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# THE EFFECT OF DIRECT CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK ON STUDENTS' GRAMMATICAL ERRORS

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## Abstract

Leaners grammar has proven to be an important variable in effective teaching and learning. One challenge in teacher education is to provide strategies and processes which equip teachers to improve grammatical level. A strategy that has received considerable attention in EFL leaning is direct corrective feedback. The objective of this study was to explore the impact of direct corrective feedback on leaners grammar. The participants were 40 intermediate EFL learners Iranian male and female teachers in two experimental and control groups. The particular treatment used in the experimental group was direct corrective feedback. At the beginning and the end of the semester, both groups completed a questionnaire regarding grammar level to investigate the possible effect of direct corrective feedback on learners' grammar. TOEFL Grammar Test (TGT) was used as the measure of learners' grammar level. The findings suggest that learners' grammar improve as the effect of DCF.

**Keywords:** Corrective Feedback, Direct Corrective Feedback, , Grammatical Errors.

## 1.1 Introduction

Grammatical error correction has been known as an interesting as well as commercially attractive problem in natural language processing in particular for EFL learners or ESL learners. Regardless of the growing interest, research has been hindered by the lack of a large annotated corpus of learner text that is available for research purposes. Consequently, the standard approach to grammatical error correction has been to train an off-the-shelf classifier to re-predict words in non-learner text. Learning grammatical error correction models directly from annotated learner corpora is not well explored as are methods that combine learner and non-learner text ( Dahl Meier and Ng; 2011).

Therefore one of the main challenges that educational system faced is how to help learners move toward becoming EFL learner without any grammatical errors. There have been many studies on how to promote learner grammatical errors from 1940 till recent years. In Asian environment, EFL learners considered as passive student in classroom with a lot of grammatical errors, so educational system should change their strategies and teaching method for moving toward learning, and when it is possible that students become learners without any grammatical errors.

## 2. Review of the related literature

### 2.1 Corrective feedback

Discussion about the significance of providing corrective feedback on EFL learning has been prominent in recent years. Recently, there has been quite some disagreement in the academic field on the benefits of this

kind feedback on learners' written output. According to Sheen (2004) there has been considerable interest in corrective feedback (CF) in SLA on both theoretical and pedagogical grounds. On the theoretical side, there has been an argument over whether CF, which is a type of 'negative evidence, is necessary, or even beneficial, for language acquisition. Those who discuss against CF claim that positive evidence alone is sufficient for learners to acquire a second language (Krashen, 1982, Schwartz, 1993) and that negative evidence has no use and may even have a harmful effect on interlanguage development (Truscott, 1996). On the other hand, those who supported CF, argue that negative evidence plays a facilitative and perhaps even crucial role in acquisition.

In recent years, there have been various research studies which have explored the role of CF on language learning. In a study by Oliver (2000) who investigated two variables: age and participatory structure. The participants of the study were from 20 ESL classrooms (10 adult and 10 children classes) and 16 adults and 16 children NS-NNS dyads. She found that the pair-work context as opposed to a teacher-fronted context produced more negative feedback moves, whereas the actual use of CF by the learners was greater in teacher-fronted interaction. Also, children, as opposed to adults, were more likely to use such feedback. Her findings provide evidence for a clear role of pedagogical context as well as age in CF and learner responses to CF.

Ohta (2001) takes corrective feedback a step further by showing that if the correct form is provided, learners may have the chance to compare their own production with that of another. Accordingly, corrective feedback may stimulate hypothesis testing, giving the learner the opportunity to grapple with form-meaning relationships. Corrective feedback that does not provide the correct form, on the other hand, may force the learners to utilize their own resources in constructing a reformulation. In either case, corrective feedback may facilitate L2 development.

## 2.2 Direct corrective feedback

Two recent studies comparing different strategies on specific types of errors have provided more evidence in support of written corrective feedback. Ferris (2002) defined direct feedback as one "when an instructor provides the correct linguistic form for students (word, morpheme, phrase, rewritten sentence, deleted word[s] or morpheme[s]" (p.19).

Direct feedback may be done in various ways such as by striking out an incorrect or unnecessary word, phrase, or morpheme; inserting a missing or expected word, phrase, or morpheme; and by providing the correct linguistic form above or near the erroneous form (Ellis, 2008; Ferris, 2006, cited in Purnawarman, 2011; p.28) usually above it or in the margin.

In other words direct error correction (also referred to as explicit or overt error correction) is the type of feedback where the L2 teacher directly provides the correct forms or structures to explicitly show the error in the linguistic structure of the student's written text (Ferris, 2002; Ferris, 2003), as shown in the above examples, in fact while indirect corrective feedback only consists of an indication of an error (i.e. by underlining the error or providing an error code), direct error correction identifies both the error and the target form. One common technique for correction of composition errors produced by native and foreign language learners is for teachers to simply provide the correct form of structure's faulty sentences (Hendrickson, 1978).

Direct feedback is the strategy of providing feedback to students to help them correct their errors by providing the correct linguistic form (Ferris, 2003) or linguistic structure of target language. Direct feedback is usually given by the teachers, upon noticing a grammatical mistake, by providing the correct answer or the expected response above or near the linguistic or grammar error (Ferris, 2003a). Direct correction is when the teacher corrects students' errors on their scripts by writing the correct structural or lexical form (Lalande, 1982; Robb et al., 1986; Semk, 1984).

Bitchener et al (2005) compared two types of feedback groups (a combination of direct written feedback and oral conference feedback and direct written feedback only) with the control group (no corrective feedback) on three types of errors (prepositions, the past simple tense, and the definite article). The study found a significant effect of the combination of written and oral feedback in the use of the past simple tense and the definite article in new pieces of writing. However, no effect was found in the use of prepositions. The findings were confirmed by a recent study by Bitchener (2008) who compared three types of direct corrective feedback: a combination of direct feedback, written and oral meta-linguistic explanation; direct feedback and written meta-linguistic explanation; and direct feedback only. It was found that the accuracy of students who received feedback in the immediate post-test outperformed those in the control group who received no corrective feedback in the use of the referential indefinite "a" and referential definite "the". More importantly, this level of

performance was retained 2 months later. Results of the two studies indicate positive effects of written corrective feedback on particular linguistic features in student writing.

### 2.3 Grammatical errors

The role of grammar instruction and error correction in the EFL classroom has been an issue of considerable debate in language learning. According to Widdowson (1990), "... 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." (p.86) 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.

This discussion can be framed in terms of meaning-focused instruction versus form-focused instruction. Meaning focused instruction is based on the assumption that, like first language (L1) acquisition, L2 acquisition occurs unconsciously and implicitly. Only the availability of comprehensible input and a low affective filter in the learner are necessary for language learning. Any overt attention to linguistic form is unnecessary, and any corrective feedback is ineffective (Krashen, 1981)

According to Ellis (2001) Form-focused instruction is an umbrella term for “any planned or incidental instructional activity that is intended to induce language learners to pay attention to linguistic form” (p. 1). Long (1996) asserted that form-focused instruction has been seen as consisting of two broad types: focus on forms and focus on form. Based on Klapper and Rees (2003) focus on forms is characterized by "division of the language according to lexis, structure notions or functions, which are selected and sequenced for students to learn in a uniform and incremental way" ( p. 2). In contrast according to Ellis (2001) and Long (1996), focus on form constitutes attention to linguistic structures within the context of meaning-focused, communicative activities.

In the same vein Al-Mekhlafi and Nagaratnam (2011) argued that in grammar teaching, three areas have to be considered: grammar as rules, grammar as form, and grammar as resource. They also motioned that for many L2 learners, learning grammar often means learning the rules of grammar and having an intellectual knowledge of grammar. Teachers often believe that this will provide the generative basis on which learners can build their knowledge and will be able to use the language eventually. For them, prescribed rules give a kind of security.

Morelli (2003) exposed that, students perceived themselves as having a better attitude towards grammar instruction in context, while performing slightly better after having experienced the traditional grammar instruction. Elkilic and Akca (2008) stated generally positive attitudes of students studying English grammar at a private primary EFL classroom towards studying 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.

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1 Design

The research design contained quantitative data collection procedures. The quantitative data collection procedure consisted of administration of the TOEFL Grammar Test (TGT) used as pretest and post-tests of the study. The questionnaire was distributed to the students of both control and experimental groups. In order to draw data from the TGT, pretest- posttest control group quasi-experimental design was used.

### 3.2 Participants

The subjects participating in the research were all Iranian students, both male and female studying English at Jihad Daneshgahi Institute in Kermanshah, Iran. This sample was chosen due to its availability because a large number of learners in this institute were intermediate ones. To do so, a total number of 70 EFL intermediate learners attended the study, but just 40 of those students whose proficiency levels seemed to be nearly the same were chosen as the main participants through the placement test. The role of direct corrective feedback in the experimental group was going to be focused on. Participants were randomly assigned into two groups of experimental and control, each consisting of 20 students (Table 3.1).

Table 3.1 Participants of the study

Groups	N
Experimental	20
Control	20

### 3.3 Instruments

The current study has focused on Ferris's view for corrective feedback. Ferris (2002) defined and described direct feedback as one "when an instructor provides the correct linguistic form for students (word, morpheme, phrase, rewritten sentence, deleted word[s] or morpheme[s]" (p.19).

Two instruments were employed by the present researcher to conduct this study.

#### 3.3.1 Oxford English Language Placement Test

To make sure that the participants were all the same level of proficiency, intermediate level, the Oxford English Language Placement Test (OELPT) was administrated. OELPT is a 50-item placement test developed by Oxford University Language Center. Those participants who have 21-30 correct answers out of 50 items were accepted to participate in this study as intermediate learners.

#### 3.3.2 TOEFL Grammar Test (TGT)

To gather data, TOEFL Grammar Test (TGT) Chosen from RAHNAMA TOEFL book written by Nazari Teimoori(2009) was administered to investigate the extent to which learners grammar are correct .Students were supposed to answer the TOEFL Grammar Test (TGT). After piloting the TGT, to 20 students the Cronbach Alpha reliability of the questionnaire in this study was reported.91 using the SPSS. Since this study lasted 16 sessions within 8 weeks, the students' grammatical errors were corrected directly in the experimental group by the teacher.

### 3.4 Procedures

This study was an attempt to investigate the effectiveness of direct corrective feedback on Iranian EFL learners' grammatical errors. So a null hypothesis was formed:

"direct corrective feedback doesn't improve Iranian EFL learners' grammatical errors".

40 participants, both male and female, who were all in their intermediate levels, were selected. Out of them, one group was selected as a control group and the other as an experimental group, each group with 20 participates. TGT was administered to both experimental and control groups as a pre-test. The direct corrective feedback was used by the instructor to the participants in experimental group as the treatment.

Direct feedback provides learners with explicit guidance about how to correct their errors. This is clearly desirable if learners do not know what the correct form is (i.e. are not capable of self-correcting the error).As Ferris and Roberts (2001) asserted that direct CF is probably better than indirect CF with student writers of low levels of proficiency. Ellis (2005) also exposed that direct CF has the advantage that it provides learners with explicit guidance about how to correct their errors. Consequently the researcher of this study focused on direct corrective feedback.

In the direct CF the teacher provides the student with the correct form. As Ferris notes, this can take a number of different forms –crossing out an unnecessary word, phrase, or morpheme, inserting a missing word or morpheme, and writing the correct form above or near to the erroneous form. The teacher asked students write a text for each session and then explain it in English. When the students had errors either in their writing or their speaking (especially grammatical errors) the teachers immediately corrected them. When the treatment was carried out, and the experimental group has done their activities on English class, TGT was administered to both experimental group and control group as a post -test to investigate the impact of direct corrective feedback on grammatical errors.

## 4. Data Analysis

### 4.1 Analysis of Scores on Proficiency Test

Before administering the treatment of the study, all participants of main study ( $n = 70$ ) took the proficiency test i.e., Oxford English Language Placement Test (OELPT) to have their language proficiency pretested. The purpose of proficiency test was to manifest the learner's homogeneity or to show whether the learners' knowledge of English was at the same level. Every one of the participants was assigned a number that was fixed until the end of study.



The descriptive statistics of proficiency test is shown in Table 4.1. Regarding this table the minimum and maximum of the scores were 15 and 33 respectively. The mean of scores was 21.38 and standard deviation was 5.12. The far distance between the minimum and maximum of scores indicates that the distribution of scores is not normal.

Table 4.1 Descriptive Statistics of the Obtained Scores from OELPT

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Std. Error
OELPT Scores	70	15.00	33.00	21.38	5.12	-.213	.281
Valid N (listwise)	70						

As it was mentioned in chapter 3, the participants with scores below 20 and above 30 were excluded from the study. Thus, forty of participants were excluded from the main analysis.

Table 4.2 Descriptive Statistics for Homogenized Scores

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Sig(two tailed)
OELPT Scores	40	21	30	24.89	2.60	4.28	.67
Valid N (listwise)	40						

Table 4.2 shows that the most extreme differences between the scores are not significant. Regarding this table the minimum and maximum of the scores were 21 and 30 respectively, so it can be concluded that there was no significant difference between the observed distribution of selected scores of proficiency test and the scores are normally distributed.

#### 4.2 Independent Sample t-test

In the experimental and control groups the TOEFL Grammar Test (TGT) was given before and after the implementation period. Consequently, an independent sample t-test was conducted for the pretest scores of the both groups in order to investigate whether two mean values of the TGT results differ significantly prior to the treatment. Table 4.3 shows the paired sample independent test. In all of the TGT statistical data analyses, probability level was set to .05 ( $\alpha < .05$ ).

Table 4.3 Statistics for TOEFL test as a pretest

Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	T	df	Sig(two tailed)
Control	20	13.25	1.209	.270	3.28	48	.792
Experimental	20	13.55	1.146	.216			

As indicated in table 4.3, there is no significant difference between the groups as pre-test. It also shows that since significant level is upper than the alpha level of 0.05 ( $P=.792$ ), it can conclude that there is no significant difference between the experimental and control groups in their knowledge based on grammar as pre-test. After the treatment span, the TGT were examined respectively in order to see the differences between posttest scores of both groups.

Table 4.4 Statistics for TOEFL test as a posttest

Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	T	df	Sig(two tailed)
Control	20	14.75	1.164	.656	6.65	48	.002
Experimental	20	19.30	1.559	.135			

As illustrated in Tables 4.4 comparing the mean scores, certainly was observed that the mean score for the posttest, in experimental group was 19.30 and this was 14.47 in control group. The *sig* which is .002 is less than *p-value* (.05>.002) so, it highly confirmed the superiority of participants in experimental group over the participants in control group.

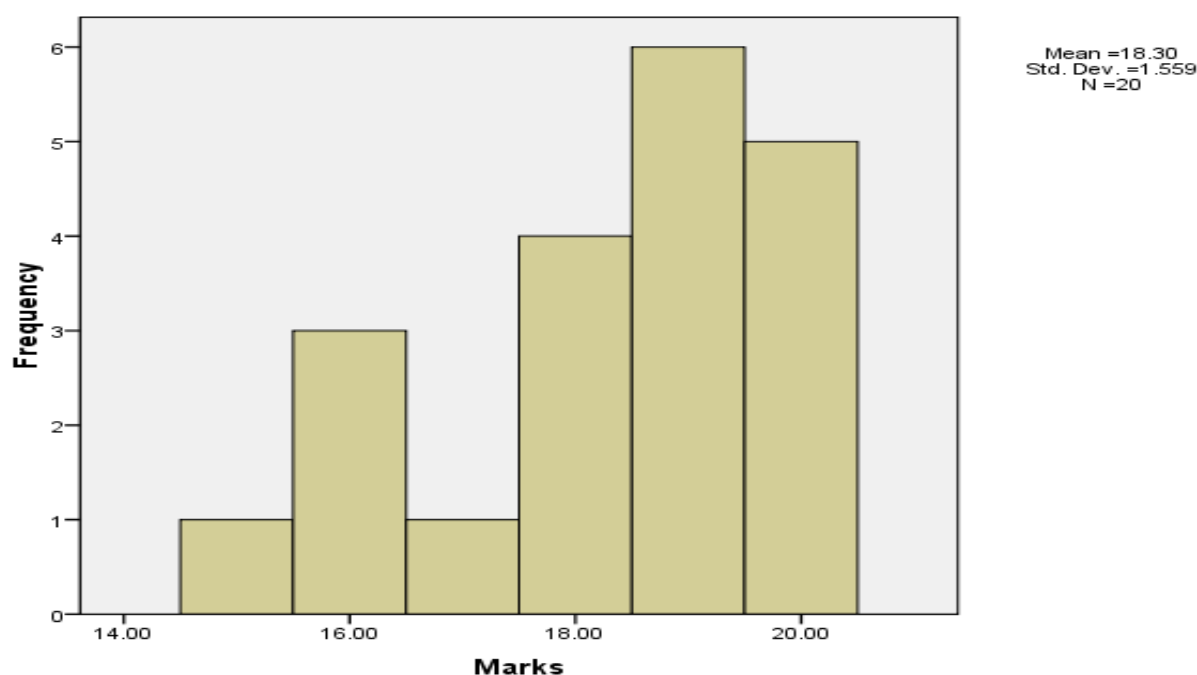


Figure 4.1 Histogram of TOEFL test in the Experimental Group as post-test

As Figure 4.1 depicts in the post-test of the TGT in the Experimental group, all the students scored more than 15 points. So, it can be inferred from these results that the implementation period contributed to the students' accuracy throughout the study.

## 5. Conclusion

In order to contribute to the need for further research on the value of providing corrective feedback to L2 writers (Ferris, 1999; Truscott, 1996), the present study investigated the extent to which direct corrective feedback on EFL learners. It found that the combination of full, explicit written feedback and one-to-one conference feedback enabled them to use grammar with significantly greater accuracy. This finding adds to a growing body of research that has investigated the effect of different feedback strategies on accuracy performance. For instance, it has already been noted that direct feedback is more effective than indirect feedback in helping learners improve the accuracy of their grammar. Because little to no research has specifically investigated the effect of different direct feedback options on improved accuracy, the findings of the present study are noteworthy. Not only did the study find that direct oral feedback in combination with direct written feedback had a greater effect than direct written feedback alone on improved accuracy over time.

Consequently, the researcher would suggest that classroom EFL teachers provide their learners with both oral direct feedback as well as written feedback on the more 'treatable' types of grammatical errors. So that

learners buy into this learning process, the researcher of this study also would suggest that teachers discuss with their learners which grammar errors should be focused on.

Because current research indicates that direct corrective feedback options have a great effect on accuracy grammatical performance, future research would do well to compare the effects of both direct oral and written feedback with various indirect options to see if the same differential effects are observed between “treatable” error categories (the past simple tense and the definite article) and the less “treatable” error category (prepositions). Although time comparisons have not been directly investigated in earlier error correction research, SLA research has consistently found that learners, in the process of acquiring mastery over the use of linguistic features, will accurately use a given feature on one occasion but fail to do so on other occasions even when the linguistic environment is the same. Consequently, in order to be able to observe patterns of consistent improvement, the researcher would suggest that there is a need for research to examine the effects of corrective feedback more longitudinally. Investigations over several semesters would be ideal. Finally, the researcher believe that the findings of this study have demonstrated that intermediate EFL learners can improve the accuracy of their use of rule-governed linguistic features if they are regularly exposed to oral and written corrective feedback.

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# THE EFFECT OF USING MONOLINGUAL MOBILE DICTIONARY ON THE IRANIAN EFL LEARNERS' ABILITY TO RECALL AND USE THE VOCABULARY

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## ABSTRACT

Dictionary use is one of the potential vocabulary learning strategies in developing learning process and the types of learners' dictionaries have been diversified with the development of digital technology in recent years. The present study aims at investigating the effect of using mobile dictionary on the Iranian EFL learners' ability to recall and use the vocabulary. To ensure the homogeneity of the participants, an Oxford Placement Test was administered to 85 learners. Then 42 participants whose scores were between one above and below the standard deviation were selected as homogeneous and were randomly assigned to Mobile Dictionary (MD) as the experimental group and Paper Dictionary (PD) as the control groups. We administered a pretest to the groups before starting the treatment. During 15 sessions of treatment, 15 vocabulary categories were instructed to the both groups. The MD group received the words through a mobile dictionary to find the meaning and vocabulary use of newly taught words, while PD group followed the using a paper dictionary. The recall times of vocabularies were recorded at the end of each session to see the possible effect of mobile dictionary on the learners' ability to recall the vocabulary. Then both groups took a posttest administered immediately after the treatment. The results of the inferential statistics revealed that the learners in MD group outperformed those in PD group. Hence, it is suggested that using mobile dictionary can improve learners' ability to recall and use the vocabulary.

**KEY WORDS:** Mobile Dictionary, Paper Dictionary, Vocabulary Recall, Vocabulary Use

## 1. Introduction

Many authors believe that mobile and ubiquitous devices can play a key role in supporting educational communities and learning opportunities (Attewell & Savill-Smith, 2003). The use of mobile-wireless technology in education is expected to provide students with increased control of their learning experiences, as well as greater convenience and flexibility (Christina, 2005). It seems that among the devices that can be used for mobile learning, mobile phones have gained more attention due to their ubiquity among the youth at schools and universities and their applications in education (Rahimi & Miri, 2014). With the rapid development of mobile technologies, they are gaining an undeniable and active role at all educational levels nowadays, and are significant and indispensable dimensions of education, specifically in learning language. Learning with the help of mobile devices and their applications like dictionaries enables students to learn via mobile devices without being restricted by time and space thus they would feel a greater sense of freedom (Nyiri, 2002).

Dictionary use can be considered as a way for independent learning for learners. The first thing a foreign language learner purchases is a dictionary (Baxter, 1990). For a language learner the first and the most important tool which facilitate the process of learning efficiently and usefully is an appropriate and suitable dictionary. Most experts now agree that dictionaries should be compiled with the users' needs foremost in mind. Dictionaries can be used as a last resort when guessing from context strategies fail. But they can also be used productively, both for generating text and as resources for vocabulary acquisition. Their usefulness depends on learners being able to access the information they contain both speedily and accurately. Training learners in effective dictionary use and selecting the appropriate dictionary is particularly important since many learners may not be familiar with dictionary conventions, even in their own language. Such training also provides them with the means to continue vocabulary acquisition long after their course of formal study has been completed. Therefore, it is as an essential source, if not the main source, of information on language for all literate people who have questions on form, meaning, and/ or use of a word(s) in their first language (L1) or in another language (Kirkness, 2004).

One of the key indicators of students' success in school, on standardized tests, and indeed, in life, is their vocabulary. The reason for this is simply that the knowledge anyone has about a topic is based on the vocabulary of that information (Marzano & Pickering, 2005). Learning vocabulary as one of the sub-skills in language learning can play an important role in receptive (reading and listening) and productive (writing and speaking) skills. Learners consider vocabulary as the most important aspect of language, thus equating language learning with vocabulary learning. According to Singleton (2000, p.12), it can be said that "language is popularly conceived in terms of words". We have to highlight the functional role of vocabulary as a crucial aspect in communication and language assessment, especially in productive skills like writing and speaking. If knowledge of vocabulary is at hand, then communication is possible even though no grammar knowledge exists (Liach, 2010).

Therefore, the present study has been intended to shed more light upon the use of mobile technology regarding mobile application in educational settings and classroom. Accordingly, the questions of this study have been formulated as below: 1. Does using monolingual mobile dictionary have any significant effect on the Iranian EFL learners' ability to recall the vocabulary? 2. Does using monolingual mobile dictionary have any significant effect on the Iranian EFL learners' ability to use the vocabulary?

## 2. Review of the Related Literature

### 2.1. Technology and Language Learning

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) have become the inevitable part of human life regarding social and personal life. It is now an integral part of us, so it can influence on our career, education, etc. This led teachers, syllabus and material designers to consider the possibility of integrating technology into the mainstream, curriculum development. ICT program provide so many novel experience for language learning (Golshan & Tafazoli, 2013). It has taken up the goal of modern approaches to language teaching, including communicative language teaching, task based learning, process approaches to writing and training in language learning strategies in enhancing student autonomy and control over the language learning process (Warschauer & Meskill, 2002).

Language organizations and institutes try to make language teaching and learning more flexible and make learners become more individual and more autonomous. In order to fulfill this goal, they are trying to use technologies such as computers, cell phones and etc. In this way they would break the time, space and condition constraints in learning. The implementation of technological resources is directly related to the way teachers perceive their use and functionality (Yunus, 2007). Yunus (2007) proposed that it is a necessity that teachers have positive attitudes towards a certain technology to adopt it efficiently in his or her working activity.

### 2.2. Mobile Learning

There are tremendous growing trends toward technology that mobile phones are one of the most prominent one in the educational context. This is the most dominant device in most students' life and help learners in a foreign language. They are not just communication devices anymore, rather we ought to consider them useful computers that fit into students, pockets, are always with them and nearly always on, and can be used in any kind of learning (Prensky, 2005). Mobile learning is defined as the method in which materials are delivered using mobile technology, such as devices and wireless networks. Many define mobile learning as borderless, where learning can take place anywhere, anytime, as the learners will not be at a fixed, predetermined location

as long as there is network connection available. So we can claim that mobile learning is undergoing rapid evolution (Cortez, Nussbaum, Santelices, Rodriguez, Zurita and Correa, 2004).

Klopfer and Squire (2008) attempted to define mobile learning in 2008 when mobile smart phones were just in their infancy and handheld devices were gaining popularity. Their definition covering the fundamental concept of a mobile learning space in the following five areas:

- (a) portability- can take the computer to different sites and move around within a location;
- (b) social interactivity- can exchange data and collaborative with other people face to face;
- (c) context sensitivity- can gather data unique to the current location, environment, and time, including both real and simulated data;
- (d) connectivity- can connect handhelds to data collection devices, other handhelds, and to a common network that creates a true shared environment;
- (e) individuality- can provide unique scaffolding that is customized to the individual's path of investigation.

### **2.3. Mobile and Electronic Dictionary**

The learning and teaching environments of the twenty first century are changing very fast due to unprecedented opportunities advancement of information and communication technologies have created for education. Almost every language learner has a mobile device like smart phone, tablet and other wireless device. This enables learners to make a portable library and carry it wherever they like. Among the most popular mobile applications, dictionary applications are the most widespread ones. Because using mobile dictionaries is time efficient and help language learners acquire vocabulary and check verb conjugations (Steel, 2012).

Using mobile dictionaries in language classes can help students to hinder frustration of turning pages of paper dictionaries. They can also extend it to environment out of classroom, into everyday activities, and learning anywhere at any times is possible with the help of one mobile application (Joseph & Uther, 2009), that one of them can be dictionary of different types, including monolingual, bilingual and bilingualized dictionary.

Many studies have shown that electronic and mobile dictionaries can have positive effect on learning. For instance, a study addressing children's use of an electronic story book showed an effect on learning for a read-with-dictionary task over a read-only task (Korafi & Shamir 2006). The researcher found evidence that the ability of a student to understand the entry in a dictionary is related to the student's academic performance. However, academically strong learners were more likely to skip entries unknown to them and not bother to take these up and hence, miss the opportunity to learn these terms.

## **3. Methods of Research**

### **3.1. The Design of the Study**

This study follows a quasi-experimental design with adopting quantitative approach to answer the research question. There are three main variables in this study: mobile dictionary as the independent variable, and ability to recall and use the vocabulary as the dependent variables. In order to gather data for answering the questions of research, different types of tests were used in this study. An OPT (Oxford Placement Test) which was included general tests of English for homogenizing learners, teacher-made pretest and posttest. Moreover, an oral test for recording the recall time of learners was included.

### **3.2. Participants**

This study was conducted with 42 pre-intermediate Iranian EFL learners who enrolled in English classes at one private English institute. The participants were female and there was no age limit and discrimination in choosing them. In addition, the participants were aged from 15 to 25. They were also the native speaker of Farsi without any academic education on English and they had received prior English instruction in Iran. The target population was 85 out of which 42 learners were selected as samples to attend the research and the rest were excluded from the study. In order to homogenize the participants and make sure they were at the same English proficiency level, an Oxford Placement Test (OPT) was conducted on 85 learners. The papers were scored, and eventually the 42 learners whose scores were between one above and below the standard deviation were selected as the main sample. These 42 participants were randomly divided into two groups of experimental and control group (NE= 21 and NC= 21). Note that learners' age and background were not considered as variable, they were explained only to describe the participants.

### **3.3. Instruments**

The participants of the study went through four research instruments;



1. An Oxford Placement Test (OPT). This test was administered in order to homogenize the participants and selecting the sample of the study.
2. A teacher-made pretest. This test was administered before the treatment in order to measure the initial vocabulary use knowledge of the learners in both groups of the study.
3. A teacher-made posttest. The teacher-made posttest was aimed to indicate the degree of progress from pretest to the posttest in the experimental group of the study in which teaching vocabulary recall and use by mobile dictionary being applied and in the control group in which teaching vocabulary by paper dictionary being applied.

The reliability of the pretest and posttest of the study was estimated using the inter-rater method as to be respectively 6.7 and 7.1. This estimation was made after the evaluation of pretest-posttest by three experts in teaching with a PHD in TEFL.

### 3.4. Procedure

The procedure of the study is shown in the following figure:



In the first phase an OPT was administered to 85 pre-intermediate Iranian EFL learners as the subjects of the study. Then, with the aim of selecting the homogeneous participants, the learners whose scores were between one above and below the standard deviation were selected as the main sample and were called for the next phase of the study. After that they were randomly divided in two groups of the study: one experimental group with 21 participants and one control group with 21 participants. The participants in both groups were given a teacher-made pretest of vocabulary use to measure the participants' initial subject knowledge of the learners under investigation. Then the pretest data have been collected.

After the preliminary steps, the participants were informed about the procedure of the study. They had two sessions in a week and each session was 90 minutes. According the institute, the Headway Book 2 was taught for the participants in the pre-intermediate level. The total sessions were 15 sessions in three months. There were 15 vocabulary categories with 7 vocabularies in each category. It is worth mentioning that the categories were selected based on the Headway Book 2, because the learners could engage better in the subjects and categories that are familiar to them and related to their main course book. Although both groups had the same instructors, they attend two different classes in two different days. In addition, the experimental group received treatment and the vocabularies were taught by using the mobile dictionary. On the other hand, the control group did not receive any treatment and the vocabularies were taught by using the paper dictionary.

The treatment procedure was as follows: in the first 30 minutes of each session, one of the categories was written on the board. The learners had to check the 7 vocabularies items of the related category. In the experimental group the teacher and learners checked each vocabulary in their mobile dictionary and the instructor explained the vocabulary use for them. As explained earlier, the good indicator of ability to use vocabulary is using it appropriately in the sentence and correct usage of vocabularies requires different factors. In addition to the explanation of different factors of each vocabulary, the instructor emphasized on the part of speech of words as one of the indicator of correct vocabulary use, so the learners paid special attention to part of speech of words. On the other hand, in the control group this procedure has been done by using paper dictionary.

In the next phase of the study, after teaching the categories and the related vocabulary items, the recall time for vocabularies were recorded with the help of a simple stopwatch at the end of each session. In this part, the maximum of 70 seconds was dedicated for each category. It means that if each learner can recall more vocabulary of each category in less time, his performance in recalling ability will be better. Thus the total times of recalling each category and the number of vocabulary of the given category in each session were recorded. At

the final phase, after the treatment sessions all the participants in both groups of study took a teacher-made posttest.

#### 4. Results and Discussion

In order to test the research hypothesis, independent samples t-test and Pearson correlation coefficient was proposed. Data obtained from the pre and post-test vocabulary use was used to determine the learners' improvement in vocabulary use. In addition, the mean of obtained vocabulary recall statistics were used to determine the learners' improvement in vocabulary recall.

Table 1  
Descriptive analysis of the pretest of the groups of the study

		Mobile Dictionary	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
L2 Vocabulary Use	Mobile Dictionary		21	12.7619	3.94254	0.66754
	Paper Dictionary		21	11.2381	3.12174	0.50665

Table 2  
Descriptive analysis of the posttest of the groups of the study

		Mobile Dictionary	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
L2 Vocabulary Use	Mobile Dictionary		21	15.4762	3.57238	0.77956
	Paper Dictionary		21	11.8571	3.19821	0.69791

Tables 1 and 2 indicate the number of participants in each group (N=21), the mean of pretest and posttest of the groups of the study, and standard deviations.

Table 3  
Independent Samples T-test results of the study

t-test for Equality of Means				
		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
L2VocabularyUse	Equal variances assumed	3.459	40	0.001
	Equal variances not assumed	3.459	39.520	0.001

As indicated in Table 3, the t-value (observed t) of the study was calculated between the posttests of the vocabulary use of participants in the experimental and control groups. The observed t value was calculated as to be 3.459 ( $t_{obs} = 3.459$ ) and the degree of freedom was 40 ( $df=n-1=40$ ). Critical t for  $df=40$  is 2.021 that is lower than observed t. Finally, the level of significance was calculated to be 0.001 ( $p=0.001$ ).

Table 4  
Pearson correlation results between the pretest and the posttest of the experimental group of the study

		Pre EX	Pos EX
Pre EX	Pearson Correlation	1	<b>0.453</b>
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<b>0.039</b>
	N	21	21
Pos EX	Pearson Correlation	0.453	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.039	
	N	21	21

According to Table 4, the Pearson correlation coefficient between the pretest and the posttest of the experimental group (Mobile Dictionary) has been calculated 0.453. This amount is smaller than 0.5 and shows that the scores of pretest and posttest do not have closeness and instead are far from each other. The level of significance based on the Table 4 is 0.039 that confirms the lack of closeness among the scores.

Table 5  
Pearson correlation results between the pretest and the posttest of the control group of the study

		Pre CON	Pos CON
Pre CON	Pearson Correlation	1	<b>0.866</b>
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<b>0.000</b>
	N	21	21
Pos CON	Pearson Correlation	0.866	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	
	N	21	21

According to Table 5, the Pearson correlation coefficient between the pretest and the posttest of the control group (Paper Dictionary) has been calculated 0.866. This amount is higher than 0.5 and shows that the scores of pretest and posttest have closeness and are not far from each other. The level of significance based on the Table 4 is 0.000 that confirms the existence of closeness among the scores.

Table 6  
Recall Statistics Results for groups of the study

Category	Mobile Dictionary	Paper Dictionary		
	Recall Time (seconds)	Recalled Vocabulary	Recall Time (seconds)	Recalled Vocabulary
Category.1	20.4 seconds	5.5	52 seconds	1.1
Category.2	25.9 seconds	4.1	53.5 seconds	3.5
Category.3	32.4 seconds	6	55.1 seconds	2
Category.4	27.3 seconds	4.7	40.7 seconds	3.7
Category.5	30.7 seconds	5.6	39.9 seconds	2.6
Category.6	35.6 seconds	6.1	40.3 seconds	2.1
Category.7	37.1 seconds	5.7	48.7 seconds	2.7
Category.8	32.2 seconds	5.2	54 seconds	3.2
Category.9	40.7 seconds	4.9	57.2 seconds	3.9
Category.10	30.5 seconds	6.1	43 seconds	2.1
Category.11	21.1 seconds	4.5	50.4 seconds	4.5
Category.12	41 seconds	5.4	40.1 seconds	3.4
Category.13	39.9 seconds	6.6	40.6 seconds	4.6
Category.14	31 seconds	4.9	50.4 seconds	3
Category.15	30.3 seconds	5	47 seconds	1.3
Total	476.1 seconds	80.3	712.9 seconds	43.7

According to Table 6, the recall time and recalled vocabulary for each category is calculated. For example the time for recalling category one (discussed in previous chapter) in experimental group (Mobile Dictionary) is calculated 20.4 seconds and this time for control group (Paper Dictionary) is calculated 52 seconds. Moreover, as indicated in Table 6, the total recall time for experimental and control group are 476.1 seconds and 712.9 seconds respectively. In addition, the recalled vocabulary for category one in experimental group is 5.5 and this number

is 1.1 for the control group. The total recalled vocabulary for experimental and control groups are 80.3 and 43.7 respectively.

Figure 1. Recall Time Results

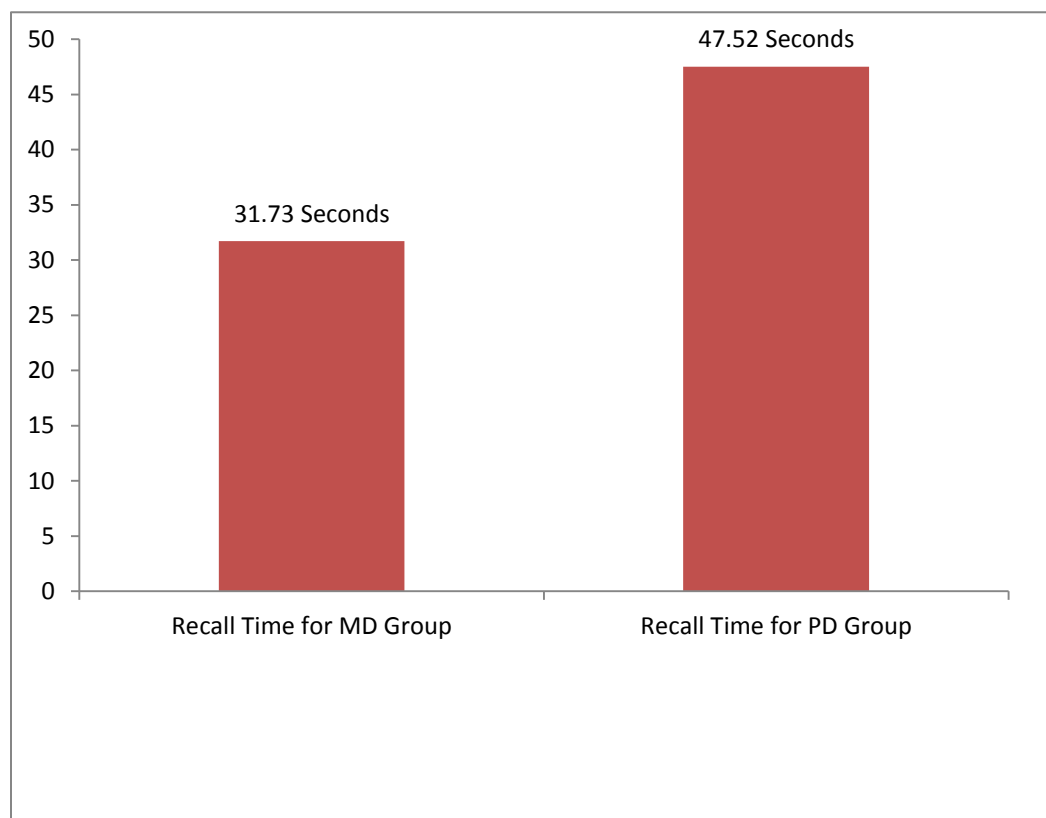


Figure 2. Recalled Vocabulary Results

According to the recall statistics there is difference between the mean of recall time of the groups of the study and the first hypothesis is rejected. In addition, there is difference between the mean of recalled vocabulary items in both groups. As it is indicated in figure 1, the mean recall time for experimental group (Recall Time for

MD) is 31.73 seconds and the mean recall time for control group (Recall Time for PD) is 47.52 seconds. On the other hand according to figure 2 the mean of recalled vocabulary for experimental group (Recalled Vocabulary for MD) is 5.3 and the mean of recalled vocabulary for control group (Recalled Vocabulary for PD) is 2.9. To sum up, the experimental group (MD) recalled 5.3 vocabulary items in 31.73 seconds, and the control group (PD) recalled 2.9 vocabulary items in 47.7 seconds. Therefore, it is concluded that the experimental group (MD) recalled more vocabulary items in less time and had better performance in comparison with control group. Using monolingual mobile dictionary has significant effect on the Iranian EFL learners' ability to recall vocabulary. Therefore, the first null hypothesis (H1) is rejected according to the inferential data analysis.

The interpretation of the descriptive and inferential data analysis for the H2 is as below. Table 3 presents the results of independents samples T-test of the study. According to the null hypotheses of the present study, the level of significance for two tailed is considered to be 0.05 that its degree of freedom is shown to be 40 ( $df=40$ ) in Table 3. As indicated in Table 3, observed-t is shown to be 3.459 that is higher than the critical-t of 2.021 (John Best, 2006, p. 483). Therefore, we conclude that the second hypothesis (H2) is rejected. Moreover, the degree of significance of the obtained observed-t is 0.001 according Table 3 that is much lower than the considered degree of significance for two tailed ( $\text{sig}=0.05$ ) (John Best, 2006m p.483), this also confirms the rejection of the second hypothesis (H2). The rejection of the second null hypothesis indicated that using monolingual mobile dictionary effects on the Iranian EFL learners' ability to use vocabulary.

Over the years, the integration of technology into language teaching was of great importance for many researchers and aroused them to investigate the effect of mobile technology on the four main skills of language teaching and learning.

The present study investigated the effect of using monolingual mobile dictionary on the Iranian EFL learners' ability to recall and use the vocabulary. It was shown that using monolingual mobile dictionary has significant effect on the Iranian EFL learners' ability to recall and use the vocabulary. The findings are in line with the ones conducted by Steel (2012), Guillot and Kenning (1994), Basoglu and Akdemir (2010), Rahimi and Miri (2011) in all of which the results demonstrated the enhancement of learning language skills through the mobile and technological devices.

This study added to the vast body of integrating technology with education research that had been conducted in foreign language acquisition literature. The findings of this study suggest a number of implications and extensions for students, teachers, syllabus designers and text book designers that can take the mobile devices into consideration.

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# A COMPARISON BETWEEN THE NEW VERSION OF IRANIAN HIGH-SCHOOL ENGLISH TEXTBOOKS AND THE INTERNATIONALLY-PRODUCED TOP NOTCH SERIES: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

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## Abstract

Among all teaching materials, textbooks play one of the most important roles in teaching context. High school English textbooks have been found to have so many flaws in different parts regarding findings of different studies. The present study is an attempt to compare the evaluation of Iranian EFL teachers regarding Iranian high school English textbooks and Top Notch series, as one of the most popular textbooks used in language institutes, regarding 12 categories (general appearance, design and illustration, accompanying materials, objectives, topic contents, language contents, social and cultural contexts, language skills, teach ability, flexibility, teaching methods, practice and testing.) and 63 subcategories included in a questionnaire designed and developed by Al-Amri(2008) and modified by five language experts. To this aim, the questionnaire was left unchanged in terms of categories and subcategories and the language used in it and 26 Iranian EFL teachers teaching in language institutes and high schools of Kazeroun and Shiraz with different teaching experiences were selected randomly and the questionnaire was distributed among them. The findings of this study indicated that, from the viewpoint of Iranian EFL teachers, the difference between Iranian high school English textbooks and Top Notch series was significant and Top Notch Series performed better than Iranian high school English textbooks in all categories mentioned above, especially regarding teachability and methods of teaching.

**Key Words:** *Textbooks, High school, Top Notch series, Evaluation, Iran*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Although it is believed that textbook is the most important part of ELT (Sheldon, 1988) and that textbook is the element most of ELT programs have in common (Hutchinson, 1988), the contradictory beliefs over the roles EFL textbook play in these program exist.

Researchers can be divided into two groups based on the opinions they have about textbook roles, one emphasizing theoretical and practical problems, or better to say negative roles of textbooks and the other emphasizing positive roles of textbooks in classroom context. Sheldon (1988) who emphasizes problems mentioned earlier and believes that textbooks just imitate each other and no changes can be seen in them and Allwright (1981) who holds the belief that textbook materials are limited to teaching goals, fall in the first group. Other researchers (e.g. Hutchinson and Torres, 1994) hold the belief that the role textbooks play in classroom context is both important and positive. They believe that textbooks change or remain unchanged based on the fact that whether or not they are considered as suitable means of providing program goals.

Based on what is said, it can be inferred that although they are not without flaws, they, as a necessity in our teaching systems, cannot be ignored. What is important here is our teaching systems, cannot be ignored. What is



important here is our evaluation of these textbooks. Why is evaluation of textbooks important? Evaluation paves the way for the process of selection (Sheldon, 1988). "The selection of a particular core volume signals an executive educational decision in which there is considerable professional, financial and even political investment." (Sheldon, 1988)

Hutchinson (1987) gives a deeper view toward materials evaluation by asking this question: why materials are in the way they are? Evaluations of materials play a very important role in language teaching, so important that it influences the way teachers operate in classroom. (ibid: 37-38). Materials evaluations have an influence on the process of educational judgment too (cunningworth, 1984). To recap, evaluation process is both important in the sense that it affects textbooks selection and professional judgment of textbooks.

### *Significance and objective*

Since English in Iran is taught as a foreign language, developing reliable textbook series is a very important issue and most of authorities are concerned about this issue. So high school textbooks in Iran had undergone some changes during recent years and a new series was developed and used instead of the old version. In order to see to what extent the new version is reliable, the researchers in this study compared them with Top Notch series as one of the most frequently used books in language institutes of Iran using some English teachers perception of them.

As a result, to perform this analysis, the current study concern with the analysis of the Iranian new version of high school English textbooks and Top Notch series from viewpoint of Iranian EFL teachers in terms of the items included in 12 categories of the questionnaire designed and developed by Al-Amri (2008), in order to find out the strengths and weaknesses of this Iranian new version of high school English textbooks in comparison with the book edited by a native speaker of English. The null hypothesis formulated in this study is as follows:

The difference between the new version of high school textbooks and Top Notch series is neither generally nor specifically significant.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

Developing materials and evaluating them is something new in teaching program (Riazi and Mosalanejad, 2010). The objective of textbook evaluation is finding good and relevant materials to teaching context (Mobarakeh and KhaniArani, 2012).

According to Williams (1983) who provided some criteria for textbook evaluation in teaching situations, where well trained teachers can hardly be found, textbooks play a very important role in teaching. So evaluation of textbooks should be done carefully and there should be some criteria for this evaluation. For nonnative teachers of English the book should have a reliable guidance (Williams 1983). So whether or not the book has a good guidance for teachers can be a criterion. To what extent the textbook meet students' needs especially in multilingual contexts where English is used as the third language can be another criterion (Williams, 1983). According to developing criteria for textbook evaluation(Williams, 1983), the textbooks' relevance to the sociocultural environment is another criterion in textbook evaluation, because most of the time most of English learners find learning syntax and vocabulary problematic as a result of the differences between the culture of the target language and students' mother tongue (Williams, 1983). After all, the criteria mentioned earlier are not the only available criteria for textbook evaluation, some different criteria were developed for textbooks evaluation by different researchers like Williams (1983), cunningworth (1995), Harmer (1996) and Riazi and Mosalanejad (2010). But according to findings of an article by Aviles (2000), Bloom's taxonomy is found useful in providing criteria for textbook evaluation (Riazi and Mosalanejad, 2010). In Iran different criteria were used for textbook evaluation. For example, Jahangard in 2007 evaluated four high school textbooks using 13 criteria such as objectives' explicitness, appropriateness of vocabulary explanation, suitability of review and test sections and so on (Riazi and Mosalanejad, 2010).

According to findings of Jahangard' study (2007), the fourth high school book had generally performed better than three other high school books (Riazi and Mosalanejad, 2010). According to results of a research run by Riazi and Mosalanejad (2010), regarding length and readability accounts, texts used in books taught in lower high school grades are shorter. They also found that the higher the grades in high school get, the more important comprehension becomes in high school textbooks.

Regarding results of Tavakoli's study in 1955, who ran a study on textbook evaluation concerning language function used in texts of textbooks used in Iranian high schools, not all language functions are used in dialogues and reading passages.

According to an article by Razmjoo (2007), who used Hyme's (1972) scheme to compare Iranian high schools and institutes' textbooks regarding representing CLT principles, Iranian high school textbooks failed to implement CLT, on the other hand textbooks used in language institutes represented CLT principle to a great extent.

According to findings of a research conducted by Ghorbani, who compared high school textbooks in Iran, Japan and Malaysia, all three series were affected by testing in classroom context and they had to move toward being more communicative.

According to a study run by Gholampur, Kasmani and Talebi in 2013, Iranian high school English textbooks had not done better in comparison with other English textbooks regarding the multiple intelligence theory. They compared Iranian high school textbooks with two other English books named as Hip-Hip Hooray and English Time.

According to findings of a study run by Riazi and Aryashokoo (2007), who tested vocabulary exercises to see whether or not they are consciousness-raising, only one percent of these exercises were able to do so.

Regarding Iranian studies on textbook evaluation, some researchers like Riazi and AriyaShokoo in 2007, Riazi and Mosallanejad in 2010, Razmjoo in 2007 and Tavakoli in 1995, have evaluated high school books but comparing new version of Iranian high school textbooks and Top Notch series in sense of 12 categories, mentioned in following parts, is a new issue.

### 3. Methodology

#### *Participants*

The participants of this study were chosen among English teachers with different teaching experiences. 26 teachers, some male and some female, were chosen randomly. Neither gender nor age of participants matter in this study and just their perceptions of high school textbooks and Top Notch series were taken into account. Among these 26 participants, 13 commented on Top Notch series and 13 commented on high school textbooks.

#### *Instrument*

The instrument used in this study is a questionnaire developed and validated by Al-Aamri (2008) whose study's aim was to evaluate textbooks used in boy's high schools in Saudi Arabia. This questionnaire had 12 categories and 64 items which asks for the perceptions of the participants of this study about the appearance of textbooks, design and illustrations, accompanying materials, objectives, topic contents, language contents, social and cultural contexts, language skills, teachability, flexibility, teaching methods and finally practices of the textbook and it checked 63 items. The questionnaire used in this study, as mentioned earlier was developed by Al-Aamri in 2008 and it was introduced by ministry of education in 2004. The Likert scale had five codes 1, strongly disagree 2, disagree 3, agree and 4, strongly agree. The instructions were given to the participants on how to fill the questionnaire.

#### *Validity and reliability of the instrument*

In order to confirm the validity of this questionnaire, Al-Aamri gave this questionnaire to five linguists. Based on the comments given by them, some items were modified or omitted. In case of this study, the questionnaire was given to three authorities of English department of Salman university of Kazerun and reported as a valid one by them. The final version of the validated questionnaire is the one introduced in previous part. In order To measure the internal consistency (reliability), cronbach's alpha is the most common measure. It is usually used for likert scale surveys or questionnaires. Internal consistency of the questionnaire was estimated through cronbach's alpha and the reliability was  $r=0.83$ .

#### *Procedure*

The first step was choosing samples to fill the questionnaire developed by Al -Amri in 2008. The questionnaire was to 26 Iranian EFL teachers from Kazerun and Shiraz enjoying different levels of proficiency. It required the participants to rate 63 items on a five point likert scale, rating from highly disagree to highly agree, to reflect participants' level of agreement. The researchers themselves attend administration sessions in order to clarify any probable ambiguities for teachers. Before administration the questionnaire, the project was explained to the participants in the study in order to guarantee their cooperation. All the participants were given an oral description of objectives and procedures of the questionnaire. They were also assured that the results would be kept confidential. They had ample amount of time to go over the questionnaire items and answer them. 26 teachers were chosen, 13 commenting on Top Notch series and 13 commenting on high school books. Once the data were collected, appropriate SPSS were used to find out the significance of the results. They are analyzed and the analysis will be shown in next parts.

**Data Analysis**

In this part of the research, the results and analyses of the data gathered. The researchers conducted an independent samples t-test to compare old series of high school textbooks in Iran and Top Notch series based on the perceptions of the participants of this study regarding 63 items included in the questionnaire used in this study. The findings of this study indicated that the difference between the quality of high school textbooks ( $M=121.85, SD=21.49$ ) and Top Notch series ( $M=157.28, SD=30.14$ ) was statistically significant [ $t(26) = -3.584, p=.001$ ], it means that there is a noticeable difference between high school textbooks and Top Notch series regarding items included in the questionnaire used in ongoing research.

**Table1.** Groups statistics

	Top Notch series	High school books	T	df	Sig
Questionnaire	157.28 (30.14)	121.85 (21.49)	3.584	26	.001

As reported in table 2, to the numbers categories identified in previous sections, independent samples T-tests were run. Based on the results of independent samples t-test, there was a significant difference between high school textbooks and Top Notch series regarding each category in the questionnaire. In other words, high school textbooks were specifically different from Top Notch series regarding each category.

**Table 2.** Independent sample test results for items

	Top Notch series	High school books	t	df	Sig
General Appearance	18.14 (3.05)	11.42 (1.22)	-7.62	26	.000*
Design and Illustration	18.28 (4.06)	11.71 (1.32)	-5.75	26	.000*
Accompanying Materials	12.71 (2.92)	7.14 (2.62)	-5.30	26	.000*
Objectives	24.85 (6.96)	17.28 (2.28)	-2.73	26	.018*
Topic Contents	10.00 (1.75)	6.71 (2.19)	-4.37	26	.000*
Language Contents	10.14 (1.95)	7.28 (1.81)	-4.006	26	.000*
Social and Cultural Contexts	9.85 (1.16)	6.28 (1.72)	-6.40	26	.000*
Language Skills	17.14 (3.10)	11.28 (1.06)	-6.66	26	.000*
Teachability	8.14 (1.29)	3.57 (.755)	-11.424	26	.000*
Flexibility	9.85 (2.032)	6.142 (1.87)	-5.025	26	.000*
Teaching Methods	9.42 (2.27)	12.00 (3.038)	2.534	26	.018*

Practice and Testing	18.00 (3.18)	11.85 (1.70)	-6.36	26	.000*
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\*p≤.05

SD appears in parentheses below M

## 5. DISCUSSION

Based on what was found by Talebinejad and Namdar in 2011, the Iranian high school English textbooks had less discourse markers in comparison with authentic English textbooks. They used Fraser's (1999) discourse markers category in their study. Regarding the findings of this study in which language skills were evaluated, high school textbooks couldn't improve skills in a good way. Considering that Being communicative is directly related to language skills such as speaking and listening, findings of this study was partly in line with those of Talebinejad and Namdar (2011).

Concerning findings of a study run by Moghtadi (2014), the materials of Iranian high school textbooks did not meet students' needs. The findings of ongoing study revealed that the contents included in high school textbooks are not proper enough in comparison with Top Notch series. So, the findings of this study are in line with those of Moghtadi (2014).

Based on the results of a study run by Aliakbari (2004), high school textbooks failed to make students familiar with the culture of native speakers of the target language. According to the findings of this research, high school textbooks were weak in terms of making the students familiar with the target culture while Top Notch series were considered as a better tool to familiarize students with the target culture. Again, the findings of this study were in line with those of Aliakbari's in 2004.

Regarding the results of a study run by Moghtadi (2014), exercises included in high school textbooks performed weak in terms of communication. The findings of ongoing study were partly for those of Moghtadi (2014); regarding that high school textbooks' exercises were weaker in comparison with Top Notch series, but not exactly in terms of communication.

Based on the findings of the research conducted by Kheirabadi and AlaviMoghaddam in 2014, Iranian high school textbooks lacked proper supplementary materials.

Regarding the results of the ongoing study, high school textbooks performed weaker than Top Notch series concerning accompanying materials. So, the findings of both studies were on the same side regarding that high school textbooks had weaker accompanying materials.

Finally, according to the findings of a study run by Aliakbari (2004), the contents in high school textbooks did not broaden students' view to the world, so, there were some flaws in high school textbooks in sense of contents. Based on what were concluded in this study, Iranian high school English textbooks didn't do well regarding their Contents in comparison with Top Notch series so the findings of the two studies were in the same line regarding the weakness of language contents included in high school textbooks

## Conclusion

First and foremost, this study is probably to draw language teachers' and researchers' attention to textbook evaluation. In fact text books play a very critical role in learning and teaching a foreign or second language and more specifically communication.

According to what were concluded in this study, The null hypothesis which was mentioned in objective part was rejected, as the findings of this study indicated that, from the viewpoint of Iranian EFL teachers, the difference between Iranian high school English textbooks and Top Notch series was significant and Top Notch Series performed better than Iranian high school English textbooks in all categories mentioned above, especially regarding teachability and methods of teaching. To recap, the teacher should be well aware of strengths and weakness of the course book they teach. In other words, it is important to consider which course book may best support language learners in diverse instructional contexts.

## Limitations

This study suffered from some limitations:

1. The number of participants in this study was 24 which didn't seem to be enough for a generalization. So generalization has to be made with caution.

2. The samples used in this study are chosen randomly and some other studies have to be run to shed lights on findings of this study.
3. This research was conducted in Kazerun, which is a small town in Fras, and some other studies have to be conducted in cities or towns other than Kazerun in order to clarify the findings of this study.

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# CULTURE, INTERCULTURAL & CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATIONS

## "A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY"

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### ABSTRACT

Communication is a system of behavior, and because different cultures often demand very different behaviors, intercultural communication is more complex than communication between persons of the same culture. All communication takes place in the matrix of culture; therefore difference in culture is the primary obstacle to intercultural communication. Our culture teaches us our behavior from birth, and most of our behavior is unconscious. Although our verbal language comes to us naturally, only the most ethnocentric can believe that their own is a "natural" language and that other societies speak some distortion of it. If we understand that we need to translate verbal language, we should be able to understand that we also need to translate nonverbal language. Accordingly, the present study is an attempt to a critically descriptive review of the opinions, views and beliefs of some scholars in the above fields of study with respect to culture, intercultural and cross-cultural communication similarities, misunderstandings, and obstacles.

**KEYWORD:** Communication, Cross-cultural, Culture, Intercultural, Misunderstanding, Problems, Review.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Our times are often referred to as the 'new world order' with its 'new economy'. What this means is that capitalism has been restructured on a global scale, and people of widely different cultural and linguistic backgrounds have been thrown into contact more than ever before. Cultural and linguistic contact may occur in the flows of information and mass media, as well as in the flows of actual people in migration and tourism. Cultural and linguistic contact-given the state of being everywhere all the time, it is unsurprising that there should be a strong interest in Intercultural Communication, both outside and inside education and research environment. Linguistics as a discipline makes two key contributions to the study of Intercultural Communication.

First, it is the key contribution of discourse analysis and anthropological linguistics to take culture as empirical and cultural identity, difference and similarity as discursive constructions. Second, Intercultural Communication by its very nature entails the use of different languages and/or language varieties and sociolinguistics, particularly bilingualism studies, illuminates the differential prestige of languages and language varieties and the differential access that speakers enjoy to them (Piller, 2007).

The term 'Intercultural Communication' is used in at least three distinct ways in the literature (Scollon, 2000, 2001). They are referred to as Intercultural Communication, Cross-Cultural Communication, and Inter-discourse Communication. Studies in Intercultural Communication start from an assumption of cultural differences between distinct cultural groups but study their communicative practices in interaction with each other. Studies

in cross-cultural communication also start from an assumption of distinct cultural groups and investigate aspects of their communicative practices comparatively. Finally, the Inter-discourse approach sets aside any a priori notions of group membership and identity and asks instead how and under what circumstances concepts such as culture are produced by participants as relevant categories for interpersonal ideological negotiation (Scollon and Scollon, 2001).

Ethnographers' uses of the word culture have established one essential point of consensus: culture is not a real thing, but an abstract and purely analytical notion. It does not cause behavior, but summarizes an abstraction from it, and is thus neither normative nor predictive (Baumann, 1996).

Many writers in cross-cultural and intercultural communication do not pay attention to this basic point and they end up using the term 'culture' as if it were co-terminus with 'nation' and/or 'ethnicity'. If researchers use predefined cultural categories that are salient to them as the basis for their investigations, they can only reproduce the discourses available to them (Piller, 2007).

It is therefore not surprising that culture oftentimes gets equated with nation and/or ethnicity, because the discourses of national identity and national belonging are powerful ones that have been around for a considerable period and that are powerfully supported by a range of state, media and other institutional practices (Piller, 2007).

Informed by anthropology, discourse analysis, social psychology and sociolinguistics, critical studies in Intercultural Communication have dealt with the twin problems of essentialism ('people *have* culture') and reification of national and ethnic identity as culture ('people from group X behave in ways that are static, internally similar and different from other groups') in two different ways. One solution is to argue that 'all communication is intercultural' (Holliday et al. 2004). The other is to develop theories and understandings that make 'culture', and consequently 'intercultural communication', amenable to empirical analysis as, for instance, Blommaert (2005) and Scollon and Scollon (2001) have done.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. Nation and Ethnicity

Whether culture is viewed as nation, ethnicity, faith, gender, or as sexuality, all these 'cultures' have one thing in common: they are imagined communities (Anderson, 1991). That means that members of a culture imagine themselves and are imagined by others as group members. These groups are too large to be 'real' groups. Therefore, they are best considered as discursive constructions. That means that we do not *have* culture but that we *construct* culture discursively (Piller, 2007).

Culture is complex, pervasive and multidimensional. (Samovar and Porter, 2003) defines Culture as: "The deposit of knowledge, experience, beliefs, values, attitudes, meanings, social hierarchies, religion, notions of time, roles, spatial relationships, concepts of the universe, and material objects and possessions acquired by a group of people in the course of generations through individual and group striving".

According to Piller (2007) this definition is typical in a number of ways: first, it goes to great lengths to stress the complexity of 'culture'; second, it is at pains to acknowledge the diversity of definitions of 'culture'; and third, it links 'culture' to group membership. In a way, such definitions are hard to disagree with: it is obvious that culture is somehow tied to group membership, it is undisputable that culture is complex, and, given that people have been thinking about culture and group membership for millennia, probably since the dawn of time, it is also clear that different thinkers have come up with a great many different understandings. However, unfortunately, from a research perspective such a definition of 'culture' as 'complex, differently defined, and tied to group membership' is useless because it cannot be operationalized. That means that it cannot be studied empirically and culture becomes an a priori assumption. In contrast, anthropologists and sociologists insist that belonging to culture A, B or C can never be an a priori assumption.

### 2.2. Multiculturalism

Some people describe themselves as belonging to two or more cultures. Similarly, we hear of migrants who learn not only a new language but also a new culture and thus become 'bicultural' (Bratt-Paulston, 2005). Children born to expatriate parents have recently gained their own label, TCK for 'Third Culture Kids' (Tokuhamma-Espinosa, 2003). Although the star of 'multiculturalism' has started to wane somewhat, countries and cities that have seen significant immigration are often called 'multicultural' and Kramsch (1998) describes 'persons who belong to various discourse communities, and who therefore have the linguistic resources and

social strategies to affiliate and identify with many different cultures and ways of using language' as multicultural. The obvious point is that, given the state of connectedness of our world, no culture exists in isolation. Explorations of multiculturalism, third cultures, and crossing are often conceived as challenges to dominant accounts of a uniform culture. However, as Holliday (1999) argues, these accounts still take the nation and/or ethnicity as their point of departure. Holliday (1999) refers to these as 'big culture' and argues for a shift of focus to 'small culture', which he defines as 'relating to cohesive behavior in activities within any social grouping'.

### 2.3. *Language and Human Communication*

The "Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis" and the concept of linguistic relativity state that our language influences the way we see the world, and that our language makes different aspects of reality salient to us. Chaney and Martin (2004) provide a table that matches verbal style with ethnic group. For pragmatics, the position of the verb in German is purely a matter of syntax: the verb is the second constituent in a main clause and the last one in a subordinate clause. In contrast, the position of "the point" is a matter of pragmatic choice and may be located anywhere in a sentence and across syntactic boundaries. Just like any other language, English words, can also be used to mean the exact opposite of their "real" meaning: think of the "start-button" many of us need to press to shut down – that is, "end" – our Microsoft Windows computers; or think of the many rape cases where a woman's "no" is said to have been heard as a "yes" (Kulick, 2003).

The relativity of linguistic structure is obvious to anyone who knows more than one language. However, the focus on formal relativity in much of the intercultural communication literature tends to obscure a much more fundamental relativity, namely that of function: we do different things with language (Piller, 2007).

Community differences extend to the role of languages in naming the world they help to shape or constitute. In central Oregon, for example, English speakers typically go up a level in taxonomy when asked to name a plant for which they lack a term: 'some kind of bush'; Sahaptin speakers analogize: 'sort of an A', or 'between an A or a B' (A and B being specific plants); Wasco speakers hesitate or disagree politely: 'No, no name for that, 'in keeping with a cultural preference for precision and certainty of reference (Hymes, 1996).

Note that Dell Hymes does not make sweeping statements about English, Sahaptin and Wasco speakers per se but about those in a specific place, central Oregon. If we take the concept of functional relativity seriously, it becomes clear that sweeping assertions about languages and their speakers such as the ones quoted above ('German speakers do not immediately get to the point'; 'in Japanese, the word "yes" has many different meanings') are quite meaningless, as 'English', 'German' or 'Japanese' may be quite different entities from each other, and for their diverse speakers.

Germans they offer the following entry: "In the German language, the verb often comes at the end of the sentence. In oral communication, Germans do not immediately get to the point." This entry suggests that having the verb at the end of the sentence says something about when "the point" is being made. However, such a claim combines syntax and

Piller (2007) argues that culture is often an a priori assumption in Intercultural Communication. She believes that the same is true for language: English, German, Japanese, etc., are all a priori assumptions that have their origin in the same source as the frequent identification of culture with nation and/or ethnicity – namely the stronghold that nationalism has on us. 'To speak of the language, without further specification, as linguists and writers on Intercultural Communication do, is tacitly to accept the official definition of the official language of a political unit' (Bourdieu, 1991). This trap – to base research in Intercultural Communication on a range of a priori assumptions about culture and language – can only be avoided by a commitment to studying language, culture and communication in context.

Empirical Intercultural Communication as it is conducted in the tradition of interactional sociolinguists as pioneered by John Gumperz (1982) has studied actual face-to-face interactions between people with different kinds of background knowledge for a long time, and isolated contextualization cues as a key variable in misunderstandings. Contextualization cues are those aspects of our communication that relate what we say to the context or that signal how we expect what we say to be interpreted: 'signaling mechanisms such as intonation, speech rhythms, and choice among lexical, phonetic, and syntactic options said to affect the expressive quality of a message but not its basic meaning' (Gumperz, 1982). We tend to think of these signals as fairly universal (e.g. a smile) but they are not (e.g. a smile can be a sign of friendliness or of embarrassment). This is particularly important to bear in mind as interaction must be conducted in a specific language, and



participants in an inter-ethnic-encounter often times have unequal proficiency levels. Numerous studies have shown that misunderstandings predominately result from limited proficiency in one or more of the languages of the participants in the inter-ethnic-encounter, especially the dominant language, including limited awareness of different contextualization cues (e.g. Roberts et al., 2005; Bremer et al., 1996). Roberts et al. (2005) found in a study of 232 general practice consultations in four inner London medical practices that lack of proficiency in the languages involved in the encounters was the main problem in medical encounters in this multilingual community: "Twenty per cent of all the consultations we filmed contained misunderstandings caused by language/cultural differences, where talk itself is the problem. These misunderstandings related to issues of language and self-presentation rather than culturally-specific health beliefs. This challenges the literature on culture and ethnicity which exoticizes patients from linguistic minorities".

Intercultural Communication needs a more sophisticated understanding of natural language processes, particularly multi-lingual-interactions, as it has been developed in interactional sociolinguistics and related ethnographic approaches in order not to mistake language problems for cultural problems (Piller, 2007).

### 3. CONCLUSION

Our global village is turning out to be an unstable and often unfriendly place, with ethnic nationalisms taking center stage. Competent, effective intercultural communication has become critical for our well-being and survival. Individuals and organizations struggle to cope with problems in living and working with people of other cultures on a daily basis. And in the accelerating pace of face-to-face and technologically facilitated interaction, it becomes ever more desirable to achieve intercultural communication competency as quickly as possible (Piller, 2007).

Research in interactional sociolinguistics has shown that, when misunderstandings arise, "culture" is not even particularly likely to be implicated. At the same time, "culture" is so ubiquitous that interactants may very well be orienting towards it, even if they never mention it. Discourse analysis has an important contribution to make to retrace these "forgotten contexts" (Blommaert, 2005) of "culture" by identifying discourses where "culture" is indeed important, whether explicitly or more implicitly, and to ask by whom, for whom, in which contexts, for which purposes. The key question of intercultural communication must shift from reified and inescapable notions of cultural difference to a focus on discourses where "culture" is actually made relevant and used as a communicative resource (Piller, 2007).

Piller (2007) argues the point that cross-cultural and intercultural communication is mistaken in considering 'culture' a key variable in human understanding and misunderstanding in two ways: In the first part of her argument, she shows that some misunderstandings that are considered 'cultural' are in fact linguistic misunderstandings, and in the second part of her argument, she shows that some misunderstandings that are considered 'cultural' are in fact based on inequality & taking recourse to 'intercultural communication' can serve to obfuscate relationships of global inequality & injustice. When it comes to talking about Intercultural Communication, misunderstanding and miscommunication are never far away. A typical example would be an intercultural communication title such as *when cultures collide* (Lewis, 2000).

Ethnographers believe that culture is not a real thing, but an abstract and purely analytical notion. It does not cause behavior, but summarizes an abstraction from it. Therefore, it is neither normative nor predictive (Baumann, 1996). Researchers' definition of culture as complex, differently defined, and tied to group membership is useless because it cannot be operationalized. That means that it cannot be studied empirically and culture becomes an a priori assumption. In contrast, anthropologists and sociologists insist that belonging to culture A, B, or C can never be an a priori assumption (Piller, 2007).

Culture is not something that exists outside of and precedes intercultural communication. Instead, intercultural communication is one domain where 'culture' as concerned with the specific and different ways of life of different national and ethnic group is constructed. Culture is an ideological construct called into play by social actors to produce and reproduce social categories and boundaries (Piller, 2007).

Most of us probably think of ourselves as persons who operate through our own free will. Much of the time, however, this is not true. Our behavior is taught to us from birth, and it is taught to us so that we will conform to the culture in which we live. We learn when to speak up and when to keep quiet. We learn that certain facial expressions meet with approval and others provoke a reprimand (Piller, 2007).

Anthropologist Edward T. Hall, in his catalyzing work *The Silent Language*, states that culture is not one thing, but rather a complex series of interrelated activities with origins deeply buried in our past. He treats culture in

its entirety as a form of communication. Culture is communication and communication is culture. In a living, dynamic circle, culture governs communication and communication creates, reinforces, and re-creates culture. Even though humans may be the only animals to have culture, they are not the first to be social. They did not, in their special wisdom, invent society. Even the earliest complex animals were born into a social system to which they had to adapt if they were to subsist. Society is an adaptive necessity for human existence, and communication is the system of co-adaptation that sustains society. However, we need to remember that even though communication is necessary to sustain life, other peoples who do not communicate precisely as we do, do not immediately die.

Human communication contains two kinds of messages. The first is intermittent in occurrence and can be referred to as the new informational aspect. The other is the continuous, relational aspect of interpersonal communication. The conveyance of new information is no more important than the relational aspect of communication, because the latter keeps the communication system in operation and regulates the interaction process. Communication in the broadest sense is the active aspect of cultural structure. The information content of communication often takes the form of a low-context verbal message, and the relational aspect is more often communicated nonverbally as a contextual meta-message (Piller, 2007).

To understand how humans adapt to their society, we can conceptually break down the social system of a culture into units of prescribed behavior for given situations. Hall characterizes these units as situational frames in society. A situational frame is the smallest viable unit of a culture that can be analyzed, taught, transmitted, and handed down as a complete entity. Examples of such units might be greeting, gift-giving, introductions, eye contact, and table manners. As children, we start learning in units the behavior for each situation that is considered appropriate for our culture. These situational units are culture's building blocks, and they contain social, temporal, proxemic, kinesic, linguistic, personality, and other components. Since we can more easily learn a new culture by using manageable analytic units, looking at common cultural situations – the units that differ from culture to culture and constitute potential obstacles – can aid us in achieving effective intercultural communication (Piller, 2007).

Difference in the situational units of a culture creates communication obstacles in the process of verbal and nonverbal interaction between persons. But since culture as a whole gives rise to obstacles of perception, it is also imperative to broadly consider cultural information such as history, religion, form of government, preconceptions, and values (Piller, 2007).

Culture gives humans their identity. It is the total communication framework for words, actions, body language, gestures, intonation, facial expressions, for the way one handles time, space, and materials, and for the way one works, makes love, plays, and so on. All these things and more are complete communication systems. Meanings can only be read correctly if one is familiar with these units of behavior in their cultural context.

Anything that can properly be called cultural is learned, not hereditary. But these learned ways of interacting gradually sink below the surface of the mind and become hidden controls that are experienced as innate because they are ubiquitous and habitual. Culture organizes the psyche, how people look at things, behave, make decisions, order priorities, and even how they think. Although culture is learned, Hall points out that it is very difficult for culture X to teach culture Y to use nonverbal communication forms, because all groups tend to interpret their own nonverbal communication patterns as universal. We constantly and silently communicate our real feelings in the language of nonverbal behavior, which is elaborately patterned by our culture (Piller, 2007).

The successful intercultural communication process best begins with goodwill on both sides. However, an individual's negative reactions and evaluations of a foreign culture may create intercultural communication barriers. Negative evaluations cause dislikes rather than like, and avoidance rather than approach. They occur because the foreign culture deviates from the norms to which we are acculturated. These barriers are bicultural and mono-directional, reflecting unwillingness or inability to understand the norms of a foreign culture. The barriers are not necessarily reciprocal. Further, a single cultural difference may, in fact, be an absolute barrier if it violates one of a communicator's core values. The isolation of women in harems and the practice of infanticide violate Western core values. Female sexual freedom violates core values of most Arab and Asian nations (Piller, 2007).

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# THE ACCURACY ORDER OF ENGLISH GRAMMATICAL MORPHEMES OF IRANIAN EFL LEARNERS: AN EXAMINATION OF A UNIVERSAL ORDER

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## ABSTRACT

In this article we tried to evaluate the view of the universality of morpheme acquisition order investigating Iranian EFL learners' morpheme acquisition. We investigated the acquisition order of four English grammatical morphemes by Iranian EFL learners across two proficiency levels and compared the predicted order with the so-called natural order by Krashen, 1977. Data were drawn from approximately 188 written exam scripts from the mock IELTS archive of Safirelian Language and IELTS house in Bushehr province, IRAN. The study revealed that Iranian EFL learners acquired the target morphemes in the same order across different proficiency levels and in consistency with natural order. The result made the existence of a universal pattern more tenable.

**Keywords** morpheme studies, accuracy order, natural order (NO), universality

## 1. Introduction

Morpheme studies has always been of importance to second language acquisition (SLA) and the findings have contributed in more understanding of SLA process and subsequently in various practical goals in this area. A suggested research strategy in studying second language acquisition is to assume that a universal grammar (UG) underlies grammar building just as first language acquisition (Hawkins, 2001; Ellis, 2004). Morpheme studies are no exceptions, as the central question of morpheme studies has been whether learners show universal patterns in the acquisition order of morphemes? The presence of a universal pattern could indicate the existence of a universal mechanism necessary to acquire language (Dulay & Burt, 1973).

Considering UG-based research there are two problems of L2 acquisition: the logical problem and the developmental problem (Hyams, 1991). Integrating the two problems, Hawkins (2001) claims that researchers seek different evidence from the learners' syntactic performance to show that learners make subconscious mental grammar progressively (developmental problem) and they deploy the mechanisms of

an underlying universal grammar to do this (logical problem). Closely related, Ellis (1994) asserts that developmental pattern is used as a cover term for the general regularities evident in language acquisition.

The developmental problem addresses whether UG plays a role in the order and sequence of acquisition. It poses two questions. Why do learners acquire some grammatical features before others? Why do they pass through developmental stages on route to the final stage (Ellis, 2008, p. 596)?

The first question is about the order of acquisition while the second one provides evidence for the sequence of acquisition. Morpheme studies, investigation of the grammatical morphemes, are one of the powerful ways to describe and identify developmental patterns.

In spite of some contradictory ideas (Long & Sato, 1984; Rosansky, 1976; Hatch, 1975) the grammatical morpheme examination proved to be a good candidate to reflect the acquisition of underlying syntax knowledge (Andersen, 1978; Dulay and Burt, 1973; Pica, 1983). So many studies have been conducted and reported regarding L2 grammatical morphemes (review a complete list in Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991; and Ellis, 1994). Most of these studies suggested that there exist a universal acquisition order in the SLA of grammatical morphemes. And this standard "acquisition order" which is not rigidly invariant is remarkably similar independent of length and condition of exposure, L1 background, age, and of whether the medium is speech or writing (Ellis, 1994).

Likewise, a related quotation we found useful in Luk and Shirai (2009) was by Saville- Troike (2006) which confirmed the universality of morpheme acquisition order in this way:

...The existence of such a "natural order" strengthened claims for internally driven acquisition processes, which Dulay and Burt (1973) labeled creative construction. The concept of natural order remains very important for understanding SLA, however, both from linguistic and from cognitive approaches . . . . These findings form part of the basis for continuing speculation that innate mechanisms for language acquisition may not be limited to early childhood (p. 43).

The universality of morpheme acquisition order has been the focus of many studies as mentioned and will be reviewed in other parts of this study but few of these studies worked on Iranian subjects (Bahjat & Sadighi, 2011) and almost no study has conducted on Iranian EFL learners across different levels of proficiency. The present study aimed to investigate the Iranian EFL learners' accuracy order of target English grammatical morphemes (backed by Krashen, 1977) to find out if they follow the same order as the so called "natural order", also NO hereafter, across different levels. Furthermore, in this paper we addressed the IELTS candidates as participants while the results can be discussed with IELTS' Writing Band Descriptors: Grammatical range and accuracy, later in other studies. IELTS setting was chosen because first, the popular IELTS has rapidly grown to be one most prominent test of language competence in the world and its position should be taken serious. Secondly, the studies on grammatical morpheme acquisition were rarely done on IELTS candidates in an EFL condition.

## 2. Literature Review

There are so many early empirical studies of second language development which concern the acquisition of grammatical morphemes. Roger Brown (1973) and de Villiers and de Villiers (1973) conducted the first research on grammatical morpheme acquisition in L1. They found that children acquire their first language grammatical morpheme in a certain sequence. Later, Dulay and Burt (1973) conducted the same study with L2 Learners. They investigated the acquisition of eight English grammatical morphemes by native Spanish-speaking children. They employed an elicitation technique called the Bilingual Syntax Measure to produce samples of speech from three groups of five-to-eight year's old (L2) Spanish speakers in the United States. They, then, scored their subjects for whether they correctly supplied morphemes on the "obligatory occasions" i.e. appropriate places in native speaker sentences where grammatical morphemes are required. One of the important findings of this study was that the subjects' accuracy profiles of grammatical morphemes were consistently the same. They also found that in child second language learners' acquisition, some English grammatical morphemes are more difficult than others while this relative difficulty was not affected by the length of exposure. They

concluded that the children's innate ability to organize structure accounts for the acquisition of L2 syntax. They reported the following list of grammatical morpheme acquisition order:

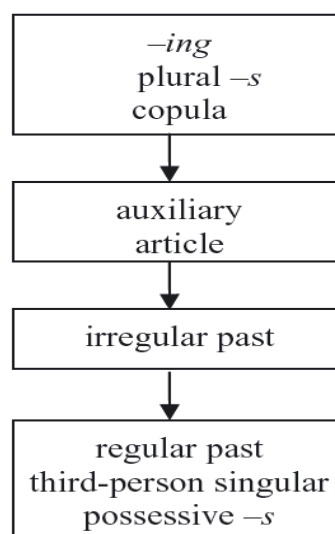
1. plural -s	books
2. progressive-ing	John going
3. copula <i>be</i>	John is here
4. Auxiliary <i>be</i>	John is going
5. articles	The books
6. irregular past tense	John went
7. third person -s	John likes books
8. Possessive 's	John's book

**Figure 1 An Accuracy Order of Grammatical Morphemes for L2 learners of English Adapted from Dulay and Burt (1973)**

Later, Dulay and Burt (1974) repeated the same study with two different groups: Spanish and Cantonese (Chinese) ESL speakers to find about the role of L1 in determining the accuracy profile. The elicitations and scoring method were the same. Same results found; the accuracy profile for each group was very similar and the results suggested that some morphemes are comparatively more difficult than others for child L2 learners even with different L1s. The conclusion was a strong support for the existence of universal child language strategies.

However, Krashen's (1977) study; relying on different longitudinal and empirical studies, lead to a modification in the list of morphemes proposed by Dulay and Burt. The criticism on early morpheme studies was that the real distance in accuracy was not clear in different morpheme orders proposed. It means that a 1% difference in accuracy between morphemes could result in the same ranking as a difference of 50%. Krashen reviewed the literature and grouped up more close morphemes in accuracy in the same group. It conveys that the order will progress from one group to the other not from morpheme to morpheme.

Figure 2 shows the proposed "Natural Order" by Krashen. "Items in the boxes higher in the order were regularly found (80 %-90 %) accurately supplied in obligatory context before those in boxes lower in the order" (Krashen 1997, p. 151).



**Figure 2 Proposed Natural Order of Grammatical Morpheme for L2 Acquisition (Krashen, 1977).**

Krashen argued that acquisition of grammatical morphemes occurs in a 'predictable' natural order for both first and second language acquisition independent of L1 background and age but, although similar, the order of

acquisition often differs between first and second languages. It is claimed that the results in this study clearly provided evidence in favor of existence of universal cognitive mechanisms which enabled learners to discover the structure of a particular language (Ellis, 1994).

Another important study which is worth mentioning based on the purpose of the present study is Andersen's (1978) which explains the accuracy profile of L2 learners on grammatical morphemes as a direct reflection of the acquisition of underlying syntax knowledge. Influenced by Krashen et al. (1975), Andersen analyzed the data into two syntactic classes: verbal-related morphemes and noun-related morphemes. He collected data from the written composition of the subjects with different proficiency level and 12 years experience of compulsory ESL classes before testing. For scoring he used a technique known as implicational scaling. The technique was based on the idea that if a learner is accurate on a difficult morpheme, she will also perform accurately on some easier morpheme. The results showed that the order obtained correlates significantly with Krashen's NO and that frequency is an explanation of natural order. He found that the degree of difficulty may be a feature of the underlying syntactic properties which the morphemes realize, rather than the morphemes themselves. He proposed the following scale of the difficulty of the verb-related and noun-related morphemes (going from easiest to the most difficult):

**Verb-related morphemes:** copula → aspect (+/- progressive) → tense (+/- aspect)  
→ subject-verb agreement (3<sup>rd</sup> person singular)

**Noun-related morphemes:** article the → article 'a' and plural -s → possessive -s

The effect of instruction is another controversial condition which is considered in morpheme studies by many researchers. One of the studies which lend support to the conclusion that the same accuracy profile occurs in EFL learners who have received formal exposure to English was by Makino (1980). Using an elicitation technique similar to the Bilingual Syntax Measure, but in a written form, Makino (1980) set out to examine the performance of 777 L1 Japanese adolescents. He found strong similarities between Dulay and Burt's subjects and his, in spite of some differences in performance. He also found a low correlation between the order in which grammatical morphemes were introduced in the textbooks and the accuracy profile of his subjects. He believed that there is no priority of input effect in producing the accuracy profile. Other support comes from Perkins and Larsen-Freeman (1975) that studied L2 native speakers of Spanish receiving formal English instruction at the university level. They found little change in the subjects' morpheme accuracy orders before and after testing. Fathman (1975) and Lightbown's (1983) study with children who received instruction also obtained similar results.

Regarding age effects, the study of Bailey et al., (1974) on 73 adolescents after a formal instruction, and Larsen-Freeman's (1976) on 24 adults showed no effects of age on grammatical morpheme acquisition order.

Related to the present study, Behjat and Sadighi (2011) investigated the morpheme accuracy in Iranian EFL learners studying English at different ages and conditions, i.e. high school, junior high school, and university. Using a grammaticality judgment test, the researchers showed that Iranian EFL students follow the same order of development in their acquisition of English grammar morphemes in different conditions. They reported the order of acquisition as follows: copula *be*, auxiliary *be*, aspect (progressive), past tense *-ed*, plural *-s*, 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular *-s* (subject-verb agreement).

However, with all studies reviewed above confirming the same order for both first and second language morpheme acquisition, there are, also, studies challenging this idea. For example, more recent studies have shifted the direction toward the effect of L1 on morpheme acquisition. Luk and Shirai (2009: 749-754) reviewed some morpheme studies (Hakuta, 1976; Koike, 1983; Sasaki, 1987; Izumi & Isahara, 2004) conducted with native speakers of Japanese, Korean, Chinese, and Spanish to test the effect of L1 in the acquisition of grammatical morphemes. Except for Spanish learners', the results with other L1 speakers showed that learners do not obey the same order in grammatical morpheme acquisition as predicted by the natural order (Krashen, 1977) depending on learners' L1. Later, Murakami (2013) relying on Luk and Shirai (2009) conducted an empirical cross-linguistic research and confirmed the effect of L1 in grammatical morpheme acquisition. Or, a series of correlational studies (reviewed in Ellis, 2008) produced very mixed results: Whereas Larsen freeman (1976a, 1976b), Lightbown (1983), Hamayan & Tucker (1980), and Long (1981) all found significant positive correlation between input frequency and accuracy, Snow & Hoefnagel-Hohle (1982), Long & Sato (1984), and Lightbown (1983) did not found any direct relationship. Krashen (1977) firmly believed that instruction cannot make a difference in acquisition.

Generally, many of the studies reviewed above found similar results i.e. the similarity of developmental patterns in SL grammatical morpheme acquisition independent of age, length and condition of exposure, and L1 background. But, at the same time, there were also different research results which contradicted this idea. It seems that the universality of morpheme acquisition is in doubt yet. The patterns identified in these studies needs to be verified for learners with different linguistic backgrounds in different situations. In this article we address Iranian EFL learners with different proficiency levels and investigate their morpheme acquisition order. The investigation will go through the following methodology.

### 3. Methodology

The design in this study is a cross-sectional one as the subjects are meant to be representative of a particular stage or 'cross-section' of the developmental process. The target morphemes were chosen from Krashen (1977). And the written tasks were selected randomly from target participants (IELTS candidates). Then, suitable scoring method (TLU) taken from Pica (1983) and proper statistical analysis (Spearman rank-order correlation) were used to examine the collected data. The findings explained consistency of the morpheme order of the Iranian EFL learners and compared the predicted order with natural order of Krashen (1977).

#### 3.1 Research Question

Based on the objectives, this study aimed to answer the subsequent question:

Do Iranian EFL learners with different proficiency levels exhibit the same order of L2 acquisition of English grammatical morphemes as the so-called Natural Order by Krashen (1977)?

#### 3.2 Target Morphemes

From the morphemes proposed by Krashen (1977), four morphemes from two ends of the table were chosen for analysis in the present study: progressive -ing, plural -s, possessive -'s, third person singular -s. The rationale for choosing these morphemes was that part of the aim of the study was a comparison of the morpheme orders in this study with Krashen's NO. Additionally, the morphemes were chosen from both ends to consider enough distance between and guarantee no overlapping.

#### 3.3 Participants

The participants were chosen randomly from a series of mock IELTS tests held at Safirelian language and IELTS House in Bushehr province. All the participants were native speakers of Persian from different age groups, and varied educational levels. They hoped to take part in a real IELTS test in a near future. The scripts were drawn out of 188 of papers. 30 papers from candidates holding bands 5 and 30 papers from candidates holding band 6 in GRA of the task 2 of IELTS were chosen for the purpose of this study.

#### 3.4 Instrument

The elicitation instrument used for this study was IELTS writing band descriptor: Task 2 (Public Version). This descriptor is also available on IELTS official website: [www.ielts.org](http://www.ielts.org). In its writing test, IELTS uses a four-criteria descriptor, to measure candidates' written performances on a scale of 1 to 9 (9 being a near native speaker). The four criteria are: Task response (TR), Cohesion and coherence (CC), Lexical resource (LR), and Grammar range and accuracy (GRA). However, based on the purpose of the present study, the focus was on the fourth part i.e. Grammar range and accuracy. The participants had composed a short essay of about 150 words on an argumentative topic: *"In many countries children are engaged some kind of paid work. Some people regard this as completely wrong, while others consider it as valuable work experiences important for learning and taking responsibility"* within the time duration of 40 minutes. These papers which had been graded by expert assessors before were again re-graded according to IELTS writing band descriptor: Task 2 (Public Version) by one of the researchers experienced in IELTS instruction. One week later once again the same researcher graded the papers while not looking at his previous scores. In this manner, the intra-rater validity was met.

#### 3.5 Scoring Procedure

The scoring measure in this study was Target-like Use (TLU) adapted from Pica (1983). The base in TLU measure is participants' accuracy profile to show acquisition. Comparing other scoring techniques such as SOC (Suppliance in Obligatory Occasion), TLU is preferred because it offers a formula which accounts for the



overgeneralization or misuse of morphemes, too (Pica, 1983). After calculating the number of correct morphemes for each obligatory context and the overgeneralization cases, these score values were added for each morpheme. The sum was then divided by the total number of contexts requiring suppliance of the morpheme in the subject's written tasks.

$$\text{TLU} = \frac{\text{number of correct suppliances in obligatory contexts}}{(\text{number of obligatory contexts}) + (\text{number of suppliances in non-obligatory contexts})}$$

#### 4. Data Analysis and Results

The collected data were analyzed in an attempt to investigate the target morpheme accuracy order for two groups across proficiency levels. The TLU scores and rank orders were presented in table 1 and descriptive analysis were provided. In order to compare the similarity of accuracy order between two groups Spearman rank-order correlation was used. Then we turned to compare the order in the present data with the natural order in "comparison with the Natural Order" section.

**Table 1 TLU Scores of the Target Grammatical Morphemes for Both Groups**

	Plural -s	progressive -ing	3 <sup>rd</sup> person singular -s	possessive 's
Group 1	79.26	69.23	54.43	35.89
Group 2	88.20	89.47	87.09	69.07

Table 1 shows the TLU scores of the target grammatical morphemes of both groups. The participants band score 5 and 6 were identified as Group 1 and Group 2 respectively. The first observation needed to be considered is that all the TLU scores increased highly across proficiency level i.e. from group 1 which is the lower proficiency group to group 2. This suggests that there should be a positive relationship between morpheme acquisition and learners' proficiency level. Second observation, looking each of the TLU scores individually and comparing them with their counterparts in both groups, is that the most accurate morphemes are *plural -s* and *progressive -ing* for group 1 and group 2 respectively. And the less accurate one in both groups is *possessive -'s*. So the morpheme accuracy order shows the following patterns: (plural -s, progressive -ing, 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular -s and possessive -'s) for group 1 and (progressive -ing, plural -s, 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular -s, and possessive -'s) for group 2. As we see, it seems the orders of target morphemes in both groups are approximately the same except for progressive -ing and plural -s that makes no difference in our later comparison with NO, as they will be placed in the same group of ranking. And thirdly, is the remarked low TLU scores of possessive -'s in both groups (35.89 and 69.07) which we believe can be attributed to L1 transfer. Some explanations will be added in discussion part to support our claim.

##### 4.1 Similarity in the Accuracy Order Between Groups Across Proficiency Levels

To identify the similarity in the order of accuracy across proficiency level we used Spearman's rank-order correlation (commonly adopted technique for comparing acquisition order) based on the TLU scores for each group. If two orders were significantly correlated, then the two groups were assumed to show the same accuracy order. The result showed that the two groups were highly correlated at  $p < 0.01$ . This means that morpheme accuracy orders are similar in Iranian EFL learners across different proficiency levels.

##### 4.2 Comparison with the Natural Order

The orders in the present data were compared to the Krashen's NO for probable similarities in order to confirm the idea of Universality of morpheme acquisition order.

**Table 2 Results of the Present Study with Iranian EFL Learners Compared with NO**

Target morphemes	Krashen's NO	Group 1	Group2
------------------	--------------	---------	--------

Progressive <i>-ing</i>	1	1	2
Plural <i>-s</i>	1	2	1
3 <sup>rd</sup> person singular <i>-s</i>	3	3	3
Possessive <i>-’s</i>	3	4	4

Table 2 is arranged based on the Krashen’s morpheme order on the left column and the ranks received by each morpheme in each group on subsequent columns. As four morphemes were chosen from either ends of Krashen’s NO table, we ranked the first two morphemes 1 and the last two morphemes 3. Even though there are some slight changes (in case of progressive *-ing* acquired later than plural *-s* in group 2), we argue that the orders in both groups don’t deviate from natural order because both plural *-s* and progressive *-ing* has the same rank i.e. 1 in Krashen clustered morphemes. And they have a very close TLU scores which left no space for overlapping with other morpheme group, too.

## 5. Discussion

The controversial issue on morpheme studies is the existence of a universal natural order. Some early morpheme studies predicted that L2 acquisition of English morphemes follows a universal natural order (Dulay and Burt, 1974, Krashen, 1977) while others reexamined this view in favour of other factors (Luk & Shirai, 2009 ; Goldschneider and DeKeyser , 2001). This study tried to find if the Iranian EFL learners’ morpheme acquisition order provides any evidence to support the idea of existence of a universal pattern. The results indicated that the TLU scores of both groups showed a progress from lower proficiency group to the higher one. This showed the progress of morpheme acquisition across proficiency level while the accuracy order of target morphemes remained consistent through this progression. It revealed that the accuracy order was the same as the acquisition order and there was a same pattern of development.

Conducting Spearman rank-order correlation, we found a high correlation showing the similarity between orders. This result along with the consistency of the present study rank orders with NO proves that there should be a universal mechanism at work, beside other probable determinant factors.

Luk and Shirai (2009), in their comprehensive study, supported the existence of a universal mechanism beside other factors as L1 however they didn’t accept an invariant natural order as Krashen’s. We, also, found traces of L1 transfer in the target participants’ performance. The low TLU scores for *possessive -’s* (35.89 and 69.07) and that it is acquired quite late in the table can be attributed to participants’ L1 transfer. The fact that possessive *-’s* is consistent with natural order and subsequently is acquired late by the Iranian EFL learners ,going through the stages as predicted, can be one reason. However if we look at the possessive construction in Persian, we may also be able to say that there is L1 transfer. First, in Persian there is no grammatical morpheme for genitive, so they cannot map possessive *-’s* to a Persian counterpart and cannot provide it in obligatory occasions easily. Secondly, in Persian the possessed is ordered before the possessor, as in “the car of my father” while in English it is vice versa. Because of this differences, it is not surprising that Iranian learners have difficulty in acquiring possessive *-’s* in English. Therefore it is suggested to interpret the remarkably low TLU scores and ranking of the possessive *-’s* in Iranian EFL learners as being due to the influence of their L1.

## 6. Conclusion

In this article we have shown that the English morpheme acquisition order of Iranian EFL learners was consistent across proficiency level and with the natural order proposed by Krashen. Our goal in this study was to show the existence of a universal mechanism underlying morpheme acquisition through examining the morpheme accuracy orders. The results proved a similar pattern as NO and consequently a contribution of UG in morpheme acquisition through developmental stages. One of the main, first support in this regard comes from Dulay and Burt (1974) who claim that language learning goes through universal processes. And as mentioned earlier, Saville-Troike (2006) claimed that “the concept of natural order remains very important for understanding SLA, .... and these findings form part of the basis for continuing speculation that innate mechanisms for language acquisition may not be limited to early childhood” (p. 43).

We believe that the results in the present study may lead to a better understanding of acquisition processes and interpretation of probable related behaviors in EFL teaching/learning situations. In a free discussion, Akira Murakami stated that "there is no direct relation between acquisition order and teaching. For instance, even if learners acquire plural -s before past tense -ed, this does not necessarily mean that we should teach plural -s before past tense -ed. ... Acquisition order studies can only be suggestive at best for teaching" (personal communication, August 3, 2015). However, Cook (1979) stated the importance of the issue through an implication for language teaching as follows:

In the case of L2 learning, there have been several reports of research in which the order of acquisition of language items by learners of different mother tongues, different ages, in different situations, appears to be constant (Bailey, Madden & Krashen, 1974). If this proves to be true, the most cautious implication for language teaching is that teaching sequences should be avoided that go counter to the order of acquisition that has been discovered.... . We need grading and sequencing based on the actual progression of the learner.

There are so many studies which lend support to the existence of universal mechanism in morpheme acquisition. But as Luk and Shirai (2009) concluded in their study, there are much more than the existence of these "universal factors" such as L1 transfer that should be considered in morpheme acquisition and morpheme studies, too. More research with Iranian EFL learners in this issue is suggested.

**Note** We used the term "natural order", also NO, as an equivalent of *acquisition order* proposed by Krashen i.e. we were more focused on the acquisition pattern than on the idea of "naturalness". As Krashen's table of accuracy order is a combination of different studies' orders, we preferred to make a comparison with natural order, a more comprehensive pattern, to conform the universality idea.

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# THE EFFECT OF SCHEMA ACTIVATION BY USING L1 IN THE CLASSROOM SITUATION ON IRANIAN EFL LEARNER'S LISTENING COMPREHENSION ABILITY

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## ABSTRACT

The current study was done to see the effectiveness of applying schema activation with authentic accessory references on Iranian intermediate EFL learners' listening knowledge. To see if any change has occurred for both groups between their pretest and posttest separately, two ANCOVAs were calculated. The results of the ANCOVAs calculation showed that the EG group benefitted from authentic accessory references finally, in order to compare the performance of experimental and control groups in the post-test, first their gain scores were calculated, then the gain scores of experimental as well as control groups were compared using an *independent t-test*. The average of the scores in the experimental group was meaningfully higher than the control group ( $p=0.00$ ). The average of scores in the EG was  $16.83 \pm 1.78$  and in the CG  $14.03 \pm 2.65$ . Thus the outcome of this study is that applying authentic accessory references has a positive effect on Iranian intermediate EFL learners' listening knowledge.

**Keywords:** authentic accessory references, listening knowledge, EFL learner.

## 1. Introduction

Traditionally, the prevalence of Grammar-Translation method during the previous century led to students' inability to use EFL fluently after having studied it for long. Consequently, the use of L1 in the EFL classroom started to be seen as uncommunicative, boring, pointless and irrelevant (Harmer, 2001). In other words, this method was challenged for doing "virtually nothing to enhance students' communication ability in the language" (Brown, 2000:16).

Advocates of the Direct Method and the Audio-lingual Method later on emphasized banning the use of L1, and viewed L1 and FL as two different systems that should not be linked so as to avoid L1 interference. Therefore, the superiority of FL may indicate prohibiting L1 in the classroom. Other theorists and researchers believed that the focus on FL can enhance communication and activate both conscious and unconscious learning. They added that learners could understand the message even when they do not know the exact meaning of words or structures, which indicates that they do not need to grasp all the words they read or hear. Here, referring to L1 might be possible in four areas: introducing concepts, reviewing a previous lesson, capturing learners' attention and praising them. Moreover, as research continued, it has been obvious that in addition to negative language transfer, positive transfer also seems to be significant, which means that FL learners might benefit from being exposed to the similarities of the two languages.

### 1.1. Significance of the study

hypothesised that background knowledge plays a crucial role. Since listening is now regarded as an active process, occurring between the listeners' existing background knowledge and the listening. Listening, which should be considered as the most important skill to be improved since it is the most material, it becomes essential to prepare the listeners prior to the listening activities in order to ease the comprehension. This

preparation should seek the importance of cognitive faculties of students towards comprehension having used the pre-listening activities effectively to activate the students' schemata and ease their listening process. . The present study was conducted in order to fill this gap frequently employed skill in our daily lives, is defined as a highly complex problem-solving activity by Byrnes (1984). In the comprehension of this highly complex problem-solving activity, it has been and to offer a perspective on listening which differs from that adopted in most previous research.

## 1.2. Research Question of the study and Null Hypothesis of the study

The study aims to answer the following major research question:

Q: Does applying schema activation by using L1 affect Iranian EFL learners 'listening?

Ho: Applying schema activation by using L1 does not affect Iranian EFL learner's listening.

## 2. Review of Literature

### 2.1. Defining Listening

There have been a number of attempts to define the listening skill in the literature. For instance, Lundsteen (1979: 1) suggests that listening is the skill "by which spoken language is converted to meaning in the mind".

Anderson and Lynch (1988: 6) suggest that successful listening is "understanding is not something that happens because of what a speaker says: the listener has a crucial part in the process, by activating various types of knowledge, and by applying what he knows to what he hears and trying to understand what the speaker means". In addition, Jeon (2007: 50) characterises listening as "a set of activities that involves an individual's capacity to apprehend, recognise, discriminate, or even ignore certain information. It has also been considered to contain complex and active processes that are involved in linguistic knowledge, personal expectation, cognitive processing skills, and world knowledge. Listening involves interaction and negotiation with a speaker and requires prior experience of a listener to best understand and interpret what a speaker says". Steinberg (2007) suggests that listening is not just merely hearing but rather a complex process that involves four stages, such as sensing and attending, understanding and interpreting, remembering and responding. She also highlights that we are not generally aware of those stages we go through.

### 2.2. Defining Schema

Before looking at the schema theory, it is important to define what a 'schem(plural: schemata or schemas). It is clear in the literature that a British psychologist, Frederic Barlett (1932) coined the term 'schema' to refer to an active organisation of past experiences in his well-known book, Remembering. A schema can be viewed as a (hypothetical) mental patterns for representing generic concepts which are kept in memory. It can be defined as the organised background knowledge which can help us make predictions or expectations within our interpretation.

### 2.3. Schema Theory

The search for understanding the relation between comprehension and background knowledge have led to the model termed 'schema theory'. According to this theory, meaning is shaped when it interacts with the previously acquired knowledge in which a text can only act as directions for reader/listeners.

Schema theory puts forward that understanding a text (spoken or written) occurs as a result of an interactive process that goes through between the listeners' background knowledge and the text.

### 2.4. Significant Studies on the Place of Schema Theory in Listening Comprehension

Schemata facilitate the listening process since listeners are involved in a series of action towards forming meaning from the text they listen to, based upon their intentions, expectations inferences and prior knowledge. Listening comprehension occurs when listeners can successfully combine their pre-existing knowledge and experiences with the listening text.

### 2.5 Using L1 in the Language Classroom

Some teachers say that they do not allow the L1 in their classrooms. What they may not appreciate, however, is that the L1 is already there. The L1 is a part of the L2 learner that cannot be separated; the L2 learner can't help but think in the L1 and make connections with the L1, because the learner's native language is at the core of his or her identity (Cook, 2001).

### 3.0. Methodology

#### 3.1. Research Design

This study adopted a Quasi-experimental design. Because we could not generalize the results of this study to the other countries. A pretest of listening was administered to both EG (Experimental Group) and CG (Control Group). Then the EG participants had the advantage of using L1 plus their regular listening practice whereas the participants in the CG could only benefit from their regular listening comprehension practice. After seven sessions a posttest was administered to both EG and CG.

#### 3.2. Subjects

The researchers' total population was 100 English learners in Kish Language Institute. They were female. By an OPT (Oxford Placement Test) the researcher selects 30 learners who were homogeneous based on the OPT scales. The researcher then randomly divided them into two Experimental Group and Control groups. Each group consisted of 15 participants.

#### 3.3. Materials

##### 3.3.1 OPT (Oxford Placement Test)

OPT (Oxford Placement Test) was employed in this study for homogenizing the participants groups. OPT was a multi skill test such as reading, writing, grammar, and vocabulary. The students answered it on the answer sheet. For the purpose of this study the researcher needed 30 homogeneous intermediate EFL learners at Kish Language Institute.

##### 3.3.2. Listening Pretest and Posttest

The researcher employed the listening part of TOEFL Longman NTC for the pretest & post-tests of the study. Pre test was used to ascertain that the students were in the same level (Control group and Experimental group). Posttest was used to ascertain the effect of treatment on the Experimental group.

##### 3.3.3. Procedures

Applying OPT (Oxford Placement Test) the researcher of this study selected 30 homogeneous participants. These participants were then randomly divided into two EG and CG groups. A pretest of listening was administered to both EG (Experimental Group) and CG (Control Group). Then the EG participants had the advantage of applying schema activation by using L1 to improve listening comprehension ability whereas the participants in the CG could only benefit from their regular practice of listening. At the end of the treatment (which lasted seven weeks) a posttest was administered to both EG and CG. To see if any change has occurred for both groups between their pretest and posttest separately, two ANCOVAs were calculated. Finally, in order to compare the performance of experimental and control groups in the post-test, first their gain scores were calculated, then the gain scores of experimental as well as control groups were compared using an *Independent T-Test*.

##### 3.3.4. Data Analysis Procedure

The data obtained from hypothesis testing of the study would be analyzed via calculating a t-test between the post-tests of listening scores of the experimental and the control groups of the study and two ANCOVAs (Analysis of covariance) between the pre-tests and post-tests of the experimental and control group of the study to see any progress happened from pre-test to the post-test or in fact during the treatment period.

### 4.0. Data Analysis and Findings

#### 4.1. 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. In order to see whether there was any significant difference between the listening ability of the two groups of study. The results of the descriptive analysis were analyzed as table 4.1.1:

**Table 4.1 .1. Descriptive analysis of the data of the Control group of the study: Descriptive Statistics**

	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Error	Std. Deviation	Variance
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic		Statistic	Statistic

preco	15	11.00	7.00	18.00	13.0000	.76842	2.97610	8.857
postco	15	9.00	9.00	18.00	15.2000	.64881	2.51282	6.314
Valid (listwise)	N 15							

According to table (4.1), the total number of participants (N) was 15 in the pretest and posttest of the control group. The minimum score or the smallest score for pretest was 7.00 but the minimum score for posttest was 9.00 but the maximum score or the largest score for the pretest and posttest of the control group was 18.00.

The mean score for the pretest and posttest of the control group has been shown as 13.0000 and 15.2000 respectively. The Standard Deviation has been calculated as 2.97610 for the pretest and 2.51282 for the posttest, that is the average deviation of all scores from the mean score of the pretest and posttest was 2.97610, and 2.51282 respectively. The variance for the pretest scores was 8.857 and for the posttest scores, 6.314. The valid N has been shown as 15 which referred to the number of non-missing values of the control group, that is, all the participants in the control group participated in the research. The descriptive analysis of the pretest and the posttest of the experimental group have been shown in table (4.2):

**Table 4.2 Descriptive analysis of the data of the Experimental group of the study: Descriptive Statistics**

	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean		Std. Deviation	Variance
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Statistic
PreEx	15	10.00	7.00	17.00	11.9333	.78962	3.05817	9.352
PostEx	15	7.00	13.00	20.00	15.8000	.62640	2.42605	5.886
Valid (listwise)	N 15							

According to table (4.2), the total number of participants (N) has been 15 in the pretest and posttest of the Experimental group. The minimum score or the smallest score for the pretest was 7.00 but this value was 13.00 for the posttest. Also, the maximum score for posttest was 20.00 while this value for pretest was 17.00. For the standard deviation obtained for the experimental group, there sounds to be more variability among the pretest of listening scores than the scores in the posttest of the listening. This may be present that the participants' posttest scores being more homogenous after presenting the treatment of the study. There were 15 participants and there has been no missing value which means that all participants participated in the experiment of this study.

#### 4. 2. Inferential Analysis of the Data :

This section focused on the inferential analysis was conducted through using SPSS ( Statistical Package for Social Sciences ) Software from which the independent Sample-t-test and also two ANCOVAs were calculated and indicated in tables (4.3) , (4.4) ,(4.5) respectively.

**Table 4.3. The T-Test result of the study**

		t-test for Equality of Means				
		t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
listenin g	Equal variances assumed	3.004	28	.006	2.40000	.79881

According to the table (4.3) indicates that the t-test results of the study between the posttest scores of the both experimental and control groups of the study. The observed t value was calculated to be 3.004. The degree of freedom (df) was 28. The level of significance (sig,2-tailed) was calculated as to be .006 which has been used in



calculating the data for the rejection or support of the hypothesis of the study. The mean difference was shown as 2.40000, that is, the difference between the mean scores of the post-tests of the control group and the experimental group of this study was calculated as 2.40000. The next inferential analysis of data in this study was indicated to be the degree of covariance between the pretest and the posttest of listening knowledge in both the experimental and control groups of the study:

**Table (4,4) Covariance Analysis of the Control Group of the Study**  
**Tests of Between-Subjects Effects**  
**Dependent Variable: posttest score**

Source	Type II Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	69.750(a)	1	69.750	48.619	.000
Intercept	20.777	1	20.777	14.483	.002
Pretestco	69.750	1	69.750	48.619	.000
Error	18.650	13	1.435		
Total	3554.000	15			
Corrected Total	88.400	14			

a R Squared = .789 (Adjusted R Squared = .773)

**Table (4,5) Covariance Analysis of the Experimental Group of the Study**  
**Tests of Between-Subjects Effects**  
**Dependent Variable: posttest EX**

Source	Type II Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	62.968(a)	1	62.968	42.126	.000
Intercept	49.050	1	49.050	32.815	.000
Pretest EX	62.968	1	62.968	42.126	.000
Error	19.432	13	1.495		
Total	3827.000	15			
Corrected Total	82.400	14			

a R Squared = .764 (Adjusted R Squared = .746)

According to table (4.4 & 4.5), the covariance between the two sets of pretest and posttest scores in the experimental group is 48.619 and 42.126 in the control group of the study. This means that the scores of experimental group is higher than the control, so the experimental group has undergone a progress compared to the control group whose score is lower than the experimental group. Thus, it can be concluded that the experimental group worked better than the control group because of being treated with traditional method of teaching.

## 5. Results of Hypothesis Testing

In this part, the results of testing the hypothesis of the study have been presented and explained in detail the rejection or support of the hypothesis. Before the hypothesis of the study was rejected or supported, it was repeated below:

**H<sub>0</sub>:** Applying schema activation by using L1 does not affect Iranian EFL learner's listening

First of all, according to the Descriptive analysis of the given data and based on the table (4.1), (4.2), the mean scores of the pretest and posttest of the control group was 13.0000 and 15.2000 and for the experimental group was 11.9333 and 15.8000 respectively. So, these two tables showed that there was no significant change in the

mean scores of the Control group, but this change was very significant in the mean scores of the experimental group and it is an evidence for rejection of the hypothesis.

In addition to, the results of the T-Test, table (4.3), showed that the observed t value was calculated by the SPSS was 3.004 ( $t_{\text{observed}} = 3.004$ ) while the critical t value determined on the basis of considering df and the 2-tailed significance level of 0.05 ( $p=0.05$ ) (Appendix f) was 2.048. So, the observed t value was higher than the critical t value and high enough to reject the null hypothesis of the study. Also, it was presented in the table (4.3), the level of significance for two-tailed value calculated by the SPSS to be .006. This value was less than 0.05 (based on the SPSS regulations) and it confirmed the rejection of the hypothesis. It could be concluded that there was a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the posttests of the control group and experimental group. There is no chance for calculating the difference between the means of the posttests of the study, so it shows that using L1 in listening classes affected on Iranian EFL learners' listening knowledge.

According to the table (4.4 & 4.5), it was shown that the rejection of the hypothesis of the study by indicating the experimental group participants' progress from pretest to the posttest of the study. The covariance value between the pretest and posttest scores in the experimental was higher than of the control group this meant that applying L1 has affected the Iranian EFL learners' listening knowledge. Also, the covariance value between the pretest to the posttest scores in the control group was lower than that of experimental group. This meant that posttest scores of Iranian EFL learners' listening knowledge were close to the pretest scores in the control group.

## 6. Discussions

### 6.1. General Discussion

There are multiple arguments both for and against the use of the L1 in the L2 classroom, each of them compelling. Some main arguments against using the L1 include: uncontrolled and unprincipled use of the L1, the view of the L2 as an illegitimate means of communication, not enough L2 input, and fewer opportunities to negotiate meaning in the target language. These arguments stem from the interactionist framework. Some main arguments for using the L1 include: lowering the affective filter, making input more comprehensible, connecting with the students' identity, and better understanding the task to ensure successful task completion. These arguments stem from the sociocultural framework. As interactionism and socioculturalism have two different ways of analyzing classroom discourse, it is no wonder that they produce two different conclusions regarding the use of the L1 in the foreign language classroom.

Many researchers have differing opinions as to the use of the L1 and these differences of opinion seem to stem from the framework used to judge L1 use. What the teacher and the language school must do is familiarize themselves with the available research on the L1/L2 debate and then decide which framework, interactionism, or socioculturalism, is more important for them to use in their classrooms.

Therefore, future research might want to consider the competing roles that interactionism and socioculturalism have in the classroom. In the future, instead of separating the two, it might be necessary to try to blend them together in the classroom, advocating an interactionist perspective for some classroom activities and a sociocultural perspective for others. In this way, it will perhaps be possible to channel the best of both perspectives so that the students are able to use (or not use) their L1 to their maximal benefit.

## 7. Limitations of the study Suggestions for Further Research

In this study the researcher tried to summarize key findings on listening learning through applying L1 in the class room as an schema activation practice. Based on this body of research. Several limitations of the present study point to ideas for future research on attitudes toward applying L1. in the class room as an schema activation practice.

First, much of this research has focused on in the class room as an schema activation practice. that had been used to enhance listening ability. Further research should investigate how teams of teachers can teach listening through an interdisciplinary approach.

Second, the small size of the sample population ( $N=15$ ) sheds doubt on the validity of the results. A replication study with a greater number of subjects is needed in order to obtain reliable and generalizable results. Third, much of the existing research had been experimental and quasi - experimental and conducted under highly controlled conditions. More research is needed that is qualitative and classroom -based.

This study dealt with Iranian intermediate level. The same study may be conducted with other learners, whether elementary, advanced levels.

## 8. Conclusion

The results of any educational survey and assessment of critical pedagogic attitude should attribute to the improvement of teaching methods for the teachers and learners of foreign language. Similarly, the present study has some practical implications for teaching, teacher-training, material development and syllabus design. With regard to teaching, the findings may be useful for teachers in Iranian EFL contexts. Teachers are also expected to apprehend that they are not slaves of the L2; hence, they can apply L1 in the classrooms.

Finally, with respect to the teachers' role in shaping learners' strategic ability, the major pedagogical implication of the study is applying authentic accessory references can be an effective listening learning strategy for Iranian university students in learning English listening with other learners, whether elementary, advanced levels.

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# A STUDY ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF FAVORITE- TEXT ON IRANIAN INTERMEDIATE EFL LEARNERS' VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT

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## Abstract

This study was conducted to investigate the effect of favorite-text on Iranian Intermediate EFL learners' vocabulary development. Sixty learners from Nour-Al-Mahdi English institute participated in the present study. Having been homogenized by Oxford Placement Test (OPT), they were randomly assigned into two groups of 30, control and experimental. Then both groups sat for a pre-test which was a vocabulary test. The purpose of this test was to measure the learners' initial knowledge of vocabulary. Then a checklist was given to both groups in order to examine their areas of interest based on the topics presented in the list. Afterwards, the experimental group received treatment on vocabulary based on their favorite-texts. However, the control group was taught vocabulary based on the traditional way of teaching. The treatment procedure lasted eight sessions. Finally, at the end of the course, both groups sat for the post-test of vocabulary. Then the statistical analysis was run through T-test. It was explored from the study that learners' vocabulary knowledge will be improved through favorite-text. This study provides a significant contribution to curriculum innovation with respect to the learners' vocabulary development.

**Key Words:** Vocabulary, Favorite-text, EFL

## INTRODUCTION

A full and flexible knowledge of a word involves an understanding of the core meaning of a word and how it changes in different contexts. To know a word, we not only need to have definitional knowledge, or knowledge of the logical relationship into which a word enters, such as the category or class to which the word belongs (e.g., synonyms, antonyms, etc.). This information is similar to that included in a dictionary definition. In addition, we also need to understand how the word's meaning adapts to different contexts. This is called contextual knowledge, since it comes from exposure to a word in context. This involves exposure to the word in multiple contexts from different perspectives. Children exposed to words in multiple contexts, even without instruction, can be presumed to learn more about those words than students who see a word in a single context (Nitsch, 1978; Stahl, 1991). Vocabulary researchers agree that to get a good start in learning the connotations of a word, a person needs multiple exposures to the word in different contexts.

There are two valuable formats for students to increase their exposure to new words in authentic literature sources. First, there are teacher read- alouds. In the primary grades (kindergarten-grade two), this sharing of a text between the instructor and his/her students are often through the use of enlarged texts or big books as well as through songs, poems, chants, and rhymes, with the text inscribed on a large chart. The shared book experience was first developed by Don Holdaway in 1979 (as cited in Cooper with Kiger, 2003). Holdaway wanted to bring the bedtime story reading experience between a parent and a child in the classroom. In shared reading, teachers show students the text as it is being read, aiding in the development of various book and print concepts (title page, author, illustrator, front and back covers, directionality of print and reading, letter/sound associations, sentence punctuation) as well as the meaning of various words. By engaging in a conversation with the teacher as the text is being read, students' reading comprehension also is fostered. In like manner, students in the intermediate grades (third-sixth grade) can greatly benefit from participation in teacher read-alouds. "This type of reading helps to activate already acquired knowledge and to develop background knowledge and vocabulary" (Cooper with Kiger, p. 36). Teacher read-alouds are particularly helpful when a text contains difficult concepts and words, which may pose problems for

students to decode on their own. Readers recognize more words in listening and reading than they produce in speaking and writing (Harp & Brewer, 2005). Regardless of the age of the students, teacher read- alouds should take place at a specific time each day in order for the students to anticipate this reading experience as well as The NERA journal to understand that teacher read- alouds have an important place in a classroom literacy program. "Listening to someone read aloud is an excellent way for students to become aware of words and expand their oral vocabulary, which is the foundation for all other vocabulary learning" (Cooper with Kiger, p. 193). A second valuable way for students to take part in reading texts of various genres and types is through independent reading. Independent reading is also described as Readers Workshop, Sustained Silent Reading (SSR), Drop Everything and Read (DEAR), or Daily Independent Reading Time (DIRT) (Graves, Juel, & Graves, 1998). No matter what independent reading might be entitled, it involves students reading texts of their own interest, choosing, and appropriate reading level. Maryam Haghighat- Dana (2003) cited in her M.A dissertation that words taught in a context of a subject area will be learned more effectively than words in isolation or from unrelated lists, because context allows students to integrate words with previously acquired knowledge. Researchers considered the effects and interactions of two main variables in learning from text: text coherence and readers' prior knowledge of the topic. The third variable, which seems to be crucial in learning from texts, is the reader's degree of interest in a topic (Hidi & Baird, 1986). In the 80s and 90s research on situational interest mostly focused on how the topic, or certain parts of a text, can affect a reader's comprehension and memory (text-based interest) (Boscolo & Mason, 2000). The positive association between interest and learning from texts has been frequently noted in the literature. However, the cause of this positive association is yet to be determined. This study set out investigate the extent to which reading of favorite text would affect readers' knowledge of vocabulary.

### STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Language learning means learning the components of language consisting of pronunciation, vocabulary, and conversational discourse. No doubt vocabulary has a very important role in the process of language learning (Sayyadian, 2001). The fact is that while without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed (Wilkins 1972). It is important for second language learners to acquire useful vocabulary learning strategies to reduce the "learning burden" as well as to learn new words by themselves. It is clear that vocabularies are the basic units of any language and are vital to linguistic communication. Therefore, providing vocabulary instruction is one of the most significant ways in which teachers can improve students' reading and listening comprehension.

From among the different components of language, vocabulary stands out as the most significant one, but unfortunately vocabulary has been neglected so far in EFL classrooms, mostly because of the following reasons:

1. Teachers who teach English vocabularies suffer from a good knowledge of vocabulary and show little interest in vocabulary and fail to motivate their students to develop their vocabulary.
2. Students, on the other hand, are not provided with any opportunity to learn rich vocabulary.
3. Students are also deprived of the situations in which they can compare their vocabulary with that of a native speaker (Mirsarraf, 2000).

Vocabulary training by teachers and learning it by Iranian students has always been a problem. It is difficult for Iranian students to memorize a large list of new words which is in each lesson of their English book. As Iranian English teachers have to teach the students these new words and the students also have to learn them as one of their syllabus, vocabulary training strategy to the students seems necessary. A lot of Iranian English teachers do not teach their students the strategies of vocabulary learning and the students are not familiar with them. So vocabulary learning is a big problem for them. Unawareness of students of different vocabulary learning strategies has caused difficulties in learning vocabulary. Both teachers and students are concerned about how to train and how to learn vocabularies and it is a big problem for them (Ostovar, Rajaei, 2013). In the Iranian context, the most frequent way of vocabulary instruction includes; first pronouncing the new word, followed by its defining and spelling and finally through explaining the new words' grammatical functions which has been proved ineffective by many EFL teachers (Zoghi & Mirzaei, 2014).

Presently, a range of different techniques is applied in classrooms all over the world to teach vocabulary to language learners of various backgrounds, knowledge and culture. (Bahmanyar, 2002).

In spite of the importance which is attached to vocabulary, the very first question is how to teach vocabulary more effectively. Another quarry is the ways by which language learners can receive adequate and appropriate input in order not to face with problems concerning their vocabulary (Olfati, 2001).

Teaching vocabulary through context is also considered as a useful method. Learners encounter a variety of familiar and unfamiliar words during reading, and those words can be stored, elaborated, and retained by a learner, depending on various conditions during reading. If reading is a great source for vocabulary acquisition, then, a few questions arise: what kind of factors can affect a learner to acquire a new word through reading? In what condition does vocabulary acquisition take place more effectively through reading? Are there any internal variables of a learner that influence, on vocabulary acquisition?

### Significance of the study

The more words we know, the easier we can communicate. In the few past years in the history of language teaching, some little concern has been cherished for vocabularies in general, and very little attention has been paid to the teaching of vocabulary in particular (Mirsarraf, 2000). Many language learners identify vocabulary as a major source of difficulty during their learning process; so, teachers need a sensible program to promote vocabulary growth.

The study will provide useful information for teachers in order to efficient vocabulary teaching in EFL classes. Moreover, it can give teachers hints about creative teaching methods and tasks. It will help teachers provide enough comprehensible input for learners (Krashen, S, 2003). It can also benefit course designers and materials developers to develop course books which can meet the teachers and learners' needs textbooks according to their areas of interests. (Olfati, 2001).

### Review of the Related Literature

Vocabulary development is the process of a person increasing the number of words which he or she uses in everyday life (Wisegeek, 2013). Developing the vocabulary of EFL learners is also important because all other language skills get affected due to the lack of vocabulary or deficiency of vocabulary. (Al Dersi, 2013). According to Schmitt and Sökmen (as cited in McCarten, 2007) organizing vocabulary in meaningful ways makes it easier to learn. Maryam Haghighat- Dana (2003) cited in her M.A dissertation that words taught in a context of a subject area will be learned more effectively than words in isolation or from unrelated lists, because context allows students to integrate words with previously acquired knowledge. Researchers considered the effects and interactions of two main variables on learning from text: text coherence and readers' prior knowledge of the topic. The third variable, which seems to be crucial in learning from texts, is the reader's degree of interest in a topic (Hidi & Baird, 1986). In the 80s and 90s research on situational interest mostly focused on how the topic, or certain parts of a text, can affect a reader's comprehension and memory (text-based interest) (Bosco lo & Mason, 2000). The positive association between interest and learning from texts has been frequently noted in the literature. However, the cause of this positive association is yet to be determined. Several researchers have tested a variety of explanations. These explanations include an increase in attention with an increase in interest (Anderson, 1982; Shirey & Reynolds, 1988; McDaniel, Waddill, Finstad, & Bourg, 2000), greater use of reading strategies when reading interesting texts (Sciefele & Krapp, 1996), differences in background knowledge between readers, and increased imagery elicited from interesting texts than boring texts (Sadoski, Goetz, & Rodriguez). Learners are in fact encouraged to use all their potential in language learning when the materials are authentic, interesting, and relevant. They become motivated to do their best when they are attentive and have a good concentration in their learning. Most researchers argue that the language aspects like interest, relevance, and authenticity have a motivating effect on learners. (Schraw, Flowerday, & Lehman, 2001).

Schiefele's (1996) found that highly interested readers (senior highschool students) developed a representation of the text's meaning, whereas low interest readers assimilated the text superficially. Hidi (1990) argued that interest is central in determining the ways in which we select and process certain types of information in preference to others. Research conducted over the last 20 years has demonstrated that both readers' well-established individual interests and their situational interests (elicited by text segments, topics, and themes) contributed to increased comprehension and learning. Some researchers suggested that interest may influence the type of learning that takes place (Krapp, 1999, Schiefele, 1996, 1998, and Schiefele & Krapp 1996). They concluded that interest did not simply enhance the amount of recalled text information, but had a strong influence on the quality of learning. That is, interest seemed to motivate readers to go beyond the surface

structure of the texts and focus on the main ideas and their underlying meaning (Krapp, 1999). According to Rostami (2014) the process of learning will be more enjoyable if you choose favorite-text. In the process of vocabulary learning McCarten (2007) claims that personalized groups of words use students' own preferences and experiences as the basis for the groups. It might include grouping vocabulary according to likes and dislikes, personal habits or history, for example, foods that you like and don't like, or eat often, sometimes, rarely, or that you ate for breakfast, lunch, and dinner yesterday. Making vocabulary personal, helps to make it more memorable. If the experience of learning is also enjoyable, so much better. The purpose of the present study is to provide evidence on how much role a favorite-text plays in learning vocabulary.

### Materials and Methods

In this study Oxford Placement Test Was used to make sure of the homogeneity of the groups. There were a pre-test and post- test of vocabulary. A checklist was used too to examine the interest areas of experimental group.

### Data Analysis Procedure

The results of post-test were analyzed for further discussion via t-test on the scores obtained from experimental and control group to see whether favorite-text had any effects on EFL learners' vocabulary development.

### Evaluation of overall foreign language proficiency (OPT test for the sampling purpose)

To make certain that the subjects were approximately at the same level of language proficiency, the standardized Oxford Placement Test (OPT) was implemented to 130 EFL students studying English as a foreign language at a private institute named Nour-Al-Mahdi Language Institute in Rahimabad, Guilan. The participants answered the structure, vocabulary and reading comprehension segments of the test with an utmost possible score of 100 points. Based on OPT test direction 60 intermediate students who scored 31+ in grammar and vocabulary and 8+ in reading section were chosen as the main sample for the present study. The results of the OPT test for 130 students are displayed in the following table:

**Table1: Statistics for the results of OPT test**

OPT scores	
N Valid	130
Missing	0
Mean	50.3077
Median	49.5000
Mode	45.00
Std. Deviation	17.54500
Variance	307.827
Skewness	.111
Std. Error of Skewness	.212
Kurtosis	-.573
Std. Error of Kurtosis	.422
Range	74.00
Minimum	18.00
Maximum	92.00
Sum	6540.00

Table 1 disclosed the results of group statistics and numerical information for the OPT test scores which were administered for the purpose of selecting homogeneous sample out of 130 EFL students. Measures of central tendency including the mean, the



median, the mode and measures of dispersion namely the range, the variance, and the standard deviation together with measures of distribution, such as Skewness and Kurtosis were displayed in the OPT test. The above descriptive statistics was reported for the 130 EFL students. For the present study, the main sample included 60 homogeneous participants who were selected based on the Oxford Placement Test direction in order to select a group of intermediate students.

#### Examining the normality assumption of the parametric tests applied to the research question:

The main statistical analyses used in this study were independent samples T- tests. Before running the principle statistical analyses for the research question, the main assumption of independent samples T-test; namely, normality was examined. Skewness analysis along with a Kolmogorov-Smirnov test were run to examine the normality of the scores. The following table highlighted the normality of the distributions and thus confirmed the normality assumption on these variables.

**Table 2: Statistics for the pre-test and post-test scores of the control and experimental groups**

	Pre-test scores (control group)	Post-test scores (control group)	Pre-test scores (experimental group)	Post-test scores (experimental group)
N Valid	30	30	30	30
Missing	0	0	0	0
Mean	68.9333	73.3667	70.7333	82.0667
Median	69.0000	74.0000	71.0000	84.0000
Mode	58.00 <sup>a</sup>	72.00 <sup>a</sup>	58.00 <sup>a</sup>	90.00
Std. Deviation	9.02844	8.43835	8.35808	8.86657
Variance	81.513	71.206	69.857	78.616
Skewness	.116	-.133	-.083	-.335
Std. Error of Skewness	.427	.427	.427	.427
Kurtosis	-.622	-.407	-.479	-.333
Std. Error of Kurtosis	.833	.833	.833	.833
Range	34.00	34.00	31.00	38.00
Minimum	52.00	55.00	55.00	62.00
Maximum	86.00	89.00	86.00	100.00
Sum	2068.00	2201.00	2122.00	2462.00

a. Multiple modes exist. The smallest value is shown

The results of the Skewness analysis, as it was represented in table 2, established by dividing the statistic of Skewness by the standard error revealed that the assumption of normality was observed in the distribution of the scores and the distribution is normal and

symmetric. Meanwhile, the Skewness and Kurtosis values reported in the table were all within the range of +2, suggesting that the distribution was normal. (116 For the pre-test scores of the control group, -.133 for the Post-test scores of the control group, -.083 in the Pre-test scores of the experimental group and -.335 for the post-test scores of the experimental group). The following table presents the results of the K-S test, which also support the findings of the Skewness analysis indicating that the normality assumption is met.

Table 3: One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test for the pre-test and post-test scores of the control and experimental groups

	Pre-test scores (control group)	Post-test scores (control group)	Pre-test scores (experimental group)	Post-test scores (experimental group)
N	30	30	30	30
Normal Parameters <sup>a b</sup> Mean	68.9333	73.3667	70.7333	82.0667
Std. Deviation	9.02844	8.43835	8.35808	8.86657
Most Extreme Differences Absolute	.087	.069	.105	.130
Positive	.087	.058	.105	.087
Negative	-.059	-.069	-.105	-.130
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z	.477	.378	.576	.710
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.977	.999	.894	.695

a. Test distribution is Normal.

b. Calculated from data.

The distribution is based on data from 30 randomly sampled participants in control and experimental groups. The probability of the Z statistic is below 0.05 for all distributions, meaning that the normal distribution with a parameter of 68.93 for the pre-test scores of the control group, 73.36 for the post test scores of the control group, 70.73 for the pre-test scores of the experimental group and 82.06 for the post-test scores of the experimental group are normal. In other words, the normality assumptions of the sample distributions are met.

### The research question:

Does using favorite – text have any significant effect on intermediate EFL learners' vocabulary development?

At the beginning of the study all the participants took part in the pre- vocabulary test. The purpose was to set up a baseline from which their achievement on the post-test could be evaluated. An independent samples t- test was used to analyze students' scores in the pre-vocabulary test to examine the possible initial differences between the two groups in terms of their vocabulary knowledge.

Table 4: Group statistics for the control and experimental groups of vocabulary pre-test

grouping	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Mean Error
Pre- control	30	68.9333	9.02844	1.64836
scores experimental	30	70.7333	8.35808	1.52597

The descriptive table displayed the sample size, mean, standard deviation, and standard error for both groups at the beginning of the study. The control and experimental group mean score were 68.93 and 70.73 respectively, and they varied some points around their

average. The mean score of the experimental group was 1.80 points higher than that of the control group. However, the degree of variation of the scores for the control group (SD= 9.02844) was a little higher than the extent of dispersion of scores around the mean score for the experimental group (SD=8.35808).

**Table 5: Independent Samples Test for the control and experimental groups' pre-test vocabulary scores**  
**Levene's t-test for Equality of Means Test for Equality of Variances**

		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference
									Lower Upper
Pre-test scores	Equal variances assumed	.25	.61	-.80	58	.42	-1.80	2.24	-6.29 2.69
	Equal variances not assumed			-.80	57.65	.42	-1.80	2.24	-6.29 2.69

The independent sample T-test procedure presented two tests of the difference between the control and experimental groups. One test assumed that the variances of the two groups were equal. The Levene statistic tested the equality of the variances. The significance value of the statistic was 0.61. Since this estimate was larger than 0.05, it could be supposed that the groups had equal variances and thus the second test was disregarded.

Based on Table 4.5, there was no significant difference between the mean scores of the two groups in pre-test of vocabulary test ( $p > 0.05$ ), that is: the control and experimental groups were almost at the same level of proficiency in terms of vocabulary knowledge in the administered vocabulary test at the beginning of the study before introducing the specific treatment.

As far as the first research question is concerned, i.e., whether using favoured-text affects the vocabulary knowledge, an independent t-test was run with the results of the vocabulary post- test to compare the experimental and control groups at the end of the treatment. The Independent Samples T- Test procedure compared means for the control and experimental groups. This time the outcomes disclosed that using favorite-text affected the vocabulary of the experimental group ( $t = 3.89$ ,  $0.00 < .05$ ). In fact, learners' performance in the experimental group (Mean =82.06) weighed more than that of the control group (Mean =73.36) in post-test. Since the subjects were randomly assigned to two groups so that the difference found in their post- test was not due to chance and it could be related to the specific treatment employed in the experimental group, i.e. using favorite text.

Tables 6 and 7 below demonstrated the results of independent samples t-test after four weeks of implementing the specific treatment (using favorite-text) for the experimental group.

**Table 6: Group statistics for the control and experimental groups of vocabulary post-test**

grouping		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Post-test scores	control	30	73.3667	8.43835	1.54062
	experimental	30	82.0667	8.86657	1.61881

The descriptive table revealed the sample size, mean, standard deviation, and standard error for both groups at the end of the study. The mean score of the control (mean =73.3667) was lower than that of the experimental group (mean= 82.0667). The mean score of the experimental group was 8.7 points higher than that of the control

group.

Furthermore, unlike the pre-test, the degree of scattering of the scores for the control group (SD= 8.43835) was a little lower than the extent of dispersion of scores around the mean score for the experimental group (SD=8.86657).

**Table 7: Independent Samples Test for the control and experimental groups' pre-test vocabulary scores**  
Levene's t-test for Equality of Means Test for Equality of Variances

		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2- tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference Lower Upper
Post- test scores	Equal variances assumed	.16	.68	- 3.89	58	.00	-8.7	2.23	-13.17 -4.22
	Equal variances not assumed			- 3.89	57.85	.00	-8.7	2.23	-13.17 -4.22

The independent sample T-test procedure produced two tests of the difference between the two groups. One test assumed that the variances of the two groups were equal. The Levene statistic tested this assumption. The significance value of the statistic was 0.68. Because this value was greater than 0.05, it could be assumed that the groups had equal variances and thus the second test was ignored.

The results of independent samples t-test for the post-test in tables 6, and 7 pointed out that there was a significant difference between the two groups in their post-test ( $p < 0.05$ ). According to the data in tables 6, and 7, the experimental group substantially exceeded in performance from the control group in the post-test. The mean score of the experimental group has been improved from 70.73 in pre- test to 82.06 in post- test; that of the control group has changed from 68.93 in pre- test in 73.36 in the post- test.

The results indicated that using favorite-text had been productive and impressive in improving students' vocabulary score in the experimental group and thus the first null hypothesis was rejected. In other words, using favorite-text had a significant effect on Iranian EFL learners' vocabulary development. Figure 1 depicts the two groups' performance on vocabulary post- tests.

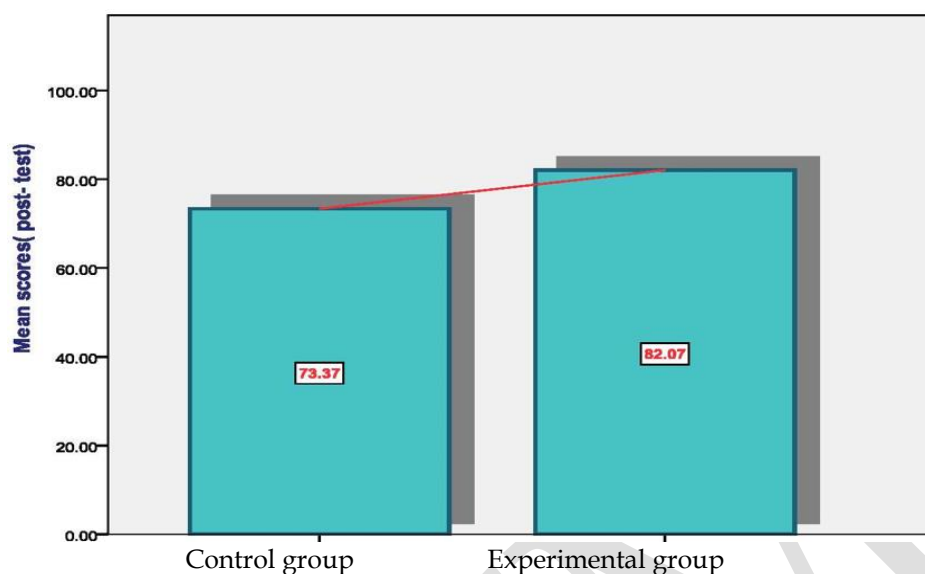


Figure 1 Experimental and control groups' scores in vocabulary test (post- test)

### Conclusion

The results of the pre-test and post-test showed that there is a significant difference between learners' performance in control and experimental group. It is indicated that teaching vocabulary through favorite-text has special effect on Iranian EFL learners' vocabulary development. Based on the findings of this research, it can be concluded that teaching vocabulary through favorite-text helps learners understand different meanings of a special word and memorize it more effectively. The results of the post-test also revealed that teaching vocabulary through context, especially favorite-text was better than teaching vocabulary in the form of an isolated list of words. As a final point, teaching vocabulary through favorite-text develop learners' vocabulary storage.

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# INFANT'S PERCEPTION OF SUPRASEGMENTAL AND SEGMENTAL ASPECTS OF LANGUAGE

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## Abstract

Infants grow up as social beings and in their social settings, they are first exposed to language in use. This language forms part of their daily communication. By their first birthday, they can understand many characteristics of language. The scientific study of the infants' perception of speech and communication has been an interesting and productive area of research during the last century. This article provides a general overview of infant perception of segmental and suprasegmental features of language. The aim is to discuss the way infants develop their perceptual abilities and become proficient at perceiving and recognizing individual speech sounds through the auditory input. The results of this review show that infants can discriminate every phonetic contrast including the ones that do not occur in their native language environment. However, during the latter half of the first year, their listening experience with the native language begins to influence the perception of sound contrasts that are not part of their native phonological system.

**Key Words:** segmental aspects of speech, suprasegmental aspects of speech, perceptual abilities, auditory input

## 1. Introduction

Speech perception is a mode of hearing developed for speech. When people speak, they not only hear the information conveyed in a waveform, but also they understand the indexical and linguistic information that conveys words and sentences as well as they identify the qualitative characteristics of the speakers (Houston, 2011). The extent to which infants are predisposed to attend to speech sounds has been the subject of many studies over the last twenty years (Clark, 2009). According to Ingram (1989), infant speech perception is the infant's ability to perceive linguistic stimuli and it is defined as the ability to perceive "speech before the recognition that such speech conveys meaning" (p.83). Early work in infant speech perception was highly influenced by Noam Chomsky's theories (Houston, 2011). On the basis of his theories, language acquisition is innately determined and we are born with a language acquisition device that enables us to systematically perceive a language (Brown, 2014). Because of this view, most work in infant speech perception focused on determining those skills that were thought to innate. According to Aslin and Pisoni (1980), there are three distinct nativist theories about infant speech perception. One is attunement theory which suggests that infants are born with the ability to perceive some of the basic sounds of the language and other sounds will develop as a result of experience with the language they are acquiring. On the basis of this theory, all infants have the same initial state, and linguistic experience plays a main role in infants' subsequent development. The next theory of nativists about infant speech perception is the universal theory, which proposes that an infant is born with the ability to perceive all of the sounds found in all languages. It claims that the child maintains those sounds that are special to his own language, and then loses the ability to perceive the other sounds. This theory suggests that the child's behavior toward sounds is very adult-like from an early age. The last theory is maturational theory. It says that the ability of speech perception by infants develops according to a biologically determined timetable that is unaffected by experience. According to this theory, all children will show these perceptual abilities at about the same time (Aslin & Pisoni, 1980).

An important point about these theories is that they make distinct predictions about the infant's perceptual abilities. According to Werker and Yeung (2005), the perceptual abilities that infants have at birth have the role of the primitives from which they construct word forms. In other words, this initial perceptual structure bootstraps word learning. Infants extract the early word forms from this general perceptual structure by using the knowledge of the acoustic and phonetic properties of their native language.

Children are faced with some critical problems while they listen to the speech around them or to the speech addressed to them. One is segmentation problem, how they identify units (words, phrases, sounds and morphemes) in the speech stream and how they segment the speech stream into meaningful units when they do not know what those units are yet. Another problem is that of invariance, the same speaker may pronounce the same sound with different acoustic properties and even he may pronounce the same word differently on different occasions. And a third problem is the language problem. Infants have to understand which sounds are systematic and therefore belong to their native language (Clark, 2009).

## 2. Initial Perceptual State

The postnatal period may not reflect infants' initial state of speech perception because fetuses are able to hear and learn in utero (Houston, 2011). Newborn babies have several perceptual preferences, some of which are developed as a function of prenatal exposure. They prefer their mother's voice, their native language and stories they have heard prenatally (Fifer & Moon, 2003). However, they do not show any preference for their father's voice over that of a strange man. Although, they can discriminate between them (Decasper and Prescott, 1984). Because such preferences require some previous experiences, it seems that they may be influenced by the infant's prenatal auditory experience (Panneton, 1985). Therefore, according to Gonzalez-Gomez and Nazzi (2012), infants have an intrauterine sensitivity to the prosodic features of language and this prenatal sensitivity has a special role in language acquisition.

Fetuses show consistent responses to auditory stimulation by 25 to 29 gestational age which means that a newborn baby has more than two months of auditory perception (Houston, 2011). In utero experience shapes the initial perceptual state of infants. Some aspects of speech perception may be more affected by fetal hearing experience. Studies of the in utero acoustic environment show that the frequencies above 1000Hz are weakened 20 to 30dB in transmission to fetuses. This suggests that infants have limited access to acoustic information important for discriminating segmental information. However, the sound that fetuses receive provides enough information for perception of suprasegmental aspects of speech (Houston, 2011). Longitudinal studies with infants provide evidence linking initial perceptual sensitivity to language proficiency (Tsao, Liu & Kuhl, 2004).

## 3. Perception of suprasegmental aspects of speech

Suprasegmental information includes the patterns of stress and prosody that are characteristics of a language. This information transmits very well to fetuses and infants (Houston, 2011; Goodman, Lee & De Groot, 1994). In a study, three months old infants, after being habituated to a melody sung by a female, recognized a change in the note of the melody even though the melody was sung by the same female (Hennessy, Palmer, Jones, Richardson, Unze, and Rick, 1983). In another study, Miller, Yeung and Morse (1982) tested the ability of 7-month olds to discriminate male and female voices using a head-turning task. They showed that these infants were able to discriminate male voices from female voices. Fernald (1985) also showed when given a choice between infant directed speech (Motherese) and adult directed speech, 4 Month old infants preferred Motherese. Trainor (1996) demonstrated preferences for infant-directed versus infant-absent singing in English in 4-7-month-old hearing infants of English-speaking hearing parents. According to Cooper and Aslin (1990), the high degree of pitch found in 'Motherese' may help the young infant to follow his mother's voice.

Newborn babies can discriminate unfamiliar languages that are rhythmically dissimilar from their native language (Nazi, Bertoneini, & Mehler, 1998). They show a preference for the familiar nursery rhyme (Decasper & Spence, 1986) and they prefer to listen to their mother's voice over that of a stranger (Decasper & Fifer, 1980). According to the native language acquisition hypothesis proposed by Nazzi, Jusczyk and Johnson (2000), this general ability to differentiate between languages based on their rhythmic properties becomes language specific due to experience with one's native language around 5<sup>th</sup> month of age.

Findings show that between 6 and 9 months of age, infants show sensitivity to the prosodic and phonotactic organization of their language (Jusczyk, Goodman and Baumann, 1999). Jusczyk, Cutler and Redanz (1993) presented infants with two types of list of bisyllabic words with either strong/weak or weak/strong



stress patterns. They found that 6 month olds listened about equally long to both types of lists while 9 month olds listened longer to lists of words which had the predominant stress pattern of their own native language. Fetuses are exposed to various kinds of auditory information in utero and this prenatal exposure forms the important and initial auditory experiences of an infant. The suprasegmental information influences the perception of other units like words, phrases and sentences (Goodman et al.1994). Based on the importance of early prosodic processing, Nazzi and Ramus (2003) proposed the concept of prosodic bootstrapping suggesting that infants' sensitivity to rhythmic properties of language at sentence level bootstraps detecting word forms at the second half of the first year of life.

#### 4. Perception of segmental aspects of speech

Young infants are able to process both segmental and suprasegmental aspects of language (Penneton & Kay, 1985). Segmental aspects of speech refer to the "acoustic properties of speech that differentiate phonemes" (Houston, 2011, p.49). According to Jusczyk and Luce (2002), Phonemes are the primary sound units for perceiving the words of a language. Therefore, perceiving words requires the perception of the sequence of phonemes in the word. According to Houston (2011), because of in-utero filtering, much of the acoustic information that differentiate phonemes is not available to fetuses. Therefore, we would expect that newborns are poor at discriminating phonemes. But despite this expectation, newborns demonstrate sensitivities to changes in segmental information.

According to Aslin, Jusczyk and Pisoni (1997), within their first year, infants already own many of the abilities that are required for learning words. Newborn babies have the universal abilities for discriminating segmental phonetic contrasts (Best, 1994). Werker and Tees (1984) have found that infants can discriminate every phonetic contrast including the ones that do not occur in their native language environment. However, during the latter half of the first year, their listening experience with the native language begins to influence the perception of contrasts that are not part of their native phonological system and they show a decline in sensitivity with age. To investigate the time course of sensitivity to non-native speech contrasts, Werker and Tees (1984) tested three age groups of 6- to 8-, 8- to 10-, and 10- to 12- month olds from three language backgrounds of English, Hindi, and Nthlakapmx ( a Canadian language) on some consonant contrasts. They found that all of the 6-8 month olds were able to discriminate all of the segmental consonant contrasts, but only half of the 8-10 month olds and almost none of the 10-12 month olds were able to discriminate the non-native consonants and they only discriminated those contrasts that were linguistically relevant to their native language suggesting that the discrimination of consonants is affected by language input and language experience. The same results was found by Pegg and Werker (1997). They showed that although 6- to 8- month old English learners can distinguish among the certain allophones from the same stop consonant category, 10- to 12- month olds do not. This is an indication that older infants are beginning to organize phonological categories (Jusczyk, Goodman and Baumann, 1999). According to Jusczyk and Luce (2002), prior experience with the language is not a main factor in discriminating phonetic contrasts during the first few months of life. These findings led researchers to a demonstration of a universalist view of infant speech discrimination in which infants are not born into a buzzing confusion. Rather, they show some organization in their perceptual skills even during the first few months of life (Houston, 2005). They are born with an innate capacity to discriminate any phonemic contrast that is relevant to any of the world's languages and then through experience and language input, they lose the ability to discriminate contrasts that are not linguistically relevant to their language.

When infants begin to babble around 6 months of age, they gradually get interested in speech production as well as in speech perception. Then their attention shifts toward the mouth of a talker starting at six months and by eight and ten months of age, they spend more time looking at a talker's mouth (Lewkowicz & Hensen-Tift, 2012). As Pons and Lewkowicz (2014) asserts, this attentional shift enables infants to gain access to synchronous audiovisual speech cues which, in turn, enables them to gradually acquire native language expertise. During this time, infants look longer to the talker's mouth regardless of whether she is speaking in their native language or not. However, by 12 month of age, when infants have acquired their initial native language expertise, they no longer pay attention to the talker's mouth when she is speaking in their native language.

As an alternative to the idea that infants' perceptual system is shaped primarily by exposure to phonetic features of the native language (Aslin & Pisoni, 1980), Best (1994) proposed that native language phonology influences speech perception and production during development. The nature of this experiential effect on perception of nonnative segment seems to be an adjustment of selective attention. When we hear words from an

unfamiliar language, we often have difficulty noticing the phonetic contrasts among consonant or vowel sounds. Of course, we experience no difficulty with phones that are very similar to our native phoneme. This is the assimilation model proposed by Best (1994). Newborn babies not only discriminate the segmental contrasts of their native language but also they can discriminate many nonnative contrasts as well. Therefore, language input affects infants' perception of both consonants and vowels of their native language and young children perceive and produce with relative ease just those phones that the language of their community uses (Best, 1994).

There are many questions unanswered about the kinds of units that infants are extracting from speech units. For example, there is considerable evidence that syllables are important processing units for infants (Jusczyk, Goodman and Baumann, 1999). In a study, Jusczyk, Goodman and Baumann (1999) investigated 9-month-olds' sensitivity to intrasyllabic information by testing their responses to common components present in different syllables. Using a Headturn Preference procedure, they presented infants with two lists of CVC syllables in each of seven experiments. Experimental lists contained items that shared a particular phonetic property (such as onset or initial consonant). The control list contained CVC items which were unrelated (there was not any element that were common to all the items on the lists). The results showed that infants listened longer to the lists in which the items shared either initial CV's, initial C's, or the same manner of articulation at syllable onsets. They concluded that infants may first develop sensitivity to intrasyllabic commonalities that occur at the beginnings of syllables. In another study, Hayes, Slater and Brown (2001) investigated 7.5 to 13 month old infants' abilities to categorize syllables according to their ending sounds, or rimes. They wanted to know whether these infants from English-speaking homes were able to categorize words on the basis of rimes. Using a Conditional Head turn (CHT), infants were presented with two sets of stimulus words. The first set of words were used in initial training of each infant and consisted of two words that were discriminable and the second set consisted of four categories of words. The CVCs in each category differed only in initial C sound. They found that infants as young as 7.5 were able to group syllables together according to whether the words shared common endings or not. They concluded that infants can segment syllables into their component parts of onsets and rimes, and they are able to categorize syllables according to this basis.

#### 4.1. Categorical Perception

One of the mechanisms unique to speech perception is thought to be categorical perception (Eimas, Siqueland, Jusczyk and Vigorito, 1971). In a study, a group of researchers created a continuum that included the entire range of changes in place of articulation from /b/ to /d/ to /g/. The subjects were asked to discriminate among the phonemes in this continuum. As a result, the researchers found sharp discriminating boundaries between categories but poor discrimination within categories (Liberman, Harris, Hoffman & Griffith, 1957). This phenomenon was called categorical perception in which listeners can only differentiate between sounds that they give different labels to but not between the sounds they assign the same label to. (Eimas, Siqueland, Jusczyk and Vigorito, 1971). Liberman and his colleagues (1967) demonstrated that when people listen to stop consonants that vary along a continuum, they hear only /ba/ and /pa/, nothing in between. The earliest research on infant speech perception was induced by findings that adults perceive some acoustic-phonetic properties of sounds categorically. This categorical perception of sounds allows listeners to ignore small variations in pronunciation as well as variations that are caused by the context of sounds (sounds that follow or precede them) (Liberman, Harris, Hoffman & Griffith, 1957). For example, in absolute initial position, both /p, t, k/ and /b, d, g/ are voiceless (phonation does not occur during the closure period and the release of stop). Therefore, listeners must rely on the presence or absence of aspiration to cue the voicing class of the stop (Rafael, 2005). The relationship between phonation and aspiration demonstrate the acoustic measure of Voice Onset Time (VOT) as a means of categorizing stop consonant cognates (Lisker & Abramson, 1970). Sounds like *b* (closure of lips with voicing) and *p* (closure of lips without voicing) differ in VOT. For *b*, it is zero second; for *p*, it is 0.06 seconds (Clark, 2009). Adults perceive VOT categorically even though it varies along a continuum (Liberman, Harris, Kinney & Lane, 1961). In English, stop consonants with relatively short VOTs (0-20msec) are conceived as voiced (e.g. [b, d, g]) and those with relatively long VOTs (>30 msec) are perceived as voiceless (e.g., [p, t, k]) (Houston, 2011). As Eimas (1985) asserts, the difference between *bah* and *pah* is signaled by the temporal information in the duration of the interval between the release burst and the onset of voicing as well as the spectral information in the onset frequency of *F1* and the fundamental frequency at the onset of voicing. Summerfield and Hagger (1977) have demonstrated that as *F1* onset frequency increases, VOT decreases

correspondingly and as F1 onset frequency decreases, there will be an increase in VOT if the phonetic identity of voiceless stops remains constant.

In a study to demonstrate whether young infants were able to understand sounds categorically, Eimas and his colleagues tested 1- and 4- month old infants' ability to discriminate voicing contrasts from a continuum that ranged from [ba] to [pa]. These two syllables differed in their voicing feature and their VOT. They used high amplitude sucking (HAS) procedure to test discrimination of these syllables. They chose two syllables on the /ba/ side of the continuum and two syllables on the /pa/ side of the continuum. They found that 1- and 4-month old infants discriminated the same VOTs as adults suggesting that even young infants perceive consonants categorically. They concluded that infants are innately endowed with special mechanisms built into their brain that allows them to discriminate between sounds (Eimas, Siqueland, Jusczyk & Vigorito, 1971). The ability to perceive phonetic distinction is necessary for discriminating one word from another (Jusczyk, Goodman and Baumann, 1999). Subsequent studies confirmed Eimas et al (1971) findings and showed that infants can discriminate between sounds that differed in their manner of articulation (Eimas & Miller, 1980a; 1980b) and place of articulation (Morse, 1972).

In another study, Eimas and Miller (1980) used a HAS procedure to demonstrate that 2- to 4- month olds were able to discriminate synthetic speech patterns that varied in duration of the formant transitions. This variation is an important acoustic cue to signal a phonetic distinction between a stop consonant /ba/ and a semivowel /wa/. As the duration of transition increases, the listeners are more likely to discriminate the sound as /wa/. Moreover, the discriminability of a given difference in transition duration was a function of both the particular stimulus values and the total duration of the syllable. They found that the young infants' phonetic boundaries shifted with contextual effects as they do in adults. They pointed out that infants accommodate changes in speaking rate in their perception of phonetic contrasts. This pattern of discontinuous discriminability confirmed that perception is relational and categorical.

These experiments on categorical perception show that infants are able to discriminate between phoneme categories (Dehaene-Lambertz & Dehaene, 1994). According to Dehaene-Lambertz and Pena (2001), this automatic perceptual normalization process which is simultaneous with the acoustic feature processing of speech stimuli is present from birth on.

Investigations on vowel discrimination show that adults perceive vowels continuously rather than categorically (Fry, Abramson, Eimas & Liberman, 1962). Eimas (1963) demonstrated that adults discriminate synthetic vowels forming a /i/-/ε/-/æ/ continuum equally well within and between phonetic categories. This phenomenon was called continuous perception. Continuous perception was found for some properties of vowels such as duration (Bastian & Abramson, 1964) as well as for non-speech stimuli that had certain features in common with categorically perceived speech stimuli (Liberman, Harris, Eimas, Lisker & Bastian, 1961).

## 5. Conclusion

Infants have an extraordinary ability for speech perception. They begin life discriminating both native and non-native phonetic contrasts. However, by 6-12 months of age, native language input reorganize their perceptual ability and they show a decline in discriminating many non-native contrasts while their sensitivity to non-native distinctions is enhanced. This changes in perceptual sensitivity in the first year of life is referred to as functional reorganization which describes patterns of organization in accordance with functional categories in the native language, but does not imply loss of perceptual ability (Werker & Curtin, 2005).

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# THE EFFECT OF REFLECTIVE TEACHING ON THE INTRINSIC MOTIVATION AND CRITICAL THINKING OF IRANIAN EFL LEARNERS ACROSS AGE GROUPS

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## Abstract

As Jay and Johnson (2002, p. 73) maintain "Reflection has become an integral part of teacher education" and "there is not a single teacher educator who would say that he or she is not concerned about preparing teachers who are reflective" (Tabachnick & Zeichner, 2002, p. 13). Similarly, critical thinking (Collins & Onwuegbuzie, 2000; Solon, 2003; Nikoopour et al., 2011) and motivation (Krashen, 2002; Ushida, 2005; Pourhosein & Gilakjani, 2012) have also been found as two important variables in general educational settings and language learning contexts in particular. To the same end, the present study sought to explore the effect of reflective teaching on critical thinking and intrinsic motivation of female Iranian intermediate learners. Moreover, the study aimed at examining the impact of reflective teaching on critical thinking and motivation across age groups. To do so, an experimental design was adopted. Initially, two teachers –a reflective and a non- reflective teacher were selected based on the results of reflective teaching questionnaire. Following that, the legitimate participants were chosen. The initial subjects of this study were ninety adult intermediate EFL learners in one of the language academies in Sirjan. Six classes out of 10 intermediate classes at this language academy were chosen randomly. Out of these 90 subjects 60 were selected based on the scores of PET. The motivation and critical thinking questionnaires were administered to both groups. The results obtained from the two groups were compared so as to make sure that both groups were homogenous regarding the level of motivation and critical thinking prior to the main study. Following that, the treatment was administered. The experimental group was taught by the reflective teacher. During this class, the teacher drew upon the principles of reflective teaching offered by Kumaravadivelu (2006) who asserts that reflective action consists of many elements involving an individual's willingness to be curious and assertive in order to increase self-awareness, self-knowledge, and develop a new understanding of the world. On the other hand, the control group was taught by the non-reflective teacher. No tangible reflective actions were adopted by the teacher in this group. Finally, both groups filled out the motivation and critical thinking questionnaires the results of which were used to examine the research questions. The results of MANOVA indicated that both critical thinking and motivation were significantly affected by reflective teaching. However, the critical thinking and motivation of the participants were not significantly impacted as a result of reflective teaching across age groups. The findings of the present study have implications for teacher educators and teachers as they provide a higher degree of awareness in terms of the effects of reflective teaching on learners' motivation and critical thinking level as two important elements in the learning process.

**Keywords:** Reflective teaching, Motivation, Critical thinking

## 1. Introduction

Reflective teaching has been included in the studies on teacher education in general and English language teaching in particular as an important means which teachers use to understand the complexity of the English

language as well as the social conditions affecting such learning and teaching. The literature on reflection has indicated three different forms/levels of 'reflection-on-action' (Schon, 1983). They are describing and reporting events and providing reasons or justifications for their occurrence and consequently seeking the best practice. According to Rezaeyan (2013, P.9):

One of the main assumptions of initial research on teacher thinking was the recognition that teaching shares many aspects of other professions. According to this view, teachers have a body of specialized knowledge acquired through training and experience, they are goal-oriented, they make judgments and decisions when faced with complex and ambiguous information, and they construct knowledge through repeated practice and reflection on that practice.

Moreover, Sze (1999, p. 147) argues that: "despite the popularity of reflective teaching, there are many questions which have been left unanswered. For teacher educators, the most immediate question is probably whether reflective teaching is an effective pedagogy of teacher education".

The emphasis of the new approaches to teaching on personality factors (Kramsch, 2001) like motivation and factors enhancing the critical thinking level of the learners as one of the main cognitive abilities has been asserted by educational experts (Fisher, 2001). Many teachers often experience the problem concerning students' tendency to copy the information without further elaboration; the problem possibly comes as the result of spoon-feeding methods employed in many traditional classrooms (Stapleton, 2001), consequently learners do not consider the proper effect of critical thinking in their learning. Also, language teachers spend most of their time teaching language but do not prepare students for lifelong learning. As Kabilan (2000) believes for learners to be proficient in a language, they need to be able to think critically and creatively.

Quite recently, the field of teaching in general and language teaching in particular have been subject to newly evolved theories of learning. As Akbari (2005), Kumaravadivelu (2001) and Pica (2000) assert, language teaching, learning and teacher education have recently witnessed a great amount of change. Crandall (2000) contends that, this change has been more of "a shift from transmission, product-oriented theories to constructivist, and process-oriented theories of learning, teaching, and teacher learning" (pp. 34-35). Highlighting this view, Brown (2000) asserts that, constructivists posit that reality is constructed in social contexts. As a consequence of this new paradigm the concept of learning and its process gained a new definition. In the same context, Cunningham (2000) notes that, "constructivism views learning as an active process where learners reflect upon their current and past knowledge and experiences to generate new ideas and concepts" (p. 2). Based on this newly emergent view of learning and considering the fact that teachers have experienced learning at various stages of their lives and are always involved in an ongoing learning process, Crandall (2000) maintains that in the light of constructivism teachers are considered the main source of knowledge about teaching. According to Tabachnick and Zeichner (2002), reflective teaching is consistent with constructivist learning theories in that, it emphasizes the concept of reflection as a source of knowledge for teachers. Language learners as the main stakeholders of the profession are also functioning in a social context in which a host of variables are interacting which may affect their learning positively or negatively. To this end, two of the most important factors in this regard are critical thinking and motivation. In the following sections the literature relevant to reflective teaching, critical thinking and motivation will be reviewed.

## 2. Reflective Teaching

In recent years, educators have devoted a great deal of their attention to the notion of reflection and the expansion of reflective practice. Reflective teaching was first raised by Dewey (1933) who believed that, "teachers are not just passive curriculum implementers, but they can also play an active role in curriculum design and educational reform" (p. 49). He suggested that teaching needs to be a process comprising the following components: Hypothesizing, investigation, reasoning, testing and evaluation. Reflective action, is in effect "the dynamic, continuous and in-depth consideration of any belief or any form of expertise and knowledge by drawing on the grounds that reinforce it (Dewey, 1933, p. 9, cited in Jay and Johnson, 2002, p. 74).

These components will lead to adaptations and modification, if needed, leading to a teaching method which will take account of the class dynamics. This is what today has come to be named "reflective teaching". Along the same lines, Dewey (1933) elaborates on seven main qualities of the reflective practice:

Reflective teaching implies an active concern with aims and consequences, as well as means and technical efficiency; reflective teaching is applied in a cyclical or spiraling process, in which teachers monitor, evaluate and revise their own practice continuously;

reflective teaching requires competence in methods of evidence-based classroom enquiry, to support the progressive development of higher standards of teaching; reflective teaching requires attitudes of open-mindedness, responsibility and wholeheartedness; reflective teaching is based on teacher judgment, informed by evidence-based enquiry and insights from other research; reflective teaching, professional learning and personal fulfillment are enhanced through collaboration and dialogue with colleagues; reflective teaching enables teachers to creatively mediate externally developed frameworks for teaching and learning" (cited in Pollard et al., 2006, pp. 14 & 15).

Bartlett (1990) also defined reflective teaching as follows: reflection points to a practice in which the individual recalls, considers, and evaluates an experience often in relation to a broader purpose. As a matter of fact, reflection is a reaction to the past experiences and is concerned with conscious recall and examination of the experience as a basis for evaluation and decision – making, and as a source for planning and action.

Ma et al. (2011) assert that reflective teaching is seen as a process that can facilitate teaching, learning and understanding, and that plays a central role in teacher professional development. The significance of reflective teaching is well expounded by many scholars. Reflective teaching has the effects of making teachers more initiative and responsible in pursuing the practical rationality through exploring teaching and learning activities, taking more informed actions and establishing a deeper understanding of teaching, which ultimately contributes to their professional knowledge and competence.

Wallace (1996) argues that teachers occasionally get engaged in "informally evaluating different angles of their professional knowledge" (p. 292). He calls this type of thinking about one's teaching as "informal reflection" (p. 13). The significance of continuous and professional development of language teachers has been emphasized by many authors in second language teaching. Some researchers have recommended engagement in organized activities as a tool for increasing reflective practice. For example, Parrott (1993) argues that to make room for reflection, it's better to make use of tasks which teachers can work on collaboratively.

Parrott seemingly draws on the reflective model of Wallace (1991), yet Wallace puts more emphasis on the training of pre-service teachers, while Parrott is more concerned with the professional growth of serving teachers, he argues that developing professional competence involves teachers identifying their own assumptions about the nature of language and of learning and teaching. Similarly, Wajnryb (1992) attaches much importance to the use of observation tasks as a tool for improving professional development. Wajnryb draws on the notion of "the reflective practitioner" applied by Schon (1983) to teaching, and defines the reflective teacher as an individual who finds more facts about their own teaching by trying to figure out the processes of teaching and learning in their own and others' classrooms.

According to Choy, (2012, p.169) teacher reflection can be thought of as taking necessary steps to analyze and articulate problems before taking action. This allows for more constructive action to be taken rather than implementing a quick fix (Boody, 2008). The challenge is to be able to demonstrate in action what is taught in the classroom. Many teachers fail to connect between their teaching and what they are actually practicing and vice versa (Rudd, 2000). The above-mentioned remarks imply that teachers need to take actions while facing problems in the classroom. This requires them to be equipped with skills such as spotting the problem, analyzing and fixing it on the spot. Along the same lines, Boud, Keogh and Walker (1985, p.19) look at reflection as an intellectual and affective abilities through which teachers reflect on their experiences, aiming to gain new understandings. According to them teachers usually explore their teaching and students' learning, how useful their teaching decisions are, approaches to teaching, improving practice and cognitive awareness of their reflective processes.

To Barlett (1990), reflective teaching results in empowerment of teacher as language teachers gain a critical awareness of their role in the wider society. In contrast, Roberts (1998) has discussed the vagueness of the concept of reflective teaching in second language teaching, stating:

The term reflection is vague. As a result there may be great variation in the nature of 'reflective activities' in language teacher education programs because providers conceptualize it differently. Reflection may be seen as conscious self-assessment according to the formal criteria of one's initial teacher education course at one end of the scale, to the exploration of tacit personal metaphors of teaching at the other (p.53).

The literature on reflection has identified two types of reflection: reflection in action and reflection on action. The former as its name indicates, happens during teaching. This requires interaction with the learners. The



latter occurs after teaching by looking back at what has been taught. Referring to the mentioned distinction, Javadi and Khatib (2014, p. 86) state:

**Reflection-in-action** - This type of reflection guides teachers' in-the-moment of decision-making, and depends on their interactions with learners and happens when teachers take for granted their knowledge of teaching as many of their actions have become routine while teaching (Farrell, 2004).

**Reflection-on-action** - It's a kind of reflection that includes planning and looking back on one's practice. Contemplation on what was done to find out how knowing at the time of teaching may have contributed to an unexpected action, thus it's a metacognitive process that includes deliberate thinking (Farrell, 2004).

### 3. Critical Thinking

Thinking critically involves taking an in-depth reflective approach to the problems and issues one may run into. Broadly speaking, critical thinking focuses on humans and the judgments they make drawing initially on reason. According to Thadphoothon (2000), "Critical thinkers usually do not take things for granted. They base their decisions on objective criteria and recognize their own bias and prejudice. They often rely on scientific inquiry, another form of critical thinking" (p. 5).

Critical thinking is a higher-order cognitive process that is demonstrated by a range of behaviors from evaluating arguments, expressing judgments to inferences, theory or proposing solutions to a problem and analyzing possible consequences (McKenzie & Murphy, 2000). Astleitner (2002) and Frampton (1994) further refine the definition to include conceptual, methodical and contextual considerations upon which the judgment is based. Therefore, it is a skill that is demonstrated by deep processing characterized by organized thought, justified argumentation and the ability to relate new knowledge with previously learned knowledge.

Many researchers (Moore, 1995, Tsui, 1998, Giancarlo & Facione, 2001) have described critical thinking as one of concepts which has been demonstrated to serve as a good predictor of academic achievement. Therefore, it is of great benefit for teachers in general and language teachers in particular to be aware of the extent to which their students enjoy critical thinking. Critical thinking is also believed to play an important role in the acquisition of language skills in particular, reading and writing (Shaharom Abdullah, 2004; Seung-Ryul Shin, 2002; Stapleton, 2001; Moore, 1995). Despite the consensus on the importance of critical thinking and the positive contributions it can make to the learning, there is no consensus on the definitions so far have been given of this construct.

Educators have attached great importance to the role of critical thinking in the learning environment. This is because the learners can be more autonomous by developing a reflective thinking toward the issues. Scholars such as Appleby (2006) and Halpern (2002) believe that there needs to be more studies on the effect the instruction of critical thinking may have in the language classes. Though, there are fewer consensuses over the definition of critical thinking.

Despite most of the experts' belief in the combination of skills and disposition in critical thinking, the most common measures and models of critical thinking are skill-based (Frijters, Dam, & Rijlaarsdam, 2007). For example, Watson and Claser (2002), who designed the most popular instrument to measure critical thinking, associated it with the following abilities: discriminating among degrees of truth or falsity of inferences; recognizing unstated assumptions in a series of statements; interpreting whether conclusions are warranted or not; determining if conclusions follow from information in given statements, and evaluating arguments as being strong and relevant or weak and irrelevant. More information about this measure will be presented in the instrumentation section.

All the supporters of critical thinking skills have argued that one of the top priorities of educational experts should be the development of critical thinking skills among learners. The importance of providing conditions for the enhancement of learners' higher order thinking skills is reflected in Dewey's (1933) writings, who believes that nurturing reflective thinking must be at the core of education (Giancarlo & Facione, 2001). Brookfield (1987) pointed out that educational systems should make attempts to "awaken, prompt, nurture and encourage the process of thinking critically and reflectively" (as cited in Rahimi et al., 2015, p. 506).

Similarly, Meyers (1986) argued that teachers can foster critical thinking through the activities they assign, the tasks they set, and the feedback they provide. Scholars in the field of higher education believe that critical thinking is a standard of intellectual excellence required for full and constructive participation in academic, individual, and social lives of students (Scriven & Paul, 1992).

The significant contribution of critical thinking to students' mental and social development has recently been reflected in the ELT context. More specifically, researchers and practitioners in this domain have mainly focused on the way critical thinking skills can be taught and reinforced through different techniques implemented in the classroom. Dantas-Whitney (2002), for example, indicated that the use of reflective audiotaped journals enhanced ESL university students' critical thinking.

Yeh (2004) studied the effect of a various instruction methods on improving student teachers' reflective thinking. The findings revealed that communicative method is an effective instrument for teaching general critical thinking skills. In addition, Liaw's (2007) study demonstrated that the implementation of content-based approach promotes EFL learner's critical thinking skills.

The ELT context, however, has documented comparatively few studies focusing on the correlates of critical thinking. Abdi (2012) investigated the relationship between thinking styles and critical thinking skills among university students. The results indicated a significant relationship between them. Also, the results of regression analysis showed that critical thinking skills were significantly predicted by particular thinking styles. That is, students with the judicial thinking style tend to be engaged in evaluative and analytical types of tasks.

In another study, Yaghoubi (2013) investigated the relationship between the psychological constructs of goal orientation (i.e. learning goal orientation, proving dimension of performance goal orientation, and avoiding dimension of performance goal orientation) and critical thinking. The results indicated a positive correlation between learning goal orientation and critical thinking and a negative relationship between performance goal orientation and critical thinking.

#### 4. Motivation

Given various positive reasons for learning a second language, learners tend to perceive things in a different way. L2 teachers always seek to find ways to make their students interested in learning target language. To this end, they resort to many tricks and techniques (e.g. reward) to motivate the learners. According to Pourhosein and Gilakjani (2012, p.9):

Motivated learners are every teacher's dream — they are willing to work hard, add their own goals to those of the classroom, focus their attention on the tasks at hand, persevere through challenges, do not need continuous encouragement, and may even stimulate others in the classroom, promoting collaborative learning.

According to Ryan & Deci (1985, p.54) "To be motivated means *to be moved* to do something. A person who feels no impetus or inspiration to act is thus characterized as unmotivated, whereas someone who is energized or activated toward an end is considered motivated". However, motivation is not considered as a monolithic concept. That is, there are different types of motivation influenced by various internal and external factors. In the words of Ryan & Deci (2000, p. 54):

Even brief reflection suggests that motivation is hardly a unitary phenomenon. People have not only different amounts, but also different kinds of motivation. That is, they vary not only in level of motivation (i.e., how much motivation), but also in the orientation of that motivation (i.e., what type of motivation).

Along the same lines, there have been many motivation theories till now in the language learning field. The most influential motivation theory was considered to be established by Robert Gardner (Dörnyei, 2001a). Gardner (1983) states that motivation to learn a foreign language is a mixture of elements including effort, desire and a positive attitude toward the language at hand.

A review of research shows that the term "motivation" has been defined in different ways. According to Gardner (1983), to be motivated, the learner needs to have something to look forward to, a purpose related to a goal or objective. Gardner (1983) gave the following definition of motivation: "the combination of effort plus desire to achieve the goal of learning the language plus favorable attitudes toward learning the language" (p.10). He

argues that motivation involves answering the question "Why does an organism behave as it does?" "According to Brown (2000), "motivation is commonly thought of as an inner drive, impulse, emotion, or desire that moves one to a particular action" (p.152).

In the context of L2 learning, this goal involves acquiring a foreign language. Learners need to be focused on and guided by a purpose i.e. learning second language. The learner's motivation for L2 may vary from achieving a sense of success, accomplish other's expectations or managing to be employed thanks to their command of the target language.

Dörnyei (2001) claims that motivation provides human with energy and direction. Crookes and Schmidt (1991) characterize L2 motivation as the learner's inclination toward the goal of learning a second language. MacIntyre et al. (2001) define motivation as —a characteristic of the human accounting for the psychological traits underlying behavior in connection with a particular task. In an inclusive volume on motivation in educational contexts, Pintrich and Schunk (1996), focus on a fundamental shift that has taken place in the area of motivation during the last two decades, i.e. the increasing desire of motivational psychologists to include cognitive concepts and variables in their theories. The forgoing section was a discussion on the general aspect of motivation. In what follows a bi-dimensional account of motivation is elaborated on.

#### 4.1. Intrinsic/extrinsic motivation.

Dörnyei (1998) proposed the dual concept of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation involves a type of motivation that drives the learner to participate in a task or an activity because he/she enjoys taking part in that. The intrinsically motivated learners engage in learning process as they seek to achieve a kind of goal which is both inspiring and satisfying to them. In contrast, an extrinsically motivated individual conducts an activity or task to reach some instrumental end, such as getting higher score or receiving rewards. The extrinsically motivated individuals are encouraged by external motives to accomplish a goal. Avoiding the punishment can serve as an extrinsic motivation as well. According to Dörnyei (2005, p. 121):

Extrinsic motivation has traditionally been seen as something that can undermine intrinsic motivation; several studies have confirmed that students will lose their natural intrinsic interest in an activity if they have to do it to meet some extrinsic requirement (as is often the case with compulsory reading at school).

Many theories of motivation have been inspired by this internal-external distinction. According to Brown (2000) one can identify 5 distinct dimensions that make up motivation, with each of them falling within an intrinsic and extrinsic pole. These dimensions have been drawn on to account for the varying degrees of motivation among the different learners. According to Pourhosein Gilakjani, (2012, p.9):

It is hard to consider motivation as something that is either simply internal or external to the learner. For example, learners who study hard to learn L2 may be intrinsically or extrinsically motivated or many have a mixture of both intrinsic and extrinsic reasons prompting them.

Noels (2001) divides intrinsic motivation into different groups: it can be intrinsic motivation inspired by the pleasure concerning gaining new knowledge; intrinsic motivation inspired by the pleasure concerning achieving new goals; intrinsic motivation inspired by the pleasure concerning doing the task. The extrinsic motivation has also been divided along a continuum of 3 groups, depending on the extent to which the goals are self-determined.

#### 4.2. Motivation and L2 learning.

Most language teachers believe that motivation is a key factor for success in language learning. There is no doubt that motivation is a potent force in language acquisition (Ellis 1994). All effective language learning environments have an unquestionable dependence to the existence of intrinsic motivation in language learners. Learning another language seems to be a multi-dimensional ability, which goes beyond linguistic and cognitive capacity of the learner. As Kramsch (2001) argues, learning another language is not like learning math or other

subjects. It is likely to involve not only the linguistic and cognitive capacities of the learner, but the social, historical, emotional, cultural, moral sense of self as a subject. Many factors have the potential to change the motivation level of the learners.

Dörnyei (1998a) conceptualized a general framework of L2 motivation. This framework includes three levels: the Language Level, the Learner Level, and the Learning Situation Level. Dörnyei (1998) states that the Language Level is the most general level of the construct. The Language Level focuses on orientations and motives associated with different aspects of the L2, such as the culture it conveys, the community in which it is spoken, and the potential usefulness of proficiency in it. These general motives result in basic learning goals. The Learner Level is the second level of this construct. It includes a complex of effects and cognitions which form personal traits. There are two motivational components at this level; need for achievement and self-confidence. The third level is the Learning Situation Level, which is composed of intrinsic and extrinsic motives and motivational conditions related to three areas. Within this level, there are three main types of motivational sources.

In Self-Determination Theory (SDT) Deci and Ryan (1985) distinguish between different types of motivation based on the different reasons or goals that give rise to an action. The most basic distinction is between *intrinsic motivation*, which refers to doing something because it is inherently interesting or enjoyable, and *extrinsic motivation*, which refers to doing something because it leads to a separable outcome. Over three decades of research have shown that the quality of experience and performance can be very different when one is behaving for intrinsic versus extrinsic reasons.

There have been plenty of studies that prove the changeability of motivation. For instance, studies revealed that when the learners are interacting meaningfully, their intrinsic motivation is positively influenced and consequently their problem solving ability is enhanced (Ragan, 1998). Moreover Deci et al. (1999), discovered that intrinsic motivation in learners is decreased when they are given tangible feedbacks. The research on motivation has caught the attention of psychologists and educational experts for many years. (Dörnyei, 2001).

In the same vein, the contribution of motive for second language learning has been extensively investigated by social psychologists in many countries. Gardner (1985) suggested that second language learners who have positive attitudes to the culture of the people speaking target language will tend to acquire the target language more effectively compared to those learners who lack such positive attitudes. A study already conducted by Gardner and Lambert (1959) conclude that aptitude and motivation serve as two important factors that most strongly contribute to learners' second language achievement.

In the context of education, this focus on motivation may signal the widespread attitude of teachers who generally consider learners' motivation as the most significant contributor to educational and academic success (Dörnyei, 2001). Reviewing the literature on motivation within the context of second language learning, one can identify two main streams. One approach is concerned with a group of studies that draw on Gardner's socio-educational model. Gardner and Macintyre (1992) drew together the conclusions of many studies over several decades and put forward Gardner's "socio-educational model of SLA" in which Gardner focused on the contribution of integrative motivation—consisting of individual's integrativeness and his/her perception or attitude to the learning situation. In this context, motivation—was experimentally probed as a factor determining the extent of second language achievement.

Gardner & MacIntyre (1992) claim that this model of SLA account for the differences in the learners' variables such as cognitive and affective variables, arguing that these variables are affected by antecedent factors such as biological factors including age as well as experiential factors like previous experience concerning language training. Pointing to the same model, Ushida (2005, p. 51) maintains:

This model shows the importance of what takes place in the learning contexts: "Teachers, instructional aids, curricula, and the like clearly have an effect on what is learned and how

students react to the experience." The model also predicts that students' degree of success (i.e., linguistic outcomes) affects their feelings (i.e., nonlinguistic outcomes) and that both types of outcomes will have an influence on individual-difference variables including language attitudes and motivation.

The other approach to motivation insists that researchers should embark on the execution of a new "agenda" (Crookes & Schmidt, 1991) for conducting research on second language motivation. Along the same lines, they propose some alternative models for the purpose of gaining a more in-depth grasping of motivation for second language learning within mainstream education.

According to Ushida (2005, p.50):

While the former studies investigate causal relationships among possible individual-difference variables with various L2 achievement measures, there have been recent attempts to identify other possible variables that could influence learners' motivations within the immediate L2 learning context.

## 5. Research Questions and Hypotheses

In an attempt to investigate the impact of reflective teaching on the intrinsic motivation and critical thinking of Iranian EFL learners across age groups, the following research questions were formed:

**Q1:** What is the effect of reflective teaching on the Iranian Intermediate learners' intrinsic motivation?

**Q2:** What is the effect of reflective teaching on the Iranian Intermediate learners' critical thinking?

**Q3:** To what extent does the effect of reflective teaching on intrinsic motivation and critical thinking vary across different age groups?

The following hypotheses were posed in line with the aforesaid research questions:

**H01:** Reflective teaching does not significantly affect the Iranian Intermediate learners' intrinsic motivation.

**H02:** Reflective teaching does not significantly affect the Iranian Intermediate learners' critical thinking.

**H03:** The effect of reflective teaching on intrinsic motivation and critical thinking does not vary significantly across different age groups.

## 6. Method

### 6.1. Participants

Initially, the number of participants were 90 female students studying at Intermediate level at a language school in Sirjan. These subjects were studying in 6 classes which were chosen randomly from among 12 such classes. The range of their age was between 16 and 30. All of the participants were studying English at intermediate proficiency level. They were mainly high school and university students studying English for the purposes of finding better jobs or pursuing their studies abroad.

### 6.2. Instruments

The materials and data collection instruments utilized in this study included the following:

#### 6.2.1. Preliminary English Test (PET)

A proficiency PET was administered to make sure that learners are homogenous in terms of their overall language proficiency. Preliminary English Test (PET), the Cambridge Preliminary English Test, or PET for short, is a qualification in English as a Foreign Language awarded by Cambridge ESOL. The test has these sections:

A-Reading Writing are taken together - 90 minutes

B-Listening - 30 minutes

Speaking - an interview, 10 minutes

The test was administrated to the initial 90 participants. Next, those learners whose scores fell between the range of one standard deviation above and below the mean were chosen for the purposes of the study. That is, only the participants whose score fell under the normal curve were selected. Finally 60 participants were chosen using this method.

### 6.2.2. Reflective Teaching Questionnaire

The instrument used for measuring reflective teaching in this study was a reflective teaching questionnaire devised by Akbari, Behzadpour and Dadvand (2010). The questionnaire includes 42 items on a five-point Likert scale, consisting of five options of never, rarely, sometimes, often, and always, which has been devised based on six elements which are Practical, Cognitive, learner, Metacognitive, Critical, and Moral aspects of teaching. This questionnaire was chosen for the purposes of this study because it was developed for measuring teachers' reflection in the context of Iran and enjoys a high reliability of 0.90 as a measuring instrument for teacher reflectivity (Akbari et al., 2010).

### 6.2.3. Intrinsic Motivation Questionnaire

The motivation questionnaire used in this study is based on the self-determination theory, comprising of three sections related to intrinsic motivation. It has three sub parts which measure: (a) Intrinsic Motivation Knowledge, (b) Intrinsic Motivation Accomplishment and (c) Intrinsic Motivation Stimulation.

### 6.2.4. Critical thinking Questionnaire

In order to measure the students' critical thinking ability, a critical thinking questionnaire developed by Peter Honey (2004) was used. This questionnaire contains 30 closed questions to evaluate critical thinking skills. According to Naeini (2005), the Persian version of the questionnaire was studied by some professors at Tehran Azad University and they modified it. The reliability of questionnaire was calculated to be 0.86 and considered acceptable.

## 6.3. Data Collection Procedures

Initially, two teachers –a reflective teacher and a non- reflective teacher were selected based on the results of reflective teaching questionnaire. The subjects of this study were initially ninety adult intermediate EFL learners in one of the language academies of Sirjan. They were studying in 6 classes chosen out of 10 such classes. Out of these 90 subjects 60 were selected based on the scores of PET administered to the subjects. To this end, only those participants whose scores fell under the normal curve that is one standard deviation above and below the mean were selected for the purposes of the current study. The motivation questionnaire and critical thinking questionnaire were administered to both groups. The results obtained from two groups were compared so as to make sure that the two groups were homogenous for the level of motivation and critical thinking. The next stage unfolded as follows:

The experimental group was taught by the reflective teacher. During this class, the teacher drew upon the principles of reflective teaching offered by Kumaravadivelu (2006) who asserts that reflective action consists of many elements involving an individual's willingness to be curious and assertive in order to increase self-awareness, self-knowledge, and new understandings of the world in which we live and work. The teacher analyzed the possible problems on the spot and addressed the issue accordingly. This required the researcher to explain the new approach to teaching beforehand so as to make the teacher ready for it. The teacher drew on both reflection in teaching and reflection on teaching. She took her time constantly to reflect on all lessons that she was required to teach. She wrote down her thoughts after each lesson to monitor her own development and the effectiveness of her teaching. For example, she reflected on the organization and presentation, as well as interaction among the learners while paying attention to the reactions, successes, and any obvious confusions that the students exhibited.

The control group was taught by the unreflective teacher. No tangible reflective actions were adopted by the teacher in this group. Finally, both groups sat for motivation and critical thinking questionnaires. Finally, to address the effect of age, the experimental group was divided into three age bands: 16-20, 20-24, and 24-30. Then, the scores obtained by these three subgroups were compared to find out if there was any significant difference between their motivation and critical thinking.

## 7. Results

Right at the outset of the study, it deemed necessary to homogenize the participants in terms of overall language proficiency and critical thinking as well as intrinsic motivation level.

### 7.1. Homogenizing the participants in terms of overall language proficiency

As mentioned earlier to homogenize the participants of the study with respect to overall language proficiency PET was given to the 90 initial subjects selected randomly from a larger pool. Table 1 and figure 1 display descriptive statistics and the histogram of the participants' PET scores, respectively.

Table 1

*Descriptive Statistics of the Original 90 Intermediate Participants' PET Scores*

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
PET Scores	90	28.00	50.00	38.82	5.429
Valid N (list wise)	90				

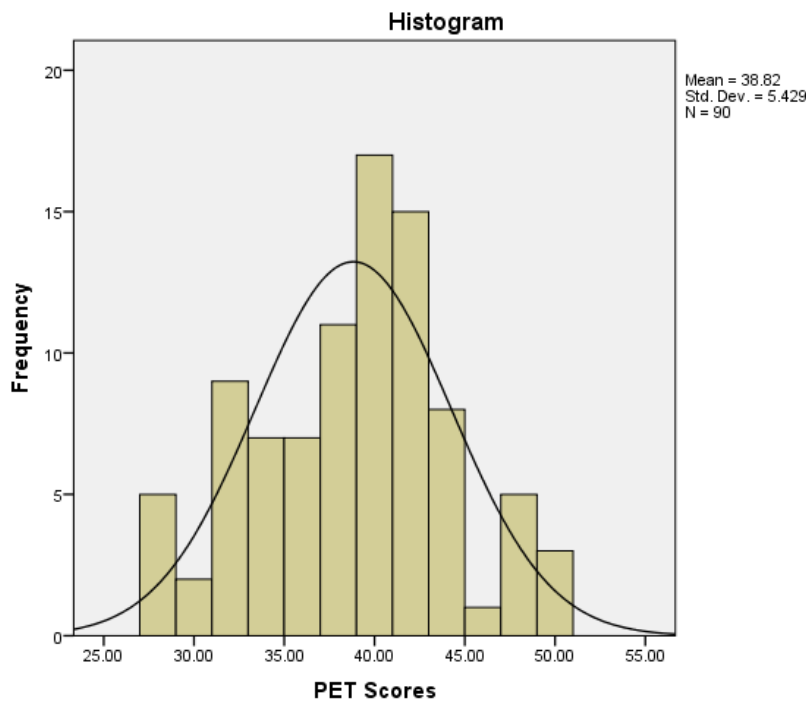


Figure 1: Histogram of the Original 90 Intermediate Participants' PET Scores

As it can be noticed the mean score is 38.82 and the standard deviation is 5.429. Drawing on this data, the researcher excluded the participants whose scores fell beyond one standard deviation above and below the mean leading to the selection of 60 homogeneous participants for the purposes of this study. Following that, the participants were randomly divided to an experimental and a control group. Next, the critical thinking and intrinsic motivation questionnaires were administered to the participants. Then to assure homogeneity of the two groups in terms of critical thinking the following procedures were taken.

### 7.2. Homogenizing the two groups in terms of critical thinking level

To compare the pre-treatment scores of two groups concerning critical thinking for the purpose of assuring homogeneity, an independent samples T-Test was run. Tables 2 and 3 display the descriptive statistics and independent samples T-test results of this analysis, respectively.

**Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Pre-treatment Scores of Control and Experimental Groups regarding Critical Thinking**

Group Statistics					
	Critical Pre-test Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Critical Pre-test	Control	30	101.5667	12.20990	2.22921
	Experimental	30	100.2667	16.81529	3.07004

**Table 3. Independent Samples T-test Results for comparing Pre-treatment Scores of the Control and experimental groups regarding Critical Thinking**

Independent Samples Test				
		Critical Pre-test		
		Equal variances assumed		Equal variances not assumed
Levene's Test for Equality of Variances	F	1.582		
	Sig.	.213		
t-test for Equality of Means	t	.343		.343
	df	58		52.929
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.733		.733
	Mean Difference	1.30000		1.30000
	Std. Error Difference	3.79401		3.79401
	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	Lower	-6.29454	-6.31006
		Upper	8.89454	8.91006

As Table 3 shows the significance level is 0.733 which is higher than the confidence level of 0.05 indicating that the two groups are not significantly different concerning critical thinking prior to the main study.

### 7.3. Homogenizing the Two Groups in terms of Motivation level

To assure homogeneity of the two groups in terms of motivation, an independent samples T-Test was administered between the experimental and control group pre-test scores on the motivation questionnaire. Tables 4 and 5 illustrate the descriptive statistics and independent samples T-test results of this analysis, respectively.

**Table 4: Descriptive Statistics of Pre-treatment Scores of the Control and Experimental Groups regarding Motivation**

Group Statistics					
	Critical Pre-test Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Motivation Pre-test	Control	30	98.4667	16.08112	2.93600
	Experimental	30	100.7333	21.69687	3.96129

**Table 5. Independent Samples T-test Results for comparing Pre-treatment Scores of the Control and experimental groups regarding Motivation**

Independent Samples Test	
	Motivation Pre-test



		Equal variances assumed	Equal variances not assumed
Levene's Test for Equality of Variances	F	3.304	
	Sig.	.074	
t-test for Equality of Means	T	-.460	-.460
	Df	58	53.476
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.647	.648
	Mean Difference	-2.26667	-2.26667
	Std. Error Difference	4.93071	4.93071
	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	Lower	-12.13655
		Upper	7.60322

As Table 5 demonstrates the significance level is 0.648 which is higher than the confidence level of 0.05 indicating that the two groups are not significantly different with respect to motivation before the treatment. After assuring the homogeneity of the two groups in terms of critical thinking and motivation the treatment i.e. reflective teaching was administered. Upon finishing the treatment, the researcher gave the participants the questionnaire at the end of the study again the results of which will be used to examine the research questions.

#### 7.4. Investigating the First and Second Research Questions

To explore the first and the second research questions of the current study since there were two dependent variables a MANOVA was run. The assumption of MANOVA is the normality of the data sets. To this end, in order to check the normality assumption a One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test was used. Table 6 shows the results of this test.

Table 6. *One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test for checking the Normality of post-test Scores of Critical Thinking and Motivation*

One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test			
		Post Critical Thinking	Post Intrinsic Motivation
N		60	60
Normal Parameters <sup>a,b</sup>	Mean	120.1333	119.4333
	Std. Deviation	18.99016	22.86168
Most Extreme Differences	Absolute	.127	.121
	Positive	.102	.098
	Negative	-.127	-.121
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z		.981	.940
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)		.291	.340
a. Test distribution is Normal.			
b. Calculated from data.			

As Table 6 depicts the significance levels for the data sets are both higher than 0.05 leading to the conclusion that the post-test critical thinking and motivation scores are normally distributed. Having established the normality assumption, a one way MANOVA was run on the results of the post-tests of critical thinking and motivation scores. Table 7 displays the results of the multivariate tests associated with this test.

Table 7. *Results of Multivariate Tests for Critical Thinking and Motivation Scores of both Groups on the Post-test*

Multivariate Tests <sup>a</sup>					
Effect	Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.

Intercept	Pillai's Trace	.996	6861.800 <sup>b</sup>	2.000	57.000	.001
	Wilks' Lambda	.004	6861.800 <sup>b</sup>	2.000	57.000	.009
	Hotelling's Trace	240.765	6861.800 <sup>b</sup>	2.000	57.000	.002
	Roy's Largest Root	240.765	6861.800 <sup>b</sup>	2.000	57.000	.03
Group	Pillai's Trace	.818	128.434 <sup>b</sup>	2.000	57.000	.008
	Wilks' Lambda	.182	128.434 <sup>b</sup>	2.000	57.000	.014
	Hotelling's Trace	4.506	128.434 <sup>b</sup>	2.000	57.000	.004
	Roy's Largest Root	4.506	128.434 <sup>b</sup>	2.000	57.000	.000
a. Design: Intercept + Group						
b. Exact statistic						

As Table 7 illustrates that a significant effect of the independent variable on the dependent variables was found (Lambda (2, 57) = 0.182,  $p = 0.014 < 0.05$ ). Table 8 shows the results of follow-up univariate MANOVA on the post test scores of critical thinking and motivation.

Table 8. Results of the follow-up Univariate ANOVA on the Post-test Scores of Critical Thinking and Motivation.

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects						
Source	Dependent Variable	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	Post Critical Thinking	14477.067 <sup>a</sup>	1	14477.067	123.483	.000
	Post Intrinsic Motivation	18868.267 <sup>b</sup>	1	18868.267	91.437	.000
Intercept	Post Critical Thinking	865921.067	1	865921.067	7385.942	.000
	Post Intrinsic Motivation	855859.267	1	855859.267	4147.552	.000
Group	Post Critical Thinking	14477.067	1	14477.067	123.483	.003
	Post Intrinsic Motivation	18868.267	1	18868.267	91.437	.012
Error	Post Critical Thinking	6799.867	58	117.239		
	Post Intrinsic Motivation	11968.467	58	206.353		
Total	Post Critical Thinking	887198.000	60			
	Post Intrinsic Motivation	886696.000	60			
Corrected Total	Post Critical Thinking	21276.933	59			
	Post Intrinsic Motivation	30836.733	59			
a. R Squared = .680 (Adjusted R Squared = .675)						
b. R Squared = .612 (Adjusted R Squared = .605)						

The results of Table 8 indicate that critical thinking significantly improved as a result of reflective teaching ( $F(1, 58) = 123.48$ ,  $p = 0.003$ ). Likewise, motivation was also significantly improved due to the treatment ( $F(1, 58) = 91.47$ ,  $p = 0.012$ ). Based on the statistical analysis of MANOVA, it can be concluded that reflective teaching significantly impacts the critical thinking and motivation of the EFL learners. Therefore, the first and second null hypotheses formed for the purpose of the current study are rejected.

### 7.5. Investigating the third research question

To examine whether reflective teaching significantly impacts intrinsic motivation and critical thinking across different age groups the learners in the experimental group were divided into three age groups including 16-20, 20-24, and 24-30. To this end, first the critical thinking and motivation pre-test scores of these three groups were compared to make sure that there were not any significant differences in terms of critical thinking and motivation of the participants prior to the main study. To do so, one way ANOVA was once used on the critical

thinking pre-test scores of the three groups and another time on the pre-test scores of motivation. It should be mentioned that the Levan's test for the homogeneity of variances was run prior to administering ANOVA since this test is the assumption of one way ANOVA. Table 9 shows the results of Levene's test for the pre-test scores of critical thinking.

Table 9. *Results of Levene's test for the Pre-test Scores of Critical Thinking*

<b>Test of Homogeneity of Variances</b>			
Pre-test Age Groups Critical Thinking			
Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
2.255	2	27	.124

As Table 9 displays the significance level is 0.124 which is higher than the confidence level of 0.05 indicating that the homogeneity of variances is established among the three sets of scores for the three respective age groups on the pre-test of critical thinking. Table 10 illustrates the results of one way ANOVA on the critical thinking scores of the three age groups on the pre-test.

Table 10. *Results of one way ANOVA on the Critical Thinking Pre-test Scores of the Three Age groups*

<b>ANOVA</b>					
Pre-test Age Groups Critical Thinking					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	724.067	2	362.033	1.308	.287
Within Groups	7475.800	27	276.881		
Total	8199.867	29			

As it can be seen in Table 10 the level of significance is 0.287 leading to the conclusion that there are no significant differences among the means of the three age groups on the pre-test of critical thinking. It was also necessary to assure that there were no significant differences between the means of the three age groups in terms of motivation. To do so, one way ANOVA was run on the pre-test motivation scores of the participants as well. It should be mentioned that the assumption of homogeneity of variances was met prior to running ANOVA. Table 11 shows the respective results.

Table 11. *Results of Levene's test for the Pre-test Scores of Motivation*

<b>Test of Homogeneity of Variances</b>			
Pre-Test Age Groups Intrinsic Motivation			
Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
2.365	2	27	.113

Table 11 indicates that the significance level is 0.113 which is higher than the confidence level of 0.05 showing that the homogeneity of variances is established among the three sets of scores for the three respective age groups on the pre-test of motivation. Table 12 illustrates the results of one way ANOVA on the motivation scores of the three age groups on the pre-test.

Table 12. *Results of one way ANOVA on the Motivation Pre-test Scores of the Three Age groups*

<b>ANOVA</b>					
Pre-Test Age Intrinsic Motivation					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	253.067	2	126.533	.255	.777
Within Groups	13398.800	27	496.252		

Total	13651.867	29			
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As Table 12 demonstrates the level of significance is 0.777 indicating that there are no significant differences among the means of the three age groups on the pre-test of motivation.

In order to test the third null hypothesis of the study since there were two dependent variables a MANOVA was run on the critical thinking and motivation post-test scores of the three age groups. However, it was necessary to meet the normality assumption of the scores. To this end, One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test was employed. Table 13 illustrates the results of this test.

Table 13. *One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test for checking the Normality of post-test Scores of Critical Thinking and Motivation of the Three Age Groups*

One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test					
	N	Normal Parameters <sup>a,b</sup>		Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation		
Age Group one Critical Post Test	10	137.5000	7.54615	.727	.667
Age Group Two Critical Post Test	10	134.0000	11.99074	.827	.500
Age Group Three Critical Post Test	10	135.5000	6.31137	.929	.353
Age Group one Motivation Post Test	10	128.2000	11.41928	.544	.929
Age Group Two Motivation Post Test	10	140.2000	6.42564	.525	.946
Age Group Three Motivation Post Test	10	143.1000	5.46606	.746	.634
a. Test distribution is Normal.					
b. Calculated from data.					

As Table 13 demonstrates the significance levels for all data sets are higher than 0.05 indicating that the post-test critical thinking and motivation scores of the three age groups are normally distributed. After establishing the normality assumption, a one way MANOVA was run on the results of the post-tests of critical thinking and motivation scores of the three age groups. Table 14 shows the results of the multivariate tests associated with the MANOVA test run.

Table 14. *Results of Multivariate Tests for Critical Thinking and Motivation Scores of the Three Age Groups on the Post-test*

Multivariate Tests <sup>a</sup>						
Effect		Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.
Intercept	Pillai's Trace	.998	7505.480 <sup>b</sup>	2.000	26.000	.000
	Wilks' Lambda	.002	7505.480 <sup>b</sup>	2.000	26.000	0.15
	Hotelling's Trace	577.345	7505.480 <sup>b</sup>	2.000	26.000	.000
	Roy's Largest Root	577.345	7505.480 <sup>b</sup>	2.000	26.000	.000
Post-Test Age Group	Pillai's Trace	.422	3.612	4.000	54.000	.011
	Wilks' Lambda	.582	4.045 <sup>b</sup>	4.000	52.000	0.17
	Hotelling's Trace	.712	4.452	4.000	50.000	.004
	Roy's Largest Root	.703	9.487 <sup>c</sup>	2.000	27.000	.001
a. Design: Intercept + POSTGROUPAGE						
b. Exact statistic						
c. The statistic is an upper bound on F that yields a lower bound on the significance level.						

The results of Table 14 illustrate that no significant effect was found on learners' critical thinking and motivation as the result of age factor. Lambda (4, 52 = 0.582,  $p = 0.07 > 0.05$ ). Thus, it can be concluded that the effect of reflective teaching on critical thinking and motivation does not vary across age groups.

### 7.6. Discussion and Conclusion

The present study sought to explore the impact of reflective teaching on the critical thinking and intrinsic motivation of female Iranian intermediate learners. Moreover, the study aimed to find out whether the effect of reflective teaching on critical thinking and intrinsic motivation varies across age groups. The results of MANOVA indicated that both critical thinking and motivation were significantly affected by reflective teaching. However, the critical thinking and motivation of the participants were not significantly impacted as a result of reflective teaching across age groups.

This study was in line with many studies exploring the effect of different factors on critical thinking (e.g., Meyers, 1986; Bransford, Sherwood, & Sturdevant, 1987; Jenkins, 1998; Facione, Blohm, Howard, & Giancarlo, 1998; Collins & Onwuegbuzie, 2000; Solon, 2003; Nikoopour et al., 2011) and intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Gardner & Macintyre, 1992; Kramsch, 2001; Krashen, 2002; Noels, 2001; Pourhosein & Gilakjani, 2012; Ushida, 2005) in the ELT context. As motivation is one of the most important concepts in psychology and language education, which is commonly used to explain learners' success and failure in learning (Dörnyei, 2009), it cannot be neglected as an important element related to critical thinking.

The current study and its findings are in keeping with Littlejohn (1997, cited in Benson and Voller, 1997, pp. 181-182) who contended that the role of the curriculum and classroom practice in promoting critical thinking and motivation should be taken more seriously. In the current study it was revealed that reflective teaching is effective in enhancing the critical thinking. One of the possible explanations for this result could be the fact that when teachers are involved in reflective practice they pay more attention to the process of their teaching and as a result can help students learn more independently and thoughtfully. Put it other way, when a teacher is thinking about her own practice in the classroom and considers reflection as an important aspect of her job, she will inevitably transfer this way of thinking and doing things to the learners.

The finding also gives support for the arguments of Benson (2000), Brown (1994), Dickinson (1995), Holec (1981) and Little woods (1999), who have stated that intrinsic motivation will be fostered if we give the second language learners an amount of freedom to the extent that they can think critically for their own course of learning. In other words, in the current study the improvement in critical thinking due to reflective teaching practiced, might have in one way or another impacted the motivation level of the learners' positively. According to Ryan & Deci (2000), intrinsic motivation stems from the organism's need to be competent and self-determining. Perception of competence and perception of control are apparently distinct but not easily separated. If a learner perceives himself as being a highly competent thinker in a learning situation, then the opportunities to take control of that situation will be meaningful to him. Moreover, in order to experience a feeling of competence, it is necessary to feel responsible for the actions and outcomes that demonstrate competence (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Another possible explanation for the improvement of intrinsic motivation and critical thinking in this study could be found in what Dörnyei (2001) also mentions as "the best motivational intervention is simply to improve the quality of our teaching" (p. 26). Reflective teaching practice can be, therefore, seen as a factor which has increased the quality of teaching and subsequently the intrinsic motivation level of the learners. Given the findings of the present study we are further reminded of the fact that the practice of teaching can influence the ways learners approach and view the learning process. As teachers, we need to reflect upon our practice in order to promote more effective learning on the part of ourselves and the learners. One way to do so is to adopt a reflective approach towards our teaching practice.

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# THE STUDY OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FEMALE EFL LEARNERS' SHYNESS, SELF-ESTEEM AND LEVEL OF EDUCATION

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## ABSTRACT

The current study intended to shed light on the relationship between female efl learners' shyness, self-esteem and their educational level (four levels of education: freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior). The participants were 106 female undergraduate english translation students at marvdasht branch, islamic azad university, with the age range of 19 to 30. The data were gathered through two questionnaires: the revised cheek and buss shyness scale (cheek, 1983) and the rosenberg self-esteem scale (rosenberg, 1965). Correlation analyses were used to determine the relationship between shyness and self-esteem. One-way anova and scheffe test were also carried out to seek if there was a difference in efl learners' level of shyness with respect to their educational level. The obtained results were indicative of a low level of shyness and well above average self-esteem level for iranian female efl learners. Shyness and self-esteem revealed to have a significant negative relationship. Furthermore, shyness was found to display a significant relationship with educational level of the participants. With regard to the participants' self-esteem, educational level was not a determining factor. The findings are finally discussed and pedagogical implications of the study are provided.

**Keywords:** shyness, self-esteem, educational level

## 1. Introduction:

### 1.1. Preliminaries:

In recent years, there has been a growing interest in the effect of affective domain on language learning due to the arrival of humanistic psychology which shifted researchers' attention from focusing solely on the cognitive aspect of learning to considering both the psychological and cognitive aspects of language learning. Hilgard (1963 cited in Brown, 2000, p. 142) asserted long ago that "purely cognitive theories of learning will be rejected unless a role is assigned to affectivity". Tallon (2009) states that the outcome of the learning process depends on a great many factors, namely: individual differences such as cognitive abilities, personality characteristics, learning styles, meta-cognitive differences, social contexts, and affective aspects. Samimy (1994) puts that researchers in L2 acquisition "seem to agree that the complex process of second language acquisition cannot be adequately explained solely by cognitive or non-affective factors" (p. 30). As a result, the role of affective variables in language learning has received considerable attention. Schuman (1998) asserts that affective factors are the key to successful language learning. Brown (2007) views personality factors as the

intrinsic side of affectivity which influences language learning to a great extent. Schuman (1975, cited in Celce-Murica, Brinton, & Goodwin (2010, p.21) also states that “personality factors are the heart of second language”. Thus, in the domain of language learning, personality factors are subjected to a great deal of language learning studies. Among personality factors, shyness, due to its influence on different aspects of foreign language learning has been the focus of language learning theorists and researchers (Cheek & Buss, 1981; Leary & Schlenker, 1981; Chu, 2008; Bashosh, Abbas Nejad, Rastegar & Marzban, 2013). Chu (2008, p.1) states that “The experience of learning a foreign language, for most learners, is not only a process that is cognitively demanding, but also emotion-laden”. She further asserts that since there is an ongoing performance evaluation by the teacher and the classmates in language classes, the situation “can be daunting for most learners, especially those who are shy, due to their fear of negative evaluation and desire for approval from others”. Alavian & salmasi (2012, p.91) put forward that shy learners are “less adept at expressing themselves during social encounters, and are hence more likely to be left out from the main stream practice of the education”. Thus, shy student’s language learning process is impeded because according to Richards, Platt & Platt (1992, cited in Alavinia & Salmas, 2012, p.94) an important characteristic of successful second language learning is for the students to be “willing to undertake actions and try out hunches about the new language and take the risk of being wrong” (p. 137). Furthermore, shy people experience behavioral inhibition such as being reticent and timid, displaying gaze aversion because they do not wish to make an undesirable impression on others (Cheek & Buss, 1981; Leary & Schlenker, 1981). Mahir (2004, p.7) asserts that “inhibition is linked with the negative attitude that prevents learners from learning another language due to the belief that they are incapable of performing well in any language practice”. This evokes the concept of self-esteem in the mind because as Coopersmith (1967, cited in Mahir, 2004, p.18) states “self-esteem is a personal judgment of worthiness that is expressed in the attitudes that the individual holds towards himself”. According to Willoughby, King, and Polatajko (1996), self-esteem is “the overall value that one places on oneself as a person” (para. 4); consequently, for successful achievement self-esteem plays a crucial role.

Due to the fact that in most foreign language classrooms shyness, accompanied by self-esteem, can greatly affect different aspects of foreign language learning, the present study attempted to probe into the nature of the relationship between EFL learners' shyness level and their self-esteem. Investigating the impact of educational level on the learners’ shyness and self-esteem levels is another major concern of this study.

## 1.2. Significance of the study:

Since shyness and self-esteem can have great impacts on different aspects of foreign language learning, it is of great importance to identify both language learners’ shyness and self-esteem levels and those learners who are particularly shy or have low self-esteem in FL classes. Furthermore, when shyness and self-esteem are combined, they act as setback on the way of the learners’ desirable educational accomplishment. Thus, the results of this study can shed light on the nature of the relationship between shyness and the personality factor of self-esteem. The results can also lead to a better understanding of the complex nature of the two constructs. The results can also add to the literature of shyness and self-esteem; consequently, be of immense value to language teachers.

## 1.3. Research questions:

The purpose of the present study is to investigate the relationship between EFL learners' shyness and self-esteem levels. Additionally, it seeks to investigate the effect of the participants’ educational level on their levels of shyness and self-esteem. Thus, the specific research questions are:

1. What is the female EFL learners’ level of shyness?
2. What is the female EFL learners’ level of self-esteem?
3. Is there any significant relationship between EFL learners’ level of shyness and their self-esteem?
4. Is there a difference in EFL learners’ level of shyness with respect to their educational level (freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior)?
5. Is there a difference in EFL learners’ level of self-esteem with respect to their educational level (freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior)?

## 2. Review of the literature:

Since the role of affective variables on the degree of success in language learning has been greatly confirmed in the last two decades, a growing body of research attempted to investigate the relationship between language learning and affective variables (Chastain, 1975; Horwits *et al.*, 1986; Young, 1990; Schumann, 1999; Samimy & Tabuse, 1992; Yamini & Tahriri, 2006; Chu, 2008; Bashosh, Abbas Nejad, Rastegar & Marzban, 2012). These studies have revealed that in the process of language learning affective variables play a key role. Affective variables concern personality factors (Brown, 1994), such as shyness, anxiety, self-esteem, introversion, extroversion, risk-taking, motivation, etc. which are regarded as the intrinsic side of affectivity (Brown, 2007). Among affective factors, shyness and self-esteem are assumed as important factors in the domain of language learning and are the focus of this study.

### 2.1. Shyness:

For many of us shyness is a familiar concept, and almost everyone reports experiencing a period of shyness at certain times in his/her life, though the level of experience shows variations from one person to the other (Henderson & Zimbardo, 1998a). Many researchers have tried to study the nature of shyness. In the literature, the nature of shyness has been viewed differently by different researchers. According to some, shyness is a subjective experience which is exhibited as nervousness and apprehension in interpersonal encounters (Buss, 1980; Leary & Schlenker, 1981; Zimbardo, 1977). Henderson & Zimbardo (1998a) also proposed that shyness is a kind of preoccupation with one's thought and reactions which results in lack of comfort in interpersonal context. Similarly, Garcia, Stinson, Ickes, Bissonnette & Briggs (1991) puts forward that shyness is being worried and restrained in the presence of others. Samadi, Maghsodi, and Azizmohammadi (2013, cited in Azizmohammadi, 2013, p. 822) define shyness experientially as "excessive self-focus characterized by negative evaluation that creates discomfort and/or inhibition in social situation and interferes with pursuing one's interpersonal or professional goals". Similarly, Honig (1987, cited in Butt, Moosa, Ajmal & Rahman, 2011) regards shyness as a discomfort in interpersonal situations that interferes with one's goals. It is a form of excessive self-focus, a preoccupation of thoughts, feelings and physical reactions. It may vary from mild social awkwardness to totally inhibiting social phobias. Shyness may be chronic or dispositional, serving as a personality trait that is central in one's definition (Butt, Moosa, Ajmal & Rahman, 2011).

Buss (1980) viewed shyness as uneasiness and inhibition in social situations; an inhibition of expected social behavior accompanied by feelings of tension and awkwardness. As so, shyness is regarded as a social phenomenon, and a form of social anxiety (Zimbardo, 1977; Buss, 1980). Leary (1986) also views shyness as a totally social phenomenon, and that it should be defined in terms of both social anxiety and inhibition.

Others believe that shy people experience not only social anxiety but also behavioral inhibition such as being reticent and timid, displaying gaze aversion because they do not wish to make an undesirable impression on others (Cheek & Buss, 1981; Leary & Schlenker, 1981). Jones & Russell (1982) also asserted that shyness encompasses both social anxiety and patterns of avoidance and inhibited behavior. According to many researchers, shyness is a subjective experience which is exhibited as nervousness and apprehension in interpersonal encounters (Buss, 1980; Leary & Schlenker, 1981; Zimbardo, 1977).

In the light of the results of many psychological surveys, substantial number of people regard themselves as shy (Murray, 2000; Butt, Moosa, Ajmal, and Rahman, 2011). Shyness becomes problematic when it leads to the patterns of behavior that includes reluctance to enter social situations discomfort and inhibition in the presence of others exaggerated self, unresponsiveness, an increasingly negative social concept, or a combination of these (Honig, 1987). Shy individuals are anxious and unsure of themselves in social situations and often try to avoid interacting.

Carducci & Zimbardo (1995) believed that the common existence of shyness maybe an intensifying factor. Thus, shyness can greatly affect the students' performance in EFL settings. In the classroom, shy students are mostly unnoticed by the teachers and peers because of their shyness and passivity. These students are susceptible to self-consciousness in social situations that make them more conspicuous and psychologically unprotected. According to Butt, Moosa, Ajmal & Rahman (2011) because of being shy, the child suffers from lack of confidence, social anxiousness, embarrassment, speech dissiliences and low speaking voice. Shy students are regarded as less friendly and assertive than others. Henderson & Zimbardo (1998a) asserted that shyness is basically shrinking back from life that weakens the bonds of human connection. The effects of shyness on the self-esteem of students have usually been observed highly negative. The reactions for shyness are observed at

any or all of the following levels: cognitive, affective, physiological and behavioral which may be triggered by a wide variety of arousal cues (Henderson & Zimbardo, 1998a).

## 2.2. Shyness and language learning:

In their study, Bashoosh *et al.*, (2013) investigated the relationship between shyness, foreign language classroom anxiety, willingness to communicate, gender, and EFL proficiency. As their subjects, they selected sixty EFL undergraduates (40 females and 20 males) majoring in English translation. Stanford Shyness Inventory by Zimbardo (1977), Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale by Horwitz *et al.*, (1986), and Willingness to Communicate Scale by McCroskey and Richmond (1987) were used to measure students' shyness, FLCA, and WTC respectively. Also, in order to measure their EFL proficiency, the average score in their specialized courses were taken. The results revealed that there was no significant relationship between shyness, foreign language classroom anxiety, willingness to communicate, gender, and EFL proficiency. The findings of some other researchers, however, indicated that the performance of non-shy students was better than the shy ones. (Crozier, 1995; Amini, 1999). Tong, Ting & MacBridge- Chang (2011) also concluded that shyness was correlated with both first and second language learning. At school level, Jaredić, Stanojević, Radović & Minić (2013), likewise, found that shyness was negatively associated with academic achievement.

## 2.3. Self-esteem:

One of the vital factors determining a language learner's success is self-esteem. Morrisom & Thomas (1975, cited in Rashidi, Yamini & Shafiei, 2011) asserted that self-esteem is "the set of evaluative attitudes that a person has about himself or his accomplishment". Michie, Glachan & Bray (2001, P.458) regard self-esteem as "the evaluative dimension of the self which is a conscious experience accessible to introspection". Horwitz *et al.*, (1986) put forward that any performance in L2 classes probably challenges the learners' self-concept and may lead to self-consciousness and fear. In fact their inability to present themselves as well as their first language threatens their "self-perceptions of genuineness" (p.128).

Self-attribution is one of the principles of self-esteem formation. Rosenberg (1986) stated that the principle of self-attribution is reflective of the fact that self-observation is the basis of people's attribution of intentions to themselves. In foreign language classes, students with inefficient performance may observe their own performance and make a judgment of it which may lead to anxiety. Reflective appraisal is another principle of self-esteem formation. This principle holds that "people's feelings about themselves are strongly influenced by their judgments of what others think of them" (Rosenberg, Schooler & Schoenbach, 1989, p. 1005). They are constantly worried about their teachers' and peers' attitude toward themselves. Festinger (1954 cited in Rosenberg, *et al.*, 1989) proposed social comparison, the third principle of self-esteem formation. According to this principle, in the absence of objective information, the comparisons that people make forms their judgment about themselves. In foreign language classes, students may make comparisons between their own performance and that of their classmates.

## 2.4. Self-esteem and language learning:

Probing the role of self-esteem in academic performance has been one of the major concerns of the educational psychologists and the focus of manifold research (El-Anzi, 2005, as cited in Koosha, Ketabi & Kassaian, 2011; Carter & Nunan, 2001; Derville, 1966). A great many studies indicate that there is a positive relationship between self-esteem and EFL performance (Liu, 2008; De Fraine, Van Damme & Ongheda, 2007; Marsh & Yung, 1998; Kurtz-Costes & Scheinder, 1994; Demo & Parker, 1987). Niki Maleki & Mohammadi's (2009) findings showed that EFL learners who had a higher level of self-esteem were more successful with regard to their oral communication tasks. Koosha, Ketabi & Kassaian (2011) who investigated the relationship between self-esteem, age, gender and the speaking skills of intermediate university EFL learners also found out that there was a significant relationship between self-esteem and speaking skills with fluency showing the most influence. Similarly, demonstrated that self-esteem was significantly and positively associated with academic achievement.

## 2.5. Research on the relationship between shyness and Self-esteem:

The relationship between shyness and self-esteem has also been subjected to a great many research. The effects of shyness on the self-esteem of students have usually been observed highly negative. The combination of shyness and low self-esteem undermine students' abilities and develop weak personalities. Research on shyness as a trait, shows its moderate high negative correlation with measures of self-esteems (Crozier, 1995). Cheek and Buss (1981) found a correlation of -.51 between shyness and self-esteem. According to them, shyness and low self-esteem impact on each other which leads to being amplified. In another study, Crozier (1995) sought the relationship between shyness and self-esteem for two samples of children aged 9 to 12 years. Shyness was measured by a new self-report questionnaire based on an elicitation of children's conceptions of shyness. Shyness was significantly correlated with measures of global self-esteem, with external locus of control and with perceived competence across different domains of the self. The relationship among variables were similar to those reported for adolescents and adults. Girls were shier than boys, and there was a suggestion that 11-year-old children were shier in secondary than in primary school.

Koydemir and Demir (2008) studied the relation between shyness and dysfunctional relationship beliefs and to extend findings of previous studies to understand the role of fear of negative evaluation and self-esteem in shyness. Participants were 415 Turkish undergraduate students at Middle East Technical University. Bivariate correlations indicated that shyness had a significant positive correlation with unrealistic relationship expectations and interpersonal rejection. It was also found that fear of negative evaluation and self-esteem had significant relations to shyness. A stepwise regression analysis showed that fear of negative evaluation, self-esteem, and interpersonal rejection were significant predictors of shyness, and self-esteem was the best predictor.

A number of studies have been reported on the relationship between shyness and self-esteem at school level. Butt, Moosa, Ajmal & Rahman (2011) tried to investigate the effects of shyness on the self-esteem of 9th grade female students. It was intended to identify the symptoms of shyness, to explore the causes of shyness, to find out the relationship of shyness with the self-esteem and to examine the effects of shyness on the self-esteem of 9th grade female students. It was found that weak positive relationship existed between shyness and self-esteem. The results indicated that shyness affects the self-esteem of 9th grade female students. The combination of shyness and low self-esteem undermine students' abilities and develop weak personalities. A variation in the level of shyness was also found among students. It was explored that some students suffered from occasional shyness while other experienced acute shyness, which impeded the development of students. Jaredić, Stanojević, Radović & Minić (2013), likewise, studied the relationship between shyness and self-esteem in elementary school. They also found that shyness and self-esteem were negatively and significantly related.

## 3. Method:

### 3.1. Participants:

All female university students majoring in English translation at Islamic Azad University, Marvdasht Branch were asked to participate in the present study (a total of 115 students). Their age ranged from 19 to 30 with an average age of 23.4. They were divided into four groups of educational levels (freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior). Eight participants were excluded from the study due to incomplete responses. A total of 106 participants comprised the subjects of the study. All the students were native speakers of Persian. The percentage of each group is reported in the result section of the study.

### 3.2. Instruments:

Two scales were used as the instruments of the study: The Revised Cheek and Buss Shyness Scale (RCBS) (Cheek, 1983) and the Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale (RSS) (Rosenberg, 1965).

**The Revised Cheek and Buss Shyness Scale** is the 13-item Revised Cheek and Buss Shyness Scale (Cheek, 1983), first developed by Cheek and Buss in 1981 as a 9-item scale. The items are answered on a 5-point Likert Scale with a lowest possible score of 13 and highest possible score of 65. The responses for answers range from very uncharacteristic (strongly disagreed) to very characteristic (strongly agree). It has the alpha coefficient of .90 and the 45-day test-retest reliability of .88. Its correlation with the original 9-item version is .96. Generally, moderate to strong correlations have been obtained between the RCBS and other measures of shyness: the SRS-II (Social Reticence Scale; Jones & Briggs, 1986  $r = .74$ ; responses to the question, "How shy are you?" (Hopko *et al.*, 2005),  $r = .56$ ; the Fear of Negative Evaluation Scale (FNE) (Watson & Friend, 1969). Through the shyness

literature this scale is frequently used due to its sound psychometric properties (Schmidt & Riniolo, 1999; Heiser, Turner & Beidel, 2003; Chu, 2008). The present study had the reliability coefficient of .88.

**The Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale** is by far the most widely used Self-esteem Scale (Gray-little, Williams & Hacncock, 1997). It consists of 10 items with a 4-point Likert scale. Thus, the lowest and highest possible total scores are 10 and 40. It measures global self-esteem and aims at "a broad and stable sense of personal competence to affectively deal with a variety of stressful situation" (Rashidi, Yamini & Shafiei, 2011, p.155). According to Demo (1985, cited in Michie, Glachan & Bray, 2001), the reliability and validity of this scale have been rigorously investigated and a positive relationship was reported between the scores of this scale and the scores of some other scales such as the Coopermith Self-eateem Inventory. It has received several psychometric and empirical validation (Gray-little, 1997; Wylie, 1974). In their studies, Rashidi *et al.*, (2011) and Yamini & Tahriri, (2006) reported reliability coefficients of .85 and .77, respectively. This study found a reliability index of .85.

### 3.3. Data collection procedure:

The questionnaires on shyness and self-esteem were translated by a group of senior translation students, and then the first researcher chose the best translation for each item. After editing the translation, two colleague English instructors, who were Ph.D candidates and were teaching for more than ten years, were asked to review and further edit the translations. The translation of the questionnaires were used because first year students were among the participants and it was intended to make sure that the students fully understood the items. The participants were asked to complete the questionnaires during their regular class hour. The participants were given clear brief directions regarding the way they had to complete the questionnaires. In addition, they were informed that the results would not affect their grades. They spent approximately 15 minutes to complete the questionnaires.

### 3.4. Data analysis procedure:

The collected data were analyzed using IMB SPSS Statistics 21. The scores on the two questionnaires were obtained by first reverse scoring the negatively worded items and then summarizing all responses. To reveal the EFL learners' levels of shyness and self-esteem, the descriptive statistics of the learners' performance on the Revised Cheek and Buss Shyness Scale and The Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale were obtained for the whole sample data. Pearson product-moment correlation was used to investigate the relationship between the EFL learners' level of shyness and their self-esteem level. One-way ANOVA was also conducted to test the significance of the difference in the shyness and self-esteem levels with respect to the learners' educational level.

## 4. Results:

The first research question concerned identifying female EFL learners' shyness level. To address this research question, the descriptive statistics of the EFL learners' performance on the RCBS were obtained for the whole sample. As table 1 presents, the mean total score on the RCBS for 106 participants was 31.30 (SD=9.56). The minimum score was 15 (N=1) and the maximum score was 56 (N=1).

**Table 1. Descriptive statistics on the RCBS for the whole sample**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
Shyness	106	15.00	56.00	31.30	9.56	91.52

The RCBS questionnaire has 13 items. It is a 5-graded Likert scale; therefore the scores can range from 13 to 65. Using the cutoff score of 39, recommended by Cheek (1983), to divide the participants into groups of shy and non-shy individuals, 25% (27) of the participants were identified as being shy (above 39) and 75% (79) were found to be non-shy (bellow 39). Thus, as a whole the female Iranian EFL learners demonstrated a low level of shyness.

The second research question attempted to identify female EFL learners' level of self-esteem. Considering the fact that RSS is a 10 item on a 4-graded Likert scale in which the scores can range from 10 to 40, the results of the descriptive statistics of the EFL learners' performance on the RSS (presented in Table 2, with

the mean total score, minimum score and the maximum score of 30.99, 19.00, and 45.00, respectively) indicated that the participants' level of self-esteem was well above average (according to Rosenberg, 1965, scores between 15-25 are considered average).

**Table 2. Descriptive statistics on the RSS for the whole sample**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
Self-esteem	106	19.00	45.00	30.99	5.13	26.40

The third research question sought to reveal whether there existed a significant relationship between the participants' shyness and self-esteem levels. Drawing on the data illustrated in Table 3, it was demonstrated that there existed a significantly negative correlation between the learners' shyness level and their level of self-esteem ( $r = -.425$ ,  $p < .01$ ). That is, an increase in their level of self-esteem would result in a decrease in their shyness level and with the decrease in their self-esteem level, there would be an increase in the learners' shyness level.

**Table 3. The relationship between self-esteem and shyness**

	Shyness	Self-esteem
Shyness Pearson correlation	1	-.425**
Sig.(2-tailed)		.000
N	106	106

To address the forth research question, a One-way ANOVA was run to seek if there was a difference in EFL learners' level of shyness with respect to their educational level (freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior). Tale 4 and 5 display the frequency of participants in each educational level and the result of the One-way ANOVA, respectively.

**Table 4. The frequency of participants in each educational level**

Educational level	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
freshman	23	21.7	21.7
sophomore	18	17.0	38.7
junior	24	22.6	61.3
senior	41	38.7	100.0
Total	106	100.0	

**Table 5. Results of One-way ANOVA on the effect of educational level on the shyness**

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	959.74	3	319.91	3.77	.013
Within Groups	8650.59	102	84.81		
Total	9610.34	105			

Drawing on the data illustrated in Table 5 the difference in participants' educational level had a significant effect ( $F = 3.77$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) on their shyness level. Furthermore, Scheffe test was carried out to locate the exact difference. The results are displayed in Table 6.



Table 6. Results of Scheffe test on shyness at different educational level

(I) years	(J) years	Mean Difference	Std. Error	Sig.
freshman	sophomore	.39614	2.89811	.999
	junior	5.13225	2.68721	.308
	senior	6.83245(*)	2.39915	.049
sophomore	freshman	-.39614	2.89811	.999
	junior	4.73611	2.87148	.441
	senior	6.43631	2.60388	.113
junior	freshman	-5.13225	2.68721	.308
	sophomore	-4.73611	2.87148	.441
	senior	1.70020	2.36691	.915
senior	freshman	-6.83245(*)	2.39915	.049
	sophomore	-6.43631	2.60388	.113
	junior	-1.70020	2.36691	.915

The findings (briefed in Table 6) revealed that the difference in the level of shyness between freshmen and seniors was significant ( $P < 0.05$ ) and the mean difference was positive. This is indicative of the freshmen's significantly higher level of shyness compared to the seniors' in this study. The difference in the level of shyness between freshmen and junior/sophomore was not found significant. In fact, the difference in the level of shyness between none of the other groups was found to be significantly different. Seniors revealed the lowest level of shyness compared to the other levels. Freshmen and sophomores showed the highest level of shyness, their mean difference with the seniors' were 6.832 and -6.436, respectively.

Finally, to investigate whether there was a difference in EFL learners' level of self-esteem with respect to their educational level, another One-way ANOVA was performed. Table 7 illustrates the results of the One-way ANOVA.

Table 7. Results of One-way ANOVA on the effect of educational level on the shyness

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	63.392	3	21.131	.795	.499
Within Groups	2709.598	102	26.565		
Total	2772.991	105			

According to Table 7, the findings showed that the obtained F-value was not significant at the level of .05. Therefore, it is safe to conclude that the difference in participants' educational level did not have a significant effect on their self-esteem level.

## 5. Discussion and Conclusion:

The current study sought to investigate five research questions. The results of the first research question showed that foreign language learners had a low level of shyness ( $M=31.30$ ) with 25% (27) of the participants identified as being shy (above 39) and 75% (79) found to be non-shy (below 39). It seems that Iranian EFL learners in this study experienced a slightly lower level of shyness in their English classes compare to the similar studies. Chu (2008) reported that the mean of the RCBS total score was 37.7 for women and 38.1 for men; the participants were 364 students who were taking either the sophomore ( $n = 322$ ) or freshman English course ( $n = 42$ ) at a private university in Taipei, Taiwan. Of these, 36.6% of the participants were men and 63.4% were

women, with an average age of 20.5. Students were from 19 different departments with no English majors included. Most of them were from the Law school (22%), Accounting (17%), and International Trade (13%). Mohamadian (2013) found the mean total score of RCBS to be 35.8 for her sixty participants (30 males and 30 females) who were taking English as a foreign language course at Management and Technology Institute in Shiraz. The slight difference can be due to the fact that the participants in this study were English language students while in the Chu (2008) and Mohammadian's (2013) study non English majors were included. On the whole, the findings of the study are in line with Chu (2008) and Mohammadian's (2013) study because they also reported the mean score of below 39 for their participants' level of shyness. The results is also in line with Cheek's (1983) study who reported the mean total score of RCBS of 33.3 for men and 32.4 for women.

The result of the second research question showed that female EFL learners' level of self-esteem was well above average (mean total score of 30.99). This is in line with the findings reported by Yamini & Tahriri (2006) whose 123 English students studying at Shiraz University also revealed a self-esteem level of above average (mean total score of 29.18).

The results of the third research question put forward that shyness and self-esteem correlated significantly. In fact, a moderate negative correlation was found between the two constructs ( $r = -.425$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Therefore, as the level of self-esteem increases the level of shyness decreases and vice versa. This study shows parallelism with several studies. Cheek and Buss's (1981) results showed a correlation of  $-.51$  between shyness and self-esteem. Crozier (1995) revealed that shyness was significantly correlated with measures of global self-esteem, with external locus of control and with perceived competence across different domains of the self. Jaredić, Stanojević, Radović & Minić (2013) also displayed that shyness and self-esteem were negatively and significantly related; self-esteem was significantly and positively associated with academic achievement whereas shyness was negatively associated with academic achievement.

Foss & Reitzel (1988) stated that students with low self-esteem perceive themselves as less worthy, with less effective communication abilities, compared to others. This low self-esteem might cause them to feel shier when communicating in foreign language classes. Cheek and Buss's (1981) asserted that shyness and low self-esteem impact on each other which leads to being amplified. Therefore, the combination of shyness and low self-esteem decreases students' abilities and brings about weak personalities. As a result, to improve their performance in foreign language classes, it is necessary to pay attention to the learners' level of self-esteem which directly affects the learners' shyness.

Regarding the forth research question, the analysis of variance revealed that the obtained F-value was significant at the level of .05. That is, the difference in participants' educational level had a significant effect on their shyness level. The results of the Scheffe test on shyness at different educational level showed that the only significant difference in the level of shyness was between freshmen and seniors and the mean difference was positive. This finding suggested that freshmen showed a significantly higher level of shyness compared to the seniors in this study. Freshmen and sophomores demonstrated the highest level of shyness, their mean difference with the seniors' were 6.832 and -6.436, respectively. Finally, juniors presented a slightly lower level of shyness compare to seniors. It can thus be concluded that as the level of education increased, the participants' level of shyness decreased although the differences were not statistically significant except for the difference between freshmen and seniors. It is likely that as they become more proficient and more familiar with the procedures and methods in the English classes after the first year, they feel less and less shier. Moreover, it can also be the result of becoming more acquainted with their classmates each year. This might lessen the level of shyness that they experience.

Concerning the fifth research question, the results of the One-way ANOVA on self-esteem at different educational level indicated that, on the whole, the participants' self-esteem level was not significantly affected by their educational level. This means that for the EFL female learners who took part in this study level of education did not modify self-esteem. This is in line with the findings of Yamini & Tahriri (2006) who reported that no significant relationship or interaction effect existed between self-esteem and educational level.

## 6. Pedagogical implications:

Qin (2003) asserts that personality factors are the most influential factors to which teachers should pay great attention in FL classroom teaching process. Considering such factors thus may help teachers to adopt a more efficient approach to FL teaching. Accordingly, the results of the present study have several implications for language teachers.

First, due to the fact that for most learners the experience of learning a foreign language is both cognitively and emotionally demanding in foreign language classroom situation where there is constant performance evaluation by the instructor and peers, the situation can become frightening, especially for those learners who are shy and have low self-esteem. Thus, it is vitally important to identify such learners.

Second, by identifying these learners, language teachers can encourage them to talk about their feelings and help them learn strategies to reduce their shyness in class or cope with it. Third, using the information of students personality traits (shyness and self-esteem), an instructor may make modification to the curriculum accordingly; for example, if there were more shy students who were not willing to speak up in class, a larger portion of the curriculum may be allotted to pair work to create a low-risk learning environment (Mohmmadian, 2013). On the other hand, "if the majority of the students in class were non-shy and were willing to take risks in their English learning behavior, an instructor can implement activities that require them to experiment, whether it is with the new strategies they acquired or the new vocabulary they have just learned" (Mohmmadian, 2013, p. 2042). In this regard, Tok (2009) suggests that EFL teachers should give the more reticent learners the opportunity to speak and build their self confidence in a positive caring environment. Finally, teachers, as the only authority in the class, should work on their relationship with the learners in order to decrease their level of shyness. Na (2007, cited in Rashidi, Yamini & Shafiei, 2011) also states that teachers should create a relaxed atmosphere in the class so that the learners would feel safe to express their opinions. He also recommends that teachers should avoid negative evaluation of the learners and try to comment on the learners' behavior with more encouragement. This may improve their self-esteem. Similarly, Huang *et al.*, (2010, p. 30) put forward that "a warm and accepting relationship between the teacher and the student is important in facilitating language learning".

#### 7. Limitations of the study:

Several limitations in this study are worth noticing when interpreting the results. First, self-reports were adopted as the instrument to assess students' shyness, and self-esteem. Thus, the results may have been biased by students' social desirability concerns and introspective limits (Green & Oxford, 1995). Second, the scope of this study was limited to English translation students at Islamic Azad University, Marvdasht Branch. Also, due to the fact that male students majoring at that university were only 22, it was decided to exclude them from the study. Furthermore, if the qualitative data were accompanied with quantitative data, such as interview or observation, more comprehensive results would be obtained.

#### 8. Further research: relates to the limited number of the male participants

To obtain a clear insight into the nature of shyness and self-esteem, other studies are called for to investigate other noteworthy aspects of the issue at hand. Further research is recommended with regard to the relationship between shyness and self-esteem and other affective factors such as self-efficacy, risk-taking, attitudes toward language learning, FLCA, etc. Studying the effect of demographic factors such as age, gender, and cultural background on shyness and self-esteem levels of EFL learners can be insightful. In addition, it would be very informative if the proficiency level of the EFL learners is taken into consideration.

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MJLTM

# THE EFFECTIVENESS OF METACOGNITIVE STRATEGY USE ON EFL LEARNERS' READING COMPREHENSION AND MOTIVATION

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## Abstract

Since learners have a crucial role in new teaching methodologies, increasing their awareness of learning strategies and assisting them to apply these strategies are the fundamental goals of teachers. One of these learning strategies is metacognitive strategies which include planning, self-monitoring and self-evaluation. The present study examined the effectiveness of metacognitive (planning & self-monitoring) strategy instruction on EFL learners' reading comprehension in authentic and inauthentic texts and on their metacognitive awareness. Three intact classes, including 73 undergraduate students (40 females and 33 males between the age ranges of 20 to 25) majoring in TEFL at Urmia University, were selected for the purpose of this study. Two classes were randomly assigned as experimental groups and the last one as the control group. After homogenizing students' language proficiency through administering TOEFL, the experimental groups received five sessions of instruction on metacognitive strategies (one session on planning and four sessions on self-monitoring strategy based on the Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (CALLA)). All groups worked on both authentic and inauthentic texts. After the treatment, the reading comprehension test and Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) questionnaire were administered to all groups. Results showed that the experimental groups outperformed the control group on the reading comprehension test, and the subjects performed better in authentic texts. Furthermore, experimental groups' awareness to metacognitive strategies significantly increased after the treatment. The findings of this study offer several pedagogical implications for learners, teachers, and textbook writers in the realm of TEFL in particular and education in general.

**Keywords:** Metacognitive strategy, planning strategy, self-monitoring strategy, Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach, authentic texts, inauthentic texts, reading comprehension

## 1. Introduction

Most learners may take it for granted that the intended meaning of the author lies in the written text, and reading is no more than a process of obtaining meaning from the source. Unfortunately, they approach reading passively, mostly utilizing a bilingual dictionary, thus wasting their time over direct sentence-by-sentence translations. Despite all the efforts, their reading comprehension remains poor. To increase the reading comprehension ability in English, Alfassi (2004) states that students should grasp the meaning of text, critically evaluate the message, remember the content, and flexibly use the new-found knowledge. Since reading is a

complicated cognitive process, it is very significant for teachers to instruct students to take active control of their own comprehension processes.

Mastering learning is a significant part of learning a foreign language. Not only can it assist language learners to learn vocabulary, acquire basic structures, and improve the necessary linguistic and communication skills, but also it assists the learners to actively control their own learning processes. Moreover, it creates autonomous learners who utilize individualized approaches to achieve their objectives. Mastery over the language contents, therefore, results in learning the content more successfully, and contributes to the development of lifelong learners (Rausch, 2000).

From among different types of learning strategies, reading comprehension strategies have mostly attracted researchers' attraction (Brantmeier, 2002; Slataci & Akyel, 2002). Actually, reading comprehension strategies separate the passive, unskilled readers from the active ones. Skilled readers do not just read; they interact with the text.

In this study, learning strategies are "behaviors or actions which learners use to make language learning more successful, self-directed, and enjoyable" (Oxford, 1989, p. 235) and they can be classified into three main groups as follow (O'Malley et al., 1985, p. 582-584):

1. Cognitive strategies that include repeating, translation, grouping, note taking, deducting, imagery, auditory representation, key word, contextualization, elaboration, transfer;
2. Metacognitive strategies consisting planning for learning, thinking about the learning process as it is taking place, monitoring of one's production or comprehension, and evaluating learning after an activity is completed;
3. Socio-affective strategies that include social-mediating activity and transaction with others.

Among these strategies, metacognitive strategies are regarded as the most significant ones in improving learners' skills (Anderson, 1991). O'Malley et al. (1985) stated that learners without metacognitive awareness do not have any abilities to monitor their improvement, achievements, and future learnings, while learners with improved metacognitive awareness tend to become more autonomous (Hauck, 2005). Likewise, Chamot (2005) claims that less successful language learners do not have the metacognitive knowledge required to choose their appropriate strategies. Furthermore, Goh (2002) argues that learners' metacognitive awareness is related to efficient learning in all learning contexts.

Anderson (2002) asserts that metacognitive strategies activate one's thinking and lead to improved performance in learning in general. Learners who have metacognitive abilities appear to be advantageous over others who are not cognizant of the role metacognition plays in learning a foreign language:

1. They are more strategic learners;
2. They have faster rate of progress and cognitive engagement in learning;
3. They are certain about their abilities to learn;
4. They easily plead for help from peers, teachers, or family when required;
5. They accurately know why they are successful learners;
6. They think positively about inaccuracies when they fail during an activity;
7. Their strategies and techniques match the learning task and they easily adjust to altering circumstances;
8. They regard themselves as continual learners and can successfully deal with new situations (Wenden, 1998).

There are some common basic principles listed by Veenman et al. (2006, as cited in Goh, 2008) in all metacognitive strategy training programs. The first key principle is that these programs should be integrated in the subject matter to guarantee connectivity. Another crucial principle is the importance of giving learners information about the fruitfulness of metacognitive activities to use the initial extra effort. Long-term instruction to guarantee the smooth maintenance of the metacognitive activity is another characteristic they offer. In addition, Chamot and Rubin (1994) highlight the significance of examining the strategies that students have already utilized for specific learning tasks, presenting new strategies by explicitly describing them, explaining why and when these strategies can be utilized and supplying them with extensive practice.

Moreover, there are various categorizations of metacognitive strategies that reveal different strategy training models with similar stages. In Anderson's model (2002), metacognitive strategy training is divided into five key components namely (1) preparing and planning, (2) deciding when to utilize particular strategies, (3) monitoring strategy use, (4) learning how to use various strategies, and (5) evaluating strategy use. In the *preparing and planning* component, students are getting prepared by thinking about what their objectives are and how they are going to achieve them. In *deciding when to use particular strategies*, learners think and decide about the learning



process and they select the best strategy in a given situation. In *monitoring strategy use*, they should periodically ask themselves whether they are still utilizing those strategies as intended. In *learning how to orchestrate various strategies*, students coordinate, organize, and make associations among the various strategies available. In the last component, *evaluating strategy use*, students try to evaluate whether what they are doing is effective through self-questioning, debriefing discussions after strategies practice and checklists of strategies utilized. These allow the student to reflect through the cycle of learning. At this final stage, all the previous stages are evaluated.

The present study attempted to investigate the effect of instruction on planning and self-monitoring strategies on the EFL learners' reading comprehension performance. Moreover, it intends to explore the effect of text (authentic or inauthentic) on their reading comprehension performance.

## 2. Review of literature

Here, we reviewed the previous studies investigating the effect of reading strategies, especially metacognitive strategies, on EFL learners' reading comprehension performance.

Khosravi (2000) made an attempt to investigate the effect of scanning and skimming, as two reading strategies, on Iranian EFL students' reading rate and reading comprehension. The analysis of the data indicated that scanning could significantly improve the students' both reading rate and reading comprehension, while skimming only accounted for significant improvement of the reading comprehension of the subjects. Shokrpour and Fotovatian (2009) conducted an experimental study to determine the effects of consciousness-raising of metacognitive strategies on a group of Iranian EFL students' reading comprehension. The results of this study revealed that compared to the control group, the experimental group showed a significant improvement in reading comprehension at the end of the treatment period.

Hong-Nam and Leavell (2006) in a study on language learning strategy use showed that students in the intermediate level used learning strategies more than beginning and advanced students and that more strategic language learners advanced along the proficiency continuum faster than less strategic ones. Yau (2005) in another study found that proficient readers implement more sophisticated approaches to reading than less-proficient readers. For example, in his study the skilled reader used strategies of inference, summarization and synthesis during and after reading, while the less skilled reader used bridging inferences, paraphrasing and repetition. Yaali Jahromi (2002) concluded that the high proficient students used more strategies. The results of a study by Al-Melhi (2000) on the reported and the actual reading strategies and the metacognitive awareness of a random sample of fourth-year Saudi college students as they read in English as a foreign language showed that some differences did exist between the skilled and less-skilled readers in terms of their actual and reported reading strategies, their use of global and local strategies, their metacognitive awareness, their perception of a good reader, and their self-confidence as readers. The second category of studies has been conducted to investigate the effect of reading strategy instruction on the readers' reading performance. Davis (2010), based on a meta-analysis of comprehension strategy instruction for upper elementary and middle school students in America, concluded that instruction on the use of reading comprehension strategies has a positive impact on students' achievements in grades 4-8.

Wright and Brown (2006) investigated the impact of reading strategy instruction on raising the learner readers' awareness of reading strategies, on extending the range of strategies they applied, and on encouraging learners to monitor their reading. The findings showed that strategy training was likely to encourage learner readers to reflect on their strategy use and to increase their confidence in their own reading abilities.

McKeon, Beck, and Blake (2009) conducted a two-year study in which standardized comprehension instruction for representations of two major approaches was designed and implemented. The effectiveness of the two experimental comprehension instructional conditions (Content and Strategies) and a control condition were compared. Content instruction focused students' attention on the content of the text through open, meaning-based questions about the text. In strategies instruction, students were taught specific procedures to guide their access to text during reading of the text. The results of the study revealed that there was no difference between the performances of the two experimental groups for some aspects of comprehension. However, for narrative recall and expository learning probes, the students following content instruction outperformed that following strategy instruction.

Moreover, Shang (2010) examined a group of Taiwanese EFL learners' use of three reading strategies (cognitive, metacognitive, compensation strategies), their effect on the learners' self-efficacy, and the link between reading strategy use and perceived self-efficacy on their English reading comprehension. The results

indicated that metacognitive strategy was utilized most frequently, followed by compensation strategy, and then cognitive strategy. Furthermore, there was a significant positive relationship between the use of reading strategies and perceptions of self-efficacy. However, reading strategies were not related to reading achievement.

Taking a look at studies reported above, one can come to the conclusion that the area of reading comprehension strategy instruction still requires further research, especially in an EFL context such as Iran and the present study intends to explore the issue more deeply by addressing a number of variables such as metacognitive strategies such as planning and self-monitoring, learners' metacognitive awareness raising, and authentic and inauthentic texts. Therefore, the present study focuses on the effect of instruction on planning and self-monitoring strategies on the EFL learners' reading comprehension performance, and the effect of text (authentic or inauthentic) on their reading comprehension performance. This article is designed to address the following research questions:

1. Does instruction on planning strategy have any significant effect on EFL learners' reading comprehension performance on authentic vs. inauthentic texts?
2. Does instruction on self-monitoring strategy have any significant effect on EFL learners' reading comprehension performance on authentic vs. inauthentic texts?
3. Does instruction on metacognitive strategies have any significant effect on EFL learners' metacognitive awareness?

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1. Participants

Three intact classes, including 73 university students (40 females and 33 males) majoring in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) at Urmia University, were selected for the purpose of this study. Their age ranged from 20 to 25. They were Persian native speakers. The subjects were assigned to groups by the university. Two classes were randomly assigned as experimental groups and the last one as the control group. Their homogeneity in terms of language proficiency was established through TOEFL. In order to establish the homogeneity of the three groups in terms of general language proficiency, a one-way ANOVA was conducted to examine the probable difference among the performance of the three groups (EG1, EG2, and CG) before the experiment. The results indicated that there was not any significant difference between the mean scores of the subjects in the two experimental groups and the control group. Furthermore, they were homogeneous regarding eight years of English education in school and L1 background.

#### 3.2. Instrumentation

To probe the research questions posed by the researcher, three instruments were utilized:

##### a. *The Test of English as a Foreign Language* (TOEFL, version 2005)

This test was administered as a standardized measure to check the homogeneity of subjects in terms of language and also it was used as a criterion to validate teacher-made reading comprehension test. This TOEFL test consists of 100 items of three sections of structure and written expressions (40 items), vocabulary (30 items) and reading comprehension (30 items). Due to administrative limitations listening comprehension section was not included. The reliability of the test, as estimated against KR - 21 measure of internal consistency, turned out as .081 in the pilot study.

##### b. *SILL Questionnaire (version 7.0)*

In the present study, Oxford's (1990) Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) was chosen for this study because it is "perhaps the most comprehensive classification of learning strategies to date" (Ellis, 2008, p. 539) and has been widely utilized. Its Cronbach alpha reliability coefficients range from 0.89 to 0.98. Its validity rests on its predictive and correlative link with language performance as well as its confirmed relationship to sensory preferences (Oxford, 1996). This questionnaire was given before and after strategy instruction to ask the students about the frequency with which they used these two metacognitive strategies (planning and self-monitoring). SILL is composed of 50 items in six categories, in which part D is related to metacognitive strategies. SILL consists of series of statements such as "I try to find out how to be a better learner of English" to which students are asked to respond to a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (never or almost never) to 5 (always or almost always).

##### c. *A reading comprehension test*

This teacher-made reading comprehension test includes two sections of authentic and inauthentic texts. Four authentic reading texts were selected from Reader's Digest (September and February issues, 2005) which has interesting, popular, universal, and reader-friendly topics (Hwang, 2005). The magazine was chosen because according to Porter Ladousse (1999), magazines are example of authentic materials. Furthermore, they include different types of text with various illustrations which help students in implementing language learning strategies. Inauthentic reading comprehension texts were selected from chapters two, seven and nine of their course book, Reading Skillfully III (Mirhassani, 2003). It was taught during the course of Reading Comprehension III. On the whole, this reading comprehension test included 40 multiple choice questions.

In order to assess the reliability of the reading comprehension test, the reading comprehension test was pretested with a sample group of 35 students having characteristics similar to the target group. Then after interpreting the collected data, five weak, malfunctioning and non-functioning items were removed from the whole test, and some were modified. After modification, estimated internal consistency measures (KR-21) revealed that the adequate reliability of 0.81 was attained.

To establish the empirical validity of the reading comprehension test, the Pearson product-moment correlation between the reading comprehension tests (authentic and inauthentic) and TOEFL were calculated respectively as 0.67 and 0.60 which are significant at 0.05 level of significance.

### 3.3. Procedure

At the first phase, the TOEFL (2005 version) was administered to all the students. As it was mentioned above, it was used both to homogenize students regarding language proficiency and as a criterion to validate the reading comprehension test.

**Table 1: Levene Test of Homogeneity of Variances for the Three Groups**

Levene Test of Homogeneity of Variances			
Leven Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
1.207	2	90	.267

At the second phase (next session), version 7.0 of the SILL that is a self-report instrument was administered to all groups. It assessed the frequency with which the subjects used a variety of techniques for foreign language learning. It was given before strategy instruction to ask the students about the frequency with which they used these two metacognitive strategies. On average, students completed the SILL within 25 minutes.

At the third phase, experimental groups received instruction on planning and self-monitoring based on CALLA model. They received treatment on metacognitive strategies for five sessions, each lasting ninety minutes during the semester. All three groups worked on authentic and inauthentic texts from both Readers' Digest and Reading Skillfully III, respectively.

The five steps of the CALLA model were utilized in this study in order to teach planning and self-monitoring strategies:

1. **Preparation:** Efficient strategy training needs a plenty of preparation including both input and output from the students. Firstly, the instructor is required to elicit information from the students so as to be aware of the students' needs and to make proper decisions about which strategies to teach and how to teach them (Chamot & O'Malley, 1994).

2. **Presentation:** In this stage, the teacher presents a specific strategy or set of strategies to learners. It is helpful to make students explicitly think about the strategy, discuss it, and remember it. The teacher informs students about how the strategy is utilized, why it is significant and how it is used for the specific task at hand, models it, and provides the students with several examples (Oxford, et al., 1990).

3. **Practice:** In this stage, the teacher provides learners with the opportunity to practice the targeted strategy or set of strategies. One of the significant elements of this stage is that it is embedded into the regular class work; therefore, learners can make a connection between the new strategy and authentic tasks that they must achieve. It is also crucial that the tasks be challenging enough to require the use of the new strategy, but not so complicated to be devastating (Chamot, et al., 1999).

4. **Evaluation:** In the fourth stage, learners evaluate their use of a specific strategy or strategies and its usefulness. This results into an increase in learner autonomy, and more individualized instruction - both ingredients of good strategy instruction (Chamot & O'Malley, 1994).

5. *Expansion*: In this final stage, learners are shown how to transfer the new strategy to different situations or tasks, and given opportunities to practice it (Chamot, et al., 1999).

At the fourth phase, SILL questionnaire and reading comprehension test were administered to all groups.

#### 4. Results

In order to establish the homogeneity of the three groups in terms of general language proficiency, a one-way ANOVA was conducted to examine the probable difference among the performance of the three groups (EG1, EG2, and CG) before the experiment. The results indicated that there was not any significant difference between the mean scores of the subjects in the two experimental groups and the control group.

**Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for the Three Groups Performance on TOEFL**

	N	Mean	SD	Standard error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower bound	Upper bound		
Control	31	56.30	15.746	2.185	51.34	63.08	29	99
Planning	31	64.26	16.890	3.105	58.54	71.43	30	99
Monitoring	31	56.75	13.528	2.384	52.43	62.46	38	99
Total	93	60.17	1.406	1.064	56.87	63.58	29	99

In order to probe the first and the second null hypotheses, and examine the effectiveness of metacognitive strategies and compare their improvement with their counterparts in the control group, all the three groups took part in the same reading comprehension tests after completing the instruction. In order to test these two null hypotheses, the statistical technique of multivariate ANOVA was run since we had two independent variables (planning and self-monitoring) and two independent variables (authentic and inauthentic texts).

As Table 3 shows, the three groups have significant difference in their performance on reading comprehension tests but the difference in the two experimental groups is not significant.

**Table 3: Pairwise Comparisons of the Three Groups on the Reading Comprehension Test**  
Measure: MEASURE\_1

(I) GROUP	(J) GROUP	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig. <sup>a</sup>	95 % Confidence Interval for Difference a	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
CG	EG 1	-1.781 *	.479	.000	-2.854	-.921
	EG 2	-1.684 *	.479	.003	-2.521	-.581
EG 1	CG	1.718 *	.479	.000	.921	2.854
	EG 2	.415	.479	.402	-.581	1.388
EG 2	CG	1.468 *	.479	.000	.581	2.521
	EG 1	-.415	.479	.402	-1.388	.581

Based on estimated marginal means

\*. The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

a. Adjustment for multiple comparisons: Least Significant Difference (equivalent to no adjustments).

The results of the Tests of Between-Subjects Effects (Table 4) compare the mean scores of the three groups on the authentic and inauthentic sections of reading comprehension test. The F-values for the authentic and inauthentic sections are 5845.1 and 8.504 respectively. At 2 and 90 degrees of freedom, these F-values are greater than the critical value of 3.09 indicating that the three groups performed differently on the two tests.

**Table 4: Test of Between-subjects Effect**

Measure: MEASURE\_1

Transformed Variable: Average

Source	Type III Sum	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
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	of Squares				
<b>Intercept</b>	31095.458	1	39019.548	5845.189	.000
<b>GROUP</b>	120.632	2	60.113	8.504	.000
<b>Error</b>	640.652	90	7.114		

Table 5 shows that mean difference in two authentic and inauthentic tests is significant.

**Table 5: Pairwise Comparisons of the Authentic and Inauthentic Tests**

(I) TEST	(J) TEST	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig. <sup>a</sup>	95 % Confidence Interval for Difference <sup>a</sup>	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1	2	.952 *	.217	.000	.561	1.367
2	1	-.952 *	.217	.000	-1.367	-.561

Based on estimated marginal means

\*. The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

a. Adjustment for multiple comparisons: Least Significant Difference (equivalent to no adjustments).

In order to probe the last null hypothesis and examine the effect of metacognitive instruction on EFL learners' metacognitive awareness, three paired samples t-tests were conducted (Table 6). As the level of significance shows, it is smaller than .05 in experimental groups. Therefore, metacognitive strategy instructions have positive effect on experimental groups' metacognitive awareness. As the last row of Table 4 shows, level of significance is bigger than .05, in other words, there is no significant difference in the control group awareness. It can be concluded that the third null hypothesis is rejected.

**Table 6: Results of the Paired-samples T- tests in SILL Questionnaire in EG1, EG2, & CG**

	Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2- Tailed)
	Mean	SD	Std Error of Mean	95 % confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
Pair 1 SILL1- SILL2 (EG1)	-.285	3.248	.582	-7.438	-5.063	-10.813	30	.000
Pair 1 SILL1- SILL2 (EG2)	-.094	1.767	.323	-5.737	-4.464	-16.201	30	.000
Pair 1 SILL1- SILL2 (CG)	.0956	.30056	.05403	-.01351	.21713	1.813	30	.83

## 5. Discussion and Conclusion

The current study investigated the effectiveness of metacognitive strategies (planning & self-monitoring) instruction and the probable effect of text type (authentic and inauthentic texts) on the EFL learners' performance in reading comprehension tests. Moreover, this research explored the effectiveness of metacognitive strategy instruction on EFL learners' metacognitive awareness.

The first null hypothesis predicting that planning strategy instruction has no significant effect on the learners reading comprehension performance was rejected. As the results showed, the first experimental group

outperformed the control group. Besides, it showed that the subjects performed better in the authentic reading comprehension tests than the inauthentic ones.

The second null hypothesis stating that self-monitoring strategy instruction has no significant effect on the learners' reading comprehension performance was also rejected. As the results showed the second experimental group outperformed the control group (CG). Moreover, it showed that the subjects' performance in the authentic reading comprehension test was better than the inauthentic one like the first experimental group.

Considering the third null hypothesis, i.e., metacognitive strategy instruction has no significant effect on EFL learners' metacognitive awareness, three-paired sample tests were run to examine the degree of EFL learners' awareness. It showed that students' awareness significantly increased after metacognitive strategy instruction.

The major concern of the present study was to explore the effectiveness of metacognitive strategies instruction on the reading comprehension performance of the EFL students and their awareness to metacognitive strategies. As it was shown, the experimental groups outperformed the control group on the reading comprehension performance. Thus, the metacognitive strategy instruction seems to have contributed to the progress of students' reading comprehension performance. In other words, the explicit instruction and practice the experimental groups received about how to plan and how to monitor their reading, contributed to this improvement. In addition, the findings of this study indicate that metacognitive strategies instruction increases the experimental groups' metacognitive awareness. Meanwhile, it should be mentioned that both experimental and control groups outperformed in the authentic section of the reading comprehension test.

The findings of this study support other empirical studies on the effect of strategy instruction on reading comprehension performance (Mokhtari & Reichard, 2002; Philip & Kim Hua, 2006; Trenchs Parera, 2006). Moreover, it can be asserted that the model (CALLA) used to teach metacognitive strategies was a practical and useful one. The findings are also in line with the positive effect of authentic materials on learners' reading comprehension performance and support other researchers' findings (Hauptman, 2000; Pritchard & Nasr, 2004). In addition, the findings of this study support the following researchers' findings on the correlation among metacognitive strategies, authenticity and reading comprehension in EAP context like Ems-Wilson, 2000, Smith, 2003, and Cain, 2004.

## 6. Implications of the Study

The findings of this study offer several pedagogical implications for learners, teachers, and textbook writers in the realm of TEFL in particular and education in general. Consciousness-raising can play an important role in teaching reading comprehension strategies as the findings suggest. Therefore, teachers can implement this technique in the process of teaching reading and help the learners make significant improvements. Readers might benefit from an instructional procedure where they learn to monitor their comprehension and use the various strategies with the help of a teacher who models the steps of the instructional process, and where they discuss their strategies while reading the text.

## 7. Limitations of the Study and Suggestions for Further Research

This study is limited in terms of having two metacognitive strategies for instruction and also not considering gender as a variable. Therefore, this research needs other enough replications, and further studies are needed to shed more light on the issue.

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# A STUDY ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF DYNAMIC ASSESSMENT ON IRANIAN INTERMEDIATE EFL LEARNERS' ORAL PROFICIENCY

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## Abstract.

The present investigation was an attempt to study the effectiveness of dynamic assessment on Iranian intermediate EFL learners' oral proficiency. To that end, an OPT test was administered to 110 EFL students learning English language in institutes. Learners who scored between one above and below the standard deviation were selected for the study, because this study focused on intermediate learners. So 40 learners were selected for this study and they were divided into experimental and control group, each group contained 20 learners. Then a speaking test was administered to both groups as a pre-test to take their initial knowledge of oral performance. The speaking section of the PET test was selected to test the oral performance of the participants. The experimental group used dynamic assessment in twenty sessions. The control group did not receive treatment. Finally both groups sat for the post-test for speaking test. The results were computed and analyzed through SPSS and it was explored that dynamic assessment had a positive effect on Iranian EFL learners' oral performance. The results also indicated that there was no significant difference between males and females in this research.

Key words: Dynamic Assessment, Formative Assessment, Oral Proficiency

## INTRODUCTION

To appreciate the radical departure from current understandings of assessment that DA represents, some remarks concerning the privileged place of formal assessments are in order. In the discussion that follows, most of the comments pertain directly to assessments that make use of formal testing instruments and only indirectly to other forms of assessment. In this regard, the traditional distinction between *summative* and *formative* assessment will be followed. According to Bachman (1990: 60-61), the goal of summative assessment is simply to report on the outcomes of learning after instruction is complete, while formative assessment is intended to feed back into teaching by providing important information regarding learners' strengths and weaknesses that can then be used for subsequent instructional decisions. While formative assessments are usually developed by classroom teachers or groups of teachers for use within their instructional settings, summative assessments are generally associated with externally-imposed, large-scale tests whose administration and scoring procedures have been standardized in order to control for factors (e.g., allotted time, language in which questions are asked, sequence of items, etc.) that might obscure the ability being assessed (see Bachman & Palmer 1996 for a useful discussion of test design). Underlying such assessment practices is the belief that human abilities exist as discrete variables whose presence and intensity can be quantified for measurement (Ratner 1997:14). The resultant scores are then used to compare the abilities of large numbers of individuals, which is particularly important for making various high-stakes decisions, including the allocation of funds to schools and programs, the acceptance of students into colleges and universities, and the awarding of diplomas and certifications (Shohamy 1999). Sophisticated statistical procedures are used to ensure that the scores themselves represent accurate measures of underlying abilities.

## STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

While similar tasks are used to assess learning, consider the following account of learning and assessment in this approach: “the major difference between assessment tasks and learning tasks is that in learning tasks, teachers need to conduct appropriate pre-task, while-task and post-tasks activities to ensure that learners can complete the tasks satisfactorily” (Candlin, 2001, p. 237). This description is revealing in that it betrays an enduring orientation toward assessment that has been carried over from standardized tests and that is perhaps the primary source of difference between assessment and instruction: the tester’s goal of controlling all variables that might jeopardize an accurate measurement of an individual’s abilities, understood to be represented by his solo performance. That is, the very kinds of interactions, feedback, supporting materials, and assistance that usually characterize good instruction, and in the task-based framework are necessary to help learners complete a given task, are not permitted if that same task is used for assessment purposes because they would obscure the learners’ “true” abilities.

An important goal of many language learners, teachers, and program and material designers is foreign language fluency. To communicate clearly and naturally with native speakers of a language is the end that makes the means of studying, memorizing vocabulary, and practicing the language worth the effort. Achieving ‘fluency’ through foreign language education, however, has focused historically on the standard, written language, rather than the acquisition of conversational competence.

What the present study is trying to do is to integrate dynamic assessment into language classes in order to improve EFL learners’ oral proficiency.

### Significance of the study

DA takes into account the results of an intervention. In this intervention, the examiner teaches the examinee how to perform better on individual items or on the test as a whole. The final score may be a learning score representing the difference between pretest (before learning) and posttest (after learning) scores, or it may be the score on the posttest considered alone. (ibid.) In DA, then, the focus is “on modifiability and on producing suggestions for interventions that appear successful in facilitating improved learner performance” (Lidz1991: 6), while in SA no attempt is made to change the examinee’s performance (Haywood, Brown & Wingenfeld 1990).

### Review of the Related Literature

Joseph Lebber did a research on Dynamic assessment of learning progresses in children with developmental disabilities. He elaborated on three case studies of children; one with autism, one with brain damage and one with Down syndrome. He showed that DA is able to visualize modifiability of cognitive functions and learning disposition that these can be enhanced and how this can be done: through meditational learning. Amy M. Elleman explored Dynamic Assessment as a means of identifying children at-risk of developing comprehension difficulties. She found out that DA allows the professionals to ascertain where the breakdown in skills occurs which serves to inform effective remediation.

Alex Kozulin and Erica Grab studied Dynamic assessment of EFL text comprehension of at risk students. The study indicated that the procedure is both feasible and effective in obtaining information on students learning potential. It was confirmed that students with a similar performance level demonstrate different, and in some cases dramatically different ability to learn and use new text comprehension strategies. Zhang yanhong conducted two studies based on Dynamic assessment; the first is Dynamic assessment mode for online EFL writing classes. The researcher found out that owing to the timely help in terms of writing strategies, reference materials and encouraging remarks by the teacher, which does not only bring out students' initiative but also lead to harmonious interaction and cooperation between them, such dynamic assessment greatly improves students' writing abilities.

The second study by this researcher is constructing Dynamic Assessment mode in college English writing classes. It is proposed that such an assessment mode should provide graduated and contingent scaffolding instructional mediation according to the developmental needs of students in the process of writing, thus reflecting the dialectical integration of assessment and instruction, and making it possible to enhance both teaching and the development of students' writing ability. A case study of dynamic assessment in EFL process writing has been done by Lan Xiaoxiao Taishan medical university and Liu Yan Shandong agricultural university. This study was done on 30 English majors in college of foreign languages. The investigators studied the process writing ability of the students. The study was designed to test the effect of using Dynamic Assessment framework on students’ writing ability and motivation by providing mediation as a vehicle for promoting students to span the ZPD established by the distance between them and their teacher or peers in a

writing task and achieve the aim of enhancing their writing competence. The findings confirmed the realization of the central objectives: 1) Learners' writing ability can be substantially and comprehensively improved; 2) Learners' motivation of writing can be markedly stimulated.

Monika Knobel conducted the Dynamic assessment of written language. This study was conducted to investigate the effectiveness of two types of dynamic assessment approaches, the graduated prompt and mediated learning experience, in assessing the composition writing of students with a learning disability and poor writers without a learning disability. Ten poor writers and eleven students with a learning disability from grades seven and eight wrote a composition using the spontaneous writing sample of the Test of Written Language-3. Since all students performed poorly on their initial composition, they were assessed using the graduated prompt approach to ascertain the number and type of prompts needed to improve written language.

Findings revealed that students as a group significantly benefitted from intervention with the graduated prompt however, compositions written by four poor writers without a learning disability and eight students with a learning disability did not improve by ten percent or did not score above the 25th percentile using the TOWL-3 composite. These students continued on in the study and received intervention through a mediated learning experience (MLE). As a group, students significantly benefitted with further individualized intervention from MLE. Maintenance of learning was found on posttest for poor writers and students with a learning disability who benefitted from the graduated prompt approach. Poor writers without a learning disability generally required low levels of prompting whereas poor writers with a learning disability required higher level prompting. The results of this study suggest that the graduated prompt approach and MLE were effective methods of assessment for poor writers with and without a learning disability in recognizing potential to learn.

Mostafa Taghizadeh and Vahid Bahrami (2014) explore how dynamic assessment (DA) affects lexical inferencing ability of Iranian intermediate learners of English as a foreign language (EFL). 44 students participated in this study, 21 in the experimental and 23 in the control group. The experimental group participated in two DA sessions in which participants were provided with appropriate mediation upon failure to make correct inferences as to the meaning of the unknown words. A combination of Buddof's Test-Train-Test model, and graduated prompting assessment model and Sternberg and Grigorenko's cake format was used during DA sessions. The control group participants were explicitly taught strategies of lexical inferencing based on the taxonomy of knowledge sources proposed by Bengeleil & Paribakht (2004). To find how DA affects learners' lexical inferencing ability their pre-DA performance was compared with their post-DA performance through paired sample t-test. The posttest scores of the two groups were also compared through independent t-test. The findings suggested that DA can be used as an effective instructional tool to help learners enhance their lexical inference ability.

### Materials and Methods

In this study Oxford Placement Test Was used to make sure of the homogeneity of the groups. The speaking section of PET test was used as pretest and posttest of oral performance.

### Data Analysis Procedure

The results of post test were analyzed for further discussion via ANCOVA on the scores obtained from experimental and control group to see whether dynamic assessment had any effects on EFL learners' oral performance.

### Results

A descriptive statistical analysis was done on the collected data of OPT (Oxford Placement Test) test. The results are shown in Table (4-1).

**Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for the Proficiency Test**

N	Mean	SD
110	32	10.32

This table shows the result obtained from the proficiency test, OPT. The mean and standard deviation are presented.

Table (4-2) shows the number of students who took the pre-test and post-test. It should be mentioned that no one excluded.

**Table 2: Number of Students Participated in Pre-test and Post-test Cases**

Included N	Excluded Percent		Total N Percent		N	Percent
Pre-test*group	40	100%	0	0%	40	100%
Pre-test*group	40	100%	0	0%	40	100%

Forty participants were selected for this study. They were divided into two groups, experimental and control. The descriptive statistical analysis done on the collected data of pre-test and post-test is shown in table (4-3).

**Table 3: Descriptive statistical analysis done on the collected data of pre-test and post-test**

Group		Pre-test	Post-test
Experimental	Mean	59.9	68.4
	N	20	20
	SD	4.8	4.7
Control	Mean	58.45	58.1
	N	20	20
	SD	5.64	5.2
Total	Mean	59.15	63.25
	N	40	40
	SD	5.216	7.121

### Interpretive Statistics

Analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) is particularly appropriate when subjects in two or more groups are found to differ on a pre-test or other initial variable. In this case, the effects of the pre-test and/or other relevant variables are partialled out, and the resulting adjusted means of the post-test scores are compared. Through ANCOVA differences in the initial status of the groups can be removed statistically so that they can be compared as though their initial status had been equated. In this study, in order to investigate the research hypothesis "Dynamic assessment has no effects on Iranian EFL learners' oral proficiency.", the differences between mean scores of pre-test and post-test of control and experimental group were calculated through ANCOVA.

In order to examine the equality of variances, Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances was run. It tests the null hypothesis that the error variance of the dependent variable is equal across groups.

**Table 4: Levine's Test of Equality of Error Variance**

F	df1	df2	Sig
.26	1	38	.61

According to table (4.5) the calculated F is not meaningful. So there is equality of variances and ANCOVA can be run.

The data in table (4.6) are related to test of homogeneity of regression. Before running covariance, between-subjects effects of pre-test-group should be investigated.

Table 5: Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Source	Type III Sum of Square	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Corrected Model	1879.82	3	626.61	230.93	.00
Group (a)	17.86	1	17.86	6.6	.015
Pretest (b)	802.97	1	802	295.95	.00
Group*pretest(a*b)	.41	1	.41	.15	.7
Error	97.68	36	2.71		
Total	46200	40			

As table (4.6) shows, between -subjects effect (a\*b) is not significance ( $F=0.15$  ,  $Sig=0.7$ ). It shows that the data supports homogeneity of regression. Therefore, covariance should be run just for between - subjects effect of post-test and group to show whether mean scores of two groups are the same or not. The results of this analysis are demonstrated in table (4.7).

Table 6: Mean and Corrected Mean of oral performance

Source	Posttest		Corrected Mean	
	M	SD	M	SE
Experimental	38.4	4.7	37.77	.36
Control	28.1	5.11	28.72	.36

Table (4.6) shows the corrected means of dependent variable oral performance. The data demonstrate that the means of the experimental group are upper than the control group. Sum of analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) of oral performance in the experimental and the control group after eliminating between-subjects effect is demonstrated in table (4.7):

Table 7: Sum of analysis of covariance

Source	Type III Sum of Square	df	Mean Square	F	Sig	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	1879.415	2	939.71	354.48	.00	.95
Pretest	818.52	1	818.52	308.76	.00	.89
Group	805.42	1	805.48	303.84	.00	.89
Error	98.08	37	2.65			
Total	46200	40				

As it can be seen, the corrected model ( $f=00$ ,  $F=354.48$ ) is statistically significant. The results ( $F=303.84$  ,  $Sig=.00$ ,  $Eta=.89$ ) shows that there is a difference between two groups. It means that there is significant difference between experimental and control group. As a result the null hypothesis "Dynamic assessment has no effects on Iranian EFL learners' oral proficiency." will be rejected, so it can be concluded that the students' oral performance can be improved by using dynamic assessment.

## Conclusion

In this study, DA was instantiated within the context of a pedagogical task, rather than during the administration of a formal test. This has direct implications for classroom practices, where teachers' assessments of learning are often high-stakes but lack systematicity (Rea-Dickins & Gardner 2000) and tend to be guided by affective concerns for learners rather than by a theoretical understanding of development (Torrance & Pryor 1998). The present study builds on the recommendations of Poehner and Lantolf (2005) and provides empirical support for their claim that DA principles can make classroom formative assessment practices more effective by

providing assistance that is continually tuned and retuned to learners' needs. The inclusion of interaction brought to light the extent of learners' understanding and control over linguistic forms and their relation to meaning, and also helped with the identification of problems underlying poor performance. Evidence was also presented to suggest that interaction provided an opportunity for these problems to be addressed and for learners to develop. The central claim of the study, then, is that the dynamic procedures unified instruction and assessment as a single activity, with the result that both mediator and learner came to better understand the latter's abilities, and this positioned both of them to optimally promote those abilities through sustained interaction. The fact that the learners themselves arrived at a greater awareness of their abilities, as evidenced by the verbalization data, is especially important. To the researcher's knowledge, this point has not been discussed in the DA literature. However, it is an excellent illustration of Vygotsky's (1986) argument that the goal of instruction should be to render the invisible visible. Mediation led not only to improved performance but also to learners' enhanced understanding of the processes underlying that performance. For Vygotsky this is a necessary for increased self-regulation.

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# THE ROLE OF SCREEN CAPTURE TECHNOLOGY IN TRANSLATION: A CASE STUDY OF PROCESS-ORIENTED TRANSLATION FROM ENGLISH INTO PERSIAN

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## Abstract

The present study aims to undertake an empirical study regarding using screen capture technology in translation from English into Persian. Screen capture technology refers to digital recording of actions on a computer screen. The study shows how a researcher, making use of screen capture, can obtain information regarding the difficulties and issues involved in the process of translation. In this study, four professional translators with at least five years of experience and four novice translators who were graduate students of translation at the same time their performance on the computer screen was recorded by means of a screen capture application. The data provided valuable information such as pause, revision, monitoring, using dictionaries, translation unit, shortcut and internal searching in the process of translation. Using such a tool, one could significantly reduce the previous disadvantages in translation process research using think-aloud protocols which made the participants conscious of being studied. Lastly, the study touches on a number of advantages of using this method as well as its limitations.

**Keywords:** Screen capture, translation process, translation research, introspective Methods

## 1. Introduction

Translation process research digs into the process of translation, and endeavors to comprehend what goes ahead in the brain of translator when he/she translates. Dimitrova (2010, p. 406) cleared up that it means to "comprehend the way of the cognitive included in deciphering, with an emphasis on the individual translator". Krings (1986, as referred to in Göpferich & Jääskeläinen, 2009) was maybe the first to do a complete research on the cognitive process of translation by utilizing verbally process conventions. Translation process research, in any case, is not by any means a simple errand since its question of examination is not straightforwardly noticeable.

That is the reason the research approach in process-oriented research is the center of enthusiasm among distinctive researchers. As it were, to a certain degree it appears that process research has been approach driven as opposed to question-driven (Alvstad et al, 2011, p.1).

Systems in process-oriented research are isolated into two gatherings of introspective and retrospective. The former gathers information amid the translation process, and the latter accumulates data directly after the translation is finished. In the following section of the article, popular methods of process-oriented research are discussed briefly.

### Think-aloud Protocol

Various scholars such as Jääskeläinen (1999) and Tirkkonen-Condit (1989) have used think-aloud protocols (TAP), the groundwork of which was laid by Ericsson and Simon (1984) from the field of cognitive psychology. Hansen (2005), however, has thrown doubt on the validity of TAPs by setting forth some basic questions and criticisms. She stated that TAP can influence the translation process. She also raised the possibility that by the use of TAP "there is much we do not discover" since a great deal of mental process of translators does not get verbalized. Hansen also maintained that data derived from TAP are so conglomerated that it is almost impossible to separate "memories, reflections, justifications, explanations, emotions and experiences" from each

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other. Toury (1995) also took the same stance and suspected that the method would affect the final product of translators. Jakobsen (2003) concluded that TAP delayed the process of translation and caused more typos. He stated that TAP makes translators process text in smaller segments. However, the experiment also showed that TAP Screen Capture Technology in Translation Process Research has positive impact on content revision thus enhancing translation quality. All in all, TAP has become a widely used method in translation-oriented research.

### Eye-tracking Tools

Tracking the eye movements of translators gives insight into the cognitive efforts translators make during the translation process. Furthermore, it could be also used as a demarcation means to distinguish between the two phases of source text (ST) understanding and target text (TT) production. Pavlovic and Jensen (2009) used an eye-tracking device to explore the cognitive efforts invested by translators by means of four indicators, namely total gaze time, average fixation duration, total task length and pupil dilation. Angelone et al (2011) recognized eye fixation and regression as two important signs by the help of which they sought to interpret the cognitive process underlying the translation task. The integration of this method into other means such as interviews, TAPs and Translog provides researchers with a vantage point by the help of which they can distinguish between different phases of translation process.

### Translog

Translog is an application which records the keyboard and mouse activity during translation. Jakobsen (2011:37) states that "the Translog software was originally only developed to record translators' key strokes in time. A complete, timed sequence of keystrokes provides a detailed overview of the entire typing process by which a translation comes into existence." After the completion of the translation task, the information is recorded as log file which could be both replayed sequentially or viewed manually. The application of Translog into translation research was first developed by Jakobsen (1999) (see Jakobsen & Schou, 1999). *Translation Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 40, Winter 2013

### Screen Capture Technology

Screen capture also known as screen cam or video screen capture, a product of early 90s, is the technology of recording the ongoing process and activities on the screen of a computer. The output is a video file containing the recordings of a computer screen. Screen capture software is used as a pedagogical means in teachers' curriculum. Screen captures are often accompanied by narration. It can also be used in conferences and seminars where the recoding of the screen on which presentations are played cannot be done properly by video cameras

## 2. Aim of the Research

In translation process research, a few studies have made use of screen capture technology. PACTE group (2011) used the software Camtasia to study translation competence, though the idea of using this software remain vague throughout the paper since they give almost no clue as to how they used Camtasia and how translator's behaviour could be reflected through the software. Lauffer (2009) used the software to see how translators consult dictionaries and other sources such as the internet. She replayed the recorded video for the translators so that they could comment on their own translations. Another case was Asadi and Séguinot (2005) who used the software Camtasia to record the performance of translators on computer screens to study their strategies and shortcuts. In product-oriented training situations, translation students are guided to see where slips were made and the sorts of mistakes made, however they are regularly not urged to reconsider their own choices, methods and practices that prompted the blunders. Besides, late studies have shown that understudy issue regularly needs to be probed in more detail (Göpferich 2008, p. 36). The traditional scope leads to a shallow comprehension of the nature and extent of issues experienced.

In this manner, the present study intends to concentrate on the process of translation, which is the thing that goes on in translators' mind and different methodologies they use in their process of translation. Specifically, this study aims at comparing the translation process of English-Persian professional and novice translators in terms of difficulties, ambiguities, information resource management and unit of translation.



## Methodology

### Participants

The research population of this study included four professional translators with at least five years of experience and four novice translators who were graduate students of translation. The premises for choosing translators as professionals and novices was that: 1. The professional translators had to have at least 4 years of experience. However, this did not only function as the mere character, it was assumed that high quality of translation could be a very important feature of translation quality of professionals. However, novice translators had to be still under training.

### Instruments

The participants were given a typing test to be ensured of their homogenous ability in typing. This was done to avoid the risk that their lack of typing skills would not interfere with the final results.

Table 1. Typing Speed of the Professional Translators

Participant	Gross speed	Accuracy	Net Speed
A <sub>1</sub>	34	92	31
A <sub>2</sub>	35	95	33
A <sub>3</sub>	30	90	27
A <sub>4</sub>	35	96	34

By gross speed, we mean the overall number of words a translator types in two minutes. Accuracy is the percentage of correctness of the typing performance, and finally, net speed is about the number of correct words a translator could type in two minutes.

Table 1 shows the results of the typing tests of the professional translators. The typing speed of the professionals, the first translator (A1) typed a total number of 34 words, 92% of which were correctly put on the page. The second one (A2) had a slightly better performance as the total words were 35 and the accuracy was 95%, meaning that he could type 33 correct words per two minutes. The third translator (A3) had the lowest speed yet not significantly low. His gross speed was 30 and his accuracy was estimated as 90%. The fourth translator (A4) had the best performance by possessing 96% typing accuracy and holding a net and gross speed of 34 and 36 words respectively.

Table 2. Typing Speed of the Novice Translators

Participant	Gross speed	Accuracy	Net Speed
B <sub>1</sub>	30	93	28
B <sub>2</sub>	26	96	25
B <sub>3</sub>	32	90	30
B <sub>4</sub>	34	98	33

Table 2 shows the results of the typing abilities of novice translators. The first translator (B1) typed an overall number of 30 words, with an accuracy of 93%. The second one (B2) typed total words were 26 and his accuracy was 96%, which meant that he could type 25 correct words per two minutes. The third translator's (B3) gross speed was 32, and his accuracy was estimated as 90%. His net speed was estimated as 30 words per two minutes. The fourth translator (B4) had the best performance by possessing 98% typing accuracy and holding a net and gross speed of 33 and 34 words respectively.

By and large, the translators, both professionals and novices, possessed the same typing skills. Their typing accuracy for examples ranged between 90% and 98%. The least number of words typed in two minutes was 26 while the highest number was 35. The lowest and highest typing skills were respectively 25 and 34 words.

### a. Source Text

The corpus to be utilized as a part of this study was bilingual and parallel. The corpus involved a 600-word paragraph on History. It was necessary that the text involves novel terms and phrases so that the activity

of translators, with respect to the exploitation of dictionaries and other sources, could be probed. The text level of difficulty was measured via the use of FLESCH readability formula.

#### **b. Software**

The screen recording application employed in this research was BlueBerry Software Ltd® called BB Flashback Pro 3 Recorder. Besides screen recording, the software possesses numerous other capabilities such as webcam recording and sound recording. The software also functions as a player in which time, key strokes, pauses are all displayed. Known as key log, this information can be exported from the recorded file as a separate text file.

### **4. Screen Capturing Findings**

The translators' behavior via screen recording is observable through six features as elaborated and illustrated in the following together with some qualitative observations made during the analysis:

#### **Pause**

The participants paused while endeavoring to peruse and comprehend the source text, beginning the new unit of translation and experiencing hard and obscure structures and lexical things. Clearly, pauses happened when translators were going to check word references. This could be a sign that pauses that happen before dictionary checking is identified with ST cognizance, while those that are made after dictionary checking are identified with TT production. The same thing could be watched when interpreters paused before revision. Different pauses were those that were made amid the production of TT and those that happened where the process of interpretation was intruded. It ought to likewise be noticed that a few pauses are not assignment related which ought to be wiped out in the examination. It may be assumed that translation with a greater number of pauses are likewise more than those with less pauses, nonetheless, this is not generally the situation. Translation completion duration is not only the matter of pauses, but it is also dependent on how long each of the pauses are, and also on other behavioral features such as dictionary use and revision where there is no progress made in text production.

#### **Revision**

As was likewise expressed previously, revisions were frequently happened after a pause. On the other hand, in a percentage of the cases they were likewise trailed by a pause which demonstrates of a psychological exertion translators experience to alter TT. Moreover, the study likewise found that in a couple of cases, a few translators experience a fast adjustment, or they choose changing rapidly a textual thing a few times. This is termed as immediate revision. A percentage of the translators did not modify any piece of their text immediately.

#### **Shortcut**

Translation as a choice making process includes diverse procedures which translators regards commendable under certain conditions specific events, and receiving shortcuts as a system is in no way, shape or form an exemption. Research on the nature and sorts of these shortcuts could just be examined by method for test or process-situated strategies since the investigation of translation item gives no educate this respect. The recorded shortcuts of the present research's members for the most part incorporated the utilization of online machine translations, for example, google-translation and shortcut keys.

#### **Dictionary and Resource Usage**

In this study, the participants could have access to both computer bilingual and monolingual dictionaries as well as online internet resources. The use of dictionary ranged widely among the subjects. Some of the elements were checked by all of the translators, while others were not. There was always a pause before checking and consulting the resources.

#### **Monitoring**

Monitoring refers to an awareness of the correctness that accompanies the drafting phase of translation. Several instances of monitoring were observed in this study. It was well-documented that most editing happened as the text segment was produced. The monitoring component that scans previously translated segments seems to be running in the background. For example, in one instance, a professional interrupts the text segment in focus to

modify a structure which he had left unchanged two minutes before. In another instance, another translator suddenly backtracked to a previous sentence to correct the spelling of a word.

### Internal Searching

Internal searching is a process in which a translator looks back at his own translation to check an equivalent or decision. In this research, internal searching happened with respect to new terminologies. The professional translators used Ctrl+F to access search toolbar in word processor while the novices searched manually in their document.

## 5. Data Analysis and Discussion

In this section, the quantitative results take from the translation process of novices and professionals are shown in Tables 5 and 6.

Table 5: The Translation Behaviour of the Professionals

Participants	Total time	Pause	Revision	Shortcut	Dictionary and Resources	monitoring	Internal searching
A1	45:56	67	45	2	38	4	1
A2	34:27	50	28	4	20	4	0
A3	39:07	60	32	8	32	6	3
A4	43:26	72	38	1	40	2	4

Table 5 shows the statistics of the translation process of the professionals in this study. The first participant's (A1) total time spent on his translation was almost 46 minutes, which was the longest time compared to other professional translators. He had 67, 45, 2, 28, 4 and 1 cases of pause, revision, shortcut, dictionary and resource management, monitoring and internal searching respectively. As for the second professional translator (A2), the results were not drastically different. He spend almost 34 minutes on his task. By contrast, he had the shortest duration. He also had the lowest usage of three translational behaviours i.e. pauses, revisions and internal searching with 50, 28 and 0 cases respectively. Regarding shortcut, dictionary usage and monitoring, he had 4, 20 and 4 attempts respectively. The third subject's (A3) number of pauses, revisions, shortcuts, dictionary usage, monitoring and internal searching was respectively 60, 32, 8, 17, 6 and 3. The fourth participant (A4) had the second long process of translation. Yet he came first with respect to pauses and internal searching with 72 and 4 cases respectively. The number of his revision, shortcut, dictionary usage, monitoring and internal searching was 38, 1, 23, 2 and 4.

Generally speaking, although there were slight differences between the professional translators, their average number of behaviours was not drastically different from each other. In the next section, the study will follow too focus on the statistics of the novices.

Table 6. The Translation Behaviour of the Novice Translators

Participants	Total time	Pause	Revision	Shortcut	Dictionary and Resources	monitoring	Internal searching
B1	38	78	15	0	30	0	2
B2	63	90	12	0	52	1	3
B3	50	97	18	2	40	0	1
B4	43	84	22	1	43	0	5

Table 6 shows the behaviours of the novice translators. With respect to time allotted to the task the longest is 63 minutes by the second translator (B2) and the shortest is 38 minutes by the first one with the fourth and third participant in the middle respectively with 43 and 50 minutes. The first novice translator's (B1) number of pauses was 78. He had 12 cases of revisions; zero number of shortcuts; 30 cases of dictionary and online resources use; zero monitoring, two internal searching. As for the second novice translator (B2), the results showed that he had 90 number of pauses deemed as highest among others. Yet his revisionary attempts were the least with 12 cases. Likewise the first translators he did not have any attempt to perform shortcut. Another record for this translator is the highest number of dictionary consultation with 52 cases. He had one monitoring effort and two for internal searching. With respect to the third translator (B3), it was found that 97 cases of pauses. 18 cases of the pauses led to revision. He was the first novice translator to undergo shortcut merely with 2 cases. He used dictionaries and online resources for 40 times. No case of monitoring was observed for this participant while only one cases of internal searching was observed. The last participant (B4) was similar in many aspects to the third one. He had 84 cases of pauses. 22 cases of revisions and only one case of shortcut was observed for this translator. 43 dictionary and online resource usages were observed. No monitoring was observed. This participant had the highest number of internal searching compared to other novice translators. A birds' eye view toward the results of the novices' translation process reveals that all in all their translation process features were almost the same with their allocated time as the only exception. 25 minutes difference was observed between the shortest and the longest process.

### Comparison of the Two Groups

In this section the results of the study will be elaborated on focusing on how the two groups differ in terms of process features of their translation.

#### Pauses

Pauses happened mostly before revisions and dictionary usage. Yet some pauses were not followed by any other process features. Pauses are either the result of ST comprehension or TT production. In this study the number of pauses done by the professional translators was significantly less than pauses done by the novices. Yet the amount of time each professional translator spent on his pause was in numerous cases more than the novice translators. This means that the professional translators' unit of translation was larger than those of the novices. In many cases this was approved, when a professional used sentence as his unit of translation while in the same context the novice used word or phrase as the unit of translation as the professionals number of pauses is closer to the number of source text sentences i.e. 28 sentences. Apparently, taking sentences as the unit of translation takes more time thus the result.

#### Revisions

The cases of revisions in the four professional translators were significantly more than the novice translators. The highest number for the novices was 22 while 48 for the professionals, almost more than twice more than the professionals. Even the minimum number of revisions in professional translators was 28 which is higher than even the maximum number of revisions in the novices. Therefore, the professionals were more sensitive to their translation choice and its quality.

#### Shortcuts

Although the frequency of this feature was low in both groups, the professionals used it more than the novices. The novices use of shortcuts were limited to keyboard shortcut keys such as Ctrl+c for copy command and Ctrl+v for paste command. However, for the professional translators the features were a little more advanced. They used previously translated documents or internet searching engines to lay their hand on ready-made equivalents.

#### Dictionary and Online Resource Usage

The use of dictionaries and online resource did not differ significantly except for one of the participants. Yet in general, the novices consulted dictionaries more often than their professional counterparts.

#### Monitoring

The use of monitoring as a strategy or process feature was more frequently observed in the professional translators. Only one use of this feature showed that monitoring was exclusively a feature of the professional translators.

### **Internal searching**

As could be observed from Tables 5 and 6, the use of internal searching was more in the novice translators. However, professional translators operationalize this feature using word processor shortcut commands Ctrl+F seeking the search toolbar. On the other hand, the novices performed this manually.

## **6. Advantages of the Method**

### **Minimal Subjectivity**

In TAP, interviewing, video recording, and eye tracking, scholars could only have limited access to the behavior of translators; none of the methods records the actual performance of translators and makes it virtually observable. One of the merits of using screen recording is that it provides researchers with the actual process of translation. The software makes it possible to know what precisely happens to TT right from the beginning to the end of translation task. The interpretation of these data, nonetheless, is by itself a challenging task. A possible option is to combine this method with other methods which is the topic of the following section.

### **The Potential of Being Integrated with Other Research Methods**

This method could be best triangulated with TAPs, eye-tracking tool and retrospective interviews. The actual recorded process together with the information gathered from the interview with the translator, provide valuable information on translation process. In case of pauses, eye trackers could provide us with the translator's gaze direction, saccades and fixations, which help researchers distinguish between those pauses emerged as a result of production and those resulting from the comprehension stage.

### **Minimum Interference with the Process of Translation**

One of the criticisms levelled at use of TAP as well as some other introspective methods such as video recording in translation research was that, employing these methods would create an unauthentic environment, and thus there is a possibility that these methods interfere with translation process. The use of the present software is a step forward ruling out such influences due to the absence of any cognitive load imposed on the translator by the software. Furthermore, the invisibility of the software lessens inauthenticity of the experiment.

## **7. Limitation of the Method**

In spite of the advantages outweighing the disadvantages of this method, some criticism could also be levelled at it. One of the major drawbacks of this method is that it is computerized, thus it cannot be used in paper translation. Another limitation is that the use of nonelectronic resources cannot be recorded by the software either.

## **8. Conclusion**

This study aimed to explore the potentials of screen capture technology in translation process research. Screen capture was utilized to record the actual process of translation while translators were doing their task. It was found that six important translation details could be detected by using screen capture software.

Translation, in terms of difficulties, could be looked upon by understanding why translators pause when they face certain problems during the process of translation.

Reasons for such pauses could be best delved into when the researcher directly asks the translator for the reason of his behavior. Another important use of screen capture is its ability to record revisions. Immediate revision i.e. spontaneous and multiple altering of translational decisions was another observed revisionary behavior of the subjects. The study also showed that the software can provide valuable information about the way translators consult dictionary and other electronic sources. Another finding of the study was about the awareness of the correctness that accompanies the drafting phase of translation. It was argued that some errors or strategies could be categorized as monitoring actions. Lastly but importantly, it was observed that translators took shortcuts for the sake of time convenience.

The software's numerous advantages and its integration with other methods reveal its potentials for gathering more genuine and objective data from the process of translation which might be rewarding for researchers of the field.

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# COMPUTER ASSISTED LANGUAGE LEARNING : THE COMPARISON OF TECHNOLOGICALLY CONTEXTUALIZED AND TRADITIONAL TEACHING OF VOCABUARY

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## Abstract

Learning and teaching vocabulary has gained a considerable attention in the last decades. The advent of computer technology, on the other hand, has opened new windows to learning and teaching practices. The purpose of this study is to incorporate computer technology to teaching vocabulary practices by providing online contextualization of vocabulary. The participants of the study were 60 male EFL learners, aged about 15, from Zanzan city who were in two groups; traditional explicit group and technologically contextualized group. The intact classes were divided according to their previous year average, so, a kind of homogeneity could be assumed (this was later confirmed by pre-test given to them). Vocabulary was taught traditionally in one of the groups while for the other group the vocabulary input was mediated by computer. The data came from final post-test questions, open-ended questionnaire and subsequent informal interview with the students about their attitude toward the teaching practices. The data was analyzed using independent and paired sample t-test for quantitative data and systematic comparative analysis for qualitative data. The analysis of the results revealed that while both of the groups had improved significantly the technologically contextualized group could not outperform the traditional group. Students' attitude, however, toward the classroom activities was different in the groups. Pedagogical implications are presented.

Key words: Call, Context, TEFL Teaching Vocabulary,

## 1. Introduction

More than three decades ago, Meara (1980) called for more research on the nature of vocabulary acquisition; since then, there has been a considerable amount of literature devoted to the role of vocabulary in second and foreign language learning and how vocabulary itself can and should be taught. (Bell, 2009; Churchill, 2008; Laufer, 1998; Laufer and Paribakht, 1998; Schmitt, 1998; Webb, 2008; Zheng, 2009). On the other hand, the so-called computer era has revolutionized most of the fields of human endeavor including ELT. This revolution in ELT has another noticeable aspect; the computer facilities and what they can offer to ELT is constantly changing. These changes have their repercussions in ELT and there is a need for revising previous findings and moving toward new theories. This study tried to compare two ways of doing vocabulary instruction; the traditional explicit one which has so far been with us (and most probably will continue to be) and an innovative one which tries to open new windows to contextualization of our vocabulary teaching practices and effective teaching of it through computer. Since technology is improving in almost daily bases, it is indispensable to interpret any claim in the context of the technology of that very particular day in which the claim is made. The purpose of this study is to determine and compare learning vocabulary through Computer Assisted Teaching (CAT) and learning it via traditional method. We will specifically try:

1. To determine the impact of computer assisted teaching on vocabulary learning.
2. To determine the impact of traditional explicit teaching on vocabulary learning.
3. To determine students' attitude toward two different vocabulary teaching strategy.

The secondary purpose of this study is to discuss the pedagogical implication of the findings of the study in the light of new developments in the views toward SLA and TEFL. That is, the implications for curriculum design; teacher and student roles as well as testing vocabulary are discussed. So the research hypotheses were as follows:



**H01:** There is no effect of explicit traditional teaching of vocabulary on first grade high school students' vocabulary achievement.

**H02:** There is no effect of technologically contextualized teaching of vocabulary on first grade high school students' vocabulary achievement.

**H03:** There is no difference between the performances of the group taught by technologically contextualized vocabulary and the group taught by using traditional explicit method.

**H04:** There is no difference of attitude among first grade high school students toward explicit traditional teaching of vocabulary and technologically contextualized teaching of vocabulary.

## 2. Vocabulary knowledge and its importance

What does the knowledge of the vocabulary of a language involve? What is the role of this knowledge? Paribakht and Wesche (1993) created a five stage Vocabulary Knowledge Scale. Their scale starts from no knowledge of vocabulary to a native like mastery of them:

Stage 1: The word is not familiar at all.

Stage 2: The word is familiar but the meaning is not known.

Stage 3: A correct synonym or translation is given.

Stage 4: The word is used with semantic appropriateness in a sentence.

Stage 5: The word is used with semantic appropriateness and grammatical accuracy in a sentence.

They mention that while talking about vocabulary gain the first question arising for the researchers is to know what it means to know a word. Nagy and Scott (2000) pointed out five characteristics of vocabulary knowledge. First, knowing a word is a matter of degree, not all or nothing. This is known as the incremental view of word knowledge. The first comprehensive scale for vocabulary knowledge is maybe for Dale (1965) who proposed four stages of degree of word knowledge; (1) never heard it before, (2) heard it but doesn't know what it means, (3) recognizes it in context as having something to do with, and (4) knows it well.

The second characteristic of vocabulary knowledge is referred to as multidimensionality: word knowledge involves several qualitatively distinct kinds of knowledge. Nation (1990) offered eight aspects of word knowledge: (1) the spoken form of a word, (2) the written form of a word, (3) The grammatical behavior of the word, (4) the collocation behavior of the word, (5) the frequency of the word, (6) the stylistic register constrains of the word, (7) the conceptual meaning of the word, (8) the associations the word has with other related words.

The third characteristic is the idea of polysemy: words often have multiple meanings that must be inferred from the context in which they occur.

The fourth is interrelatedness: one's knowledge of any given word is not independent of one's knowledge of other words.

The fifth and last characteristic is heterogeneity: what it means to know a word differs substantially depending on the kind of word.

For instructional purposes, Stahl (1983) proposed two types of knowledge about words: definitional information and contextual information. Definitional information comprises knowledge of the logical relationship between a word and other known words, as in a dictionary definition involving knowing a definition, synonym, antonym, or affixes, and so on. Contextual information can be defined as knowledge of the core concept of the word and how that concept changes in different contexts. Depending on the students' knowledge of the word, effective vocabulary instruction will employ different techniques. Huckin and Bloch (1993) pointed out that second language readers rely heavily on vocabulary knowledge, and a lack of vocabulary knowledge is the largest obstacle for second language readers to overcome. They found that the main obstacle for second language readers is not lack of reading strategies but rather insufficient vocabulary knowledge in English.

## 3. Historical backgrounds of vocabulary teaching and learning

The history of research on vocabulary instruction is complex. In spite of its centrality to language learning, the importance of vocabulary acquisition is not always recognized. It has for most of the time been overshadowed by studies prioritizing syntax, pronunciation and language skills. In the early days of teaching language when it was the heyday of Grammar translation method, vocabulary had a high status. In this non-scientific and intuitive teaching method, students had to memorize lists of wide range of vocabulary which especially came from literary texts (Rivers, 1981). As Zimmerman (1997) puts it vocabulary teaching "was based on definition and etymology throughout the nineteenth century at least in part because of the prevalent belief that the connection between the etymon and derivative should be protectively preserved to avoid degeneration of the language" (p. 6). In this period, word lists, organized semantically, were regarded as material of teaching rather than as a reference for

teaching practices. The earlier criticism of the method goes as far back as mid-1800<sup>th</sup> (Rivers, 1883). For example Sweet (1899/1964) mentions that:

Although language is made up of words, we do not speak in words, but in sentences. From a practical, as well as, scientific, point of view, the sentence is the unit of language, not the word. From the purely phonetic point of view words do not exist. (p. 97)

Research concentrated on four areas before 1950: (1) vocabulary size at various ages, (2) the relationship between vocabulary and intelligence, (3) identifying the most useful words to know, and (4) identifying a core of words that make text more understandable (Irvin, 1990). However, the study of vocabulary became one of the weakest areas in early research for English language learners while the study about grammatical and phonological structure had been dominant throughout the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s especially with the advent of audiolingual method. Charles Fries' *Teaching and Learning English as a Foreign Language* (1945) was the most influential study for this tradition based on behaviorist psychology. It valued audio-lingual method as a good way to learn second languages by paying systematic attention to intensive drills of basic sentence patterns and their pronunciation (as cited in DeCarrico, 2001). The basic assumption was that once students learned the structural frames, lexical items could be learned later to fill the grammatical slot in the frames. Direct method or audio-lingual method in this period emphasized oral skills, accurate pronunciation as a way to build good language use habits and vocabulary was not regarded as important dimension of language use. From this perspective, good language habits would eventually lead to an increased vocabulary. In other words, in this view, all aspects of language was decomposable to a series of habits and learning a language was understood as a series of activities with reinforced habit formation. So, in this period rote learning of vocabulary was enhanced. Though rote learning of some of the lexico-grammatical aspects of language can be effective in earlier stages of learning a language, as Schmitt (1997) points out, it becomes extremely boring for more advanced learners. As learning is also a cognitive process, adults prefer to engage in the tasks which involve their cognition. The emphasis on rote learning of vocabulary did not mean that vocabulary teaching got the attention it deserves, since the major emphasis was on patterns of the sentences as the building blocks of language. That is, learning extensive lists of vocabulary was discouraged based on the fact that it gives the students the false belief of equating knowing the language with knowing its vocabulary.

Revolutionary changes in linguistic theory were made by Chomsky (1957). He criticized the basis of audio-lingual method of teaching and set the stage for more cognitively oriented approaches. This was his first major contribution to linguistics in which he introduced the idea that language is represented in mental grammar by a finite and abstract set of rules. In his work, language teaching was viewed as a rationalist's framework rather than the behaviorists' notion of habit formation. The central assumption was that language is represented as a speaker's mental grammar, in other words, a set of abstract rules for generating grammatical sentences. Since, language learning was considered as rule acquisition, not habit formation, vocabulary was somewhat important; however, rule learning still has a place in language learning. But Chomsky, in his search for universal, did not give any priority or whatsoever to vocabulary which was the major source of linguistic variation across languages. Richards (1976) who was among the first scholars to alert this neglect relates it to effects of trends in linguistic theory which was at the time dominated by Chomskyan approach.

In 1970's, Hymes's concept of communicative competence emphasized the sociolinguistic and pragmatic factors governing effective use of language (Hymes, 1972). He was especially concerned about using language for meaningful communication, including the appropriate use of language in particular social contexts. Hymes tried to show that Chomskyan linguistic competence was particularly narrow to be able to encompass the whole variation of language. He believed that Chomsky's distinction between competence and performance did not involve language use as a social practice in a real communicative acts and also it makes no references to issues concerning the appropriateness of the utterances (for example politeness issues and felicity conditions). He introduced the notion of *communicative competence*, which in his idea included not only grammatical competence which is the rules of usage but also the rules of language use in real communicative situation. The communicative competence also involves the context of situation and is sensitive to socio-cultural norms of appropriacy. Arising from this view was interactionist school of thought in which language is not only what is in the minds of the speakers but also it is formed by interaction between the mind and the social variables. Though it made language more concrete and in a sense brought it from sky to the earth, it created its own complexities, the least of which was dealing with a large number of variations. But it had, however, some advantages as far as learning and teaching vocabulary was concerned. Since the communicative language

teaching promoted fluency over accuracy, lexical competence became a central part of communicative competence. In other words, teaching vocabulary started to become a central part of teaching language in contrast to early language research. However, during the 1970's contemporary linguistics and cognitive psychology supported the psycholinguistic approach, which focused on guessing the meaning of unknown words through the use of contextual clues (Coady, 1993). Psycholinguistic studies provided insights concerning mental processes involved in vocabulary learning, such as memory, storage, and retrieval. This approach argues that the proficient readers utilize both bottom-up and top-down processing, and that successful comprehension is the result of an interaction between both types of processing. Within this approach, schema theory emphasizes the role of preexisting knowledge which the learner relates to the input from the text interactively. Thus, interactional activities in this framework emphasize teaching students to take advantage of all of their prior knowledge. As a result, vocabulary acquisition was viewed in terms of the students' background knowledge of concepts as well as of word forms.

In this framework, the emphasis was on the role of the environment and its interaction with the minds of the children which were supposed to be prewired to acquire language. The interactionists claim that internal and external dynamics both have some roles in language learning processes. Interactionist disregard innatist ideas on the basis of the fact that unlike innatists they believed language input are modified for the learners (here the children learning their first language) (Lightbown and Spada 1993). As van Els et al. (1984: 26) mention; the interactionist approach characterize a shift "away from innate versus learned linguistics ability, and toward the children's cognitive capacity to discover structure in the language around them." This shift of focus on cognitive abilities of the learners by not losing the sight of environmental factors had some implications for teaching language. One implication is that learning is dynamic, social and communicative by its very nature and the learners need to have a good command of soci-cultural variations of language. The second implication is for teachers. They are recommended to focus on developing the students' communicative competence and to take into account the learners' cognitive abilities. In other words, this approach to learning language which tries to take into account the context of language use in real life situations emphasizes the factors contributing to the processes of interaction as well as learners' cognitive abilities involved in such processes. All these functional dimensions are necessary part of learners' communicative abilities in learning second language(s).

Also notable works contributing to the broadening of the views toward the nature of language was Austin (1962) and Searle (1973) that put forward the notion of 'speech act' and Grice (1975) that proposed 'cooperative principle'. Drawing on the works of Austin (1962) and Searle (1969) there were some attempts to investigate how language users were able to perform actions by speech (e.g., requesting, apologizing, complaining, refusing) and how these speech acts were to be performed in a normative background of social context. In pragmatics, there was a shift away from focusing on producing grammatically correct sentences and more attention was paid to communicants' appropriate use of utterances within different situational contexts which in turn had some bearings on appropriacy of use. In this regard, the politeness theory developed by Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987) was of importance, since it described "the three sociopragmatic factors which qualified a linguistic form as being appropriate".

Cooperative principle tries to highlight the processes by which people interact with each other. As introduced by Paul Grice, himself, "make your contribution such as it is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged." (Grice, 1975: 46) The principle is not supposed to prescribe how to talk (as it seems to be!) but to describe what happens when people encounter verbally in normal situations.

Works of Halliday (for example, 1970) also contributed significantly to a more extended view of language. Halliday (1975) proposed seven communicative functions characterizing the child's early communicative development, all of which were related to aspects of social life. These functions were: instrumental, which involves the use of language to get things; regulatory, which involves the use of language to regulate people's behavior; interactional, which involves the use of language to interact with other people; personal, which involves the use of language to express one's feelings; heuristic, which involves the use of language to explore the outside world; imaginative, which involves the use of language to create an environment, and representational, which involves the use of language to communicate information. He theorized that children learned to talk because it served a function for them. Halliday's (1975) theory underscored the crucial importance of context of situation in the description of language systems and language was viewed as meaning potential. Therefore, the descontextualized analysis of formal structures followed by structural and generative

linguistics was losing ground in favor of a contextualized perspective followed by systemic functional linguistics. (Juan & Flor, 2006: 9)

More broadened views toward 'language' changed the standpoints regarding the role of vocabulary in language learning, since the words were not regarded as signs capable of containing the meaning but they were considered as indices referring where the meaning was hidden. The renewed interest in vocabulary has ironically enough raised the bell of pendulum swinging; like that of teaching methods. "the pendulum has swung from direct teaching of vocabulary (the grammar translation method) to incidental (the communicative approach) and now, laudably, back to the middle: implicit and explicit learning" (Sökmen 1997, p.239).

#### 4. Contextualized learning of vocabulary

There exist conflicting views among language professionals concerning the relative superiority of two approaches of 'contextualized' and 'de-contextualized' ways of learning, the ideas which are termed as implicit and explicit teaching of vocabulary (Stoller & Grabe, 1993 and Sökmen, 2000). Oxford (1990), for example, observed that while 'de-contextualized learning' (word list) may help students memorize vocabulary for tests; students are likely to forget rapidly words memorized from lists.

According to Nielson (2006) at early stages of language development, 'decontextualized' 'vocabulary instruction has been found to be more effective in building a fundamental vocabulary than the contextualized reading. The relevant literature on facilitating vocabulary acquisition is vast and has covered various aspects.

On the other hand, research on vocabulary acquisition has been carried out by investigating vocabulary learning strategies by (Chen, 2001; Nation, 2001). Among them, most studies have concentrated on some types of strategies such as using dictionaries, guessing and mnemonics (key words). According to Schmitt and Meara (1997), a number of types of strategies for learning vocabulary have been identified, such as using guessing from context, using certain mnemonics like the key words method (Pressley, et. al., 1982), using inference from the context (Nation, 1982), using association and the keyword method (Pressley, et. al., 1982), using word lists (Nation, 1990), using guessing (Nation, 2001) and rote repetition (O'Malley & Chomot, 1990).

Nation (2001) discussed that vocabulary is a very important as well as challenging aspect of learning additional language(s). Nonetheless, some teachers may think that it is an easy task and left to their own devices, students can manage accomplishing it.

Wang (2009) in a quantitative study investigated 164 non-English major students from Jiaying University on the use of English vocabulary learning strategies. It was a comparative study focusing on high achievers versus low achievers, Science students versus Arts students and male students versus female students. The study found that, firstly, there are significant differences between high achievers and low achievers in the use of eleven strategies such as learner autonomy. Secondly, there are significant differences in the use of four strategies such as selective attention between Science and Arts students. Third, there are a few differences between male and female students.

In a study, Nemati (2010) meant to compare the impact of teaching vocabulary learning through memory strategies on experimental group in comparison to the control group. The subjects were 140 and 170 pre-university female students in India who served as control and experimental groups respectively. The results indicated that the students of the experimental group outperformed both in short-term and long-term scores. The findings also revealed that for both short-term and long-term retention memory strategies were useful. A number of researchers have made a contribution to vocabulary learning strategies research (Chen, 2001; Nation, 2001; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Wang, 1998; Wu & Wang, 1998). Among them, most studies have concentrated on some types of strategies such as using dictionaries, guessing and mnemonics.

Stoller & Grabe (1993) have discussed the idea from the same point of view, by saying that teaching new words can occur in one of the explicit or implicit method. However, recent research emphasizes a need for explicit vocabulary instruction at all levels of language proficiency.

Zhang, Gao and Liu (2002) found female graduates employed more vocabulary learning strategies than male students, and female students used eleven strategies more frequently than male students. On the other hand, Wang (2006) found that there was no significant difference between male and female students in the use of vocabulary learning strategies.

In the same way, Gao (2004) compared the differences in using vocabulary learning strategies between male and female students. He found that female students had significant differences from male students in the use of vocabulary learning strategies; however, female students used vocabulary learning strategies more frequently than male students. In the 70's and 80's the communicative approach and interactional approach focused on

implicit, incidental learning. Incidental vocabulary learning is defined as learning that occurs when the mind is focused elsewhere, such as on understanding a text or using language for communicative purpose. In a review of 144 studies, Krashen (1989) argued that incidental acquisition of vocabulary occurs through the operation of his input hypothesis, which proposes that learners acquire a second language as they are exposed to comprehensible input.

A number of studies which support this hypothesis have shown that guessing from context can lead to vocabulary acquisition. So the notion of context, partly because of some philosophical development toward the nature of language, received more attention. Raptis (1997) showed that many current second language reading textbooks promote the assumption that vocabulary is best learned incidentally from context. Based on this learning theory, teachers encouraged their students to recognize clues to word meanings in context and to use monolingual rather than bilingual dictionaries, and textbooks emphasized inferring word meanings from context. In the review of contextualized vocabulary learning, Huckin and Coady (1999) stated some advantages of incidental vocabulary learning over explicit introduction: (1) It gives the learner paired-associate exercises, (2) it is pedagogically efficient in that it enables two activities – vocabulary acquisition and reading – to occur at the same time, and (3) it is more individualized and learner-based because the vocabulary being acquired is dependent on the learner's own selection of reading materials. However, Huckin and Coady in the same article point out some limitations of incidental learning: (1) guessing is imprecise because many reading tasks call for precise interpretation, (2) accurate guessing requires accurate word recognition and careful monitoring because there are many deceptive lexical items that can easily mislead the learner, (3) guessing takes time and thus slows down the reading process, (4) guessing is effective only when the context is well understood and almost all of the surrounding words in the text are known, (5) guessing requires good reading strategies, (6) guessing often does not translate into acquisition, and (7) guessing is not effective in the acquisition of multiword lexical items. In spite of the above, they concluded that the contextualized and incidental learning can still be seen as an important part of vocabulary building, especially among advanced learners, but it requires a great deal of prior training in basic vocabulary, word recognition, metacognition, and subject matter. Contextualized vocabulary learning without these and other clear guidelines on how to conduct it in the class cannot have desired results, especially taking into account the fact that there are many vocabularies which are whether abstract or contain concepts that are difficult to contextualize using traditional equipment available to the teachers. And historically this has even led to some conclusions which highlight the superiority of traditional learning over contextualized learning.

As cited in Mijin Won (2008), Hulstijn (1992) reported that the number of new words learned incidentally is relatively small compared to the number of words learned intentionally. Incidental vocabulary learning tends to be incremental and slow even with the use of dictionary and the inferring strategy. He believed that second language learners could not have enough learning incidentally due to the following reasons:

- (1) The learners fail to notice the new words,
- (2) they notice the new words, but ignore them,
- (3) they do not focus their attention on the unknown word,
- (4) they infer the meaning from context incorrectly, and
- (5) the low frequency of most unknown words prevents effective learning (quoted in p. 24).

It was emphasized by Hulstijn (1992) that both incidental and intentional learning should exist together in vocabulary instruction. Coady (1993) concluded after exploring the basic argument for a mixed approach to vocabulary acquisition in ESL that the basic or core vocabulary should be taught, but less frequent vocabulary will be learned "naturally" via context, but even in that case the techniques for that purpose should be taught.

There was the conclusion that in spite of the evident role of reading in much advanced vocabulary acquisition, there are some problems from the perspective of effective learning. In incidental acquisition through reading, the acquisition process is slow, often misguided, and seemingly haphazard, with different outcomes for various learners, word types and contexts. According to Sternberg (1987), even if most vocabulary is learned from context, one should not conclude that this is the fastest or most efficient way of learning specific vocabulary. These findings, however, date back to the time when the technology had not swept its ways into the classes, at least in way it has done now.

## 5. An overview of computer assisted teaching

As the requirement for access to education grows and increasing numbers of adults come back to schools for education and training, the need for new technologies to make easy learning is becoming more important (Wang, et al, 2014). Contribution of computer to language learning gave rise to computer assisted language learning (CALL, henthforth) which has come to be known as learners' learning language in any context ?structure?

The convergence of a variety of technological, instrumental, and pedagogical developments in recent decades has dramatically altered the process of teaching and learning of almost all high-school and university subjects across the world (Bonk & King 1998). According to Warschauer and Healey (1998), historical development of CALL shows that at first studies of CALL, researchers mainly focused on the design of system and software. They also started to discuss the role of computers in language learning, and the comparison of traditional and computer-enhanced classes. Later, as cognitive psychology was developed as the dominant school of psychology, CALL practices and research focused both on software design and task development. The roles of teachers and students in the environment of CALL also attracted researchers' attention. The last stage which has come to be known as integrative CALL, started in 1990s (which has continued to the present time) is based on multimedia and the internet. Under the influence of humanistic, communicative, and constructivist approaches, learners' needs, individual differences, experience, and feelings received considerable attention in education.

CALL has been used as a means of generating learners' opportunities for engaging in learning of the target language and thereby overcoming traditional classroom teaching limitations (Chapelle, 2003). Oblinger and Oblinger (2005) propose that present generation of the students have the opportunity of engaging in more visual communicators and therefore have better spatial skills than their predecessors; because they grew up with technology as an integral part of their lives. Computer Mediated Communications (CMC) and social media can enhance English language skills both effectively and functionally. Learners communicate with each other using chats, forums (bulletin boards), internet telephony, video conferencing, shared online white boards as well as more recent social networking systems like Viber, Tango, Whatsap, Line etc.

As Wang & Vasquez (2012) put it, the language learning environments which benefit from developments in computer technologies have given more opportunities for exploration of different topics and practices: the scope ranges from traditional focus on four language skills to more recent topics, such as identities of the students and teachers, online collaboration, and learning communities. Although the field demands closer scrutiny of learners' achievements, the general consensus is that students can experience more favorable learning conditions which can subsequently enhance their learning.

Elam & Nesbit (2012) claim that EFL programs which use CALL, have adapted their regular programs to incorporate such changes in syllabus. In another study, it was found that students' attitude was "particularly high and self-transformation of knowledge was achieved" (Alonso, Alcala & Brugos, 2007). Technology applications offer many qualities that can increase quality of works and the motivation of the students (Alonso et al., 2007). An added benefit of using technology in the class is that teachers can take the position of a facilitator (that has always been a desired role for the teachers) because it generates a condition that augments independent learning skills such as autonomy (Alonso et al., 2007). In such cases, students can decide on which part of the subject they would like to focus on and search for their own answers. Finally they have the opportunity to demonstrate or share their own mastery of materials. Considering most of the research in CALL, it is easy to see that it creates an environment that essentially becomes student- driven along with many other benefits that could enhance any EFL program.

## 6. Learners' attitudes toward vocabulary

"Every man has reminiscences which he would not tell to everyone but only his friends. He has other matters in his mind which he would not reveal even to his friends, but only to himself, and that in secret. But there are other things which a man is afraid to tell even to himself, and every decent man has a number of such things stored away in his mind"

*Fyodor Dostoyevsky, Notes from the Underground* (as cited in Todd & Pojanapunya, 2009)

It can be understood that we are not always aware of our attitudes and even if we are aware we cannot always say them. In course of their leanings students develop attitudes that subsequently guide their other activities and their engagement with learning processes. American Heritage Dictionary defines attitude as the 'state of mind' and Webster 9th New World Dictionary refers to it as the 'mental position related to a fact or state'. Regarding our purpose, we can define it as a state of mind about an object which in our case is vocabulary

acquisition. Once it was thought that attitudes are unchangeable and once established, can be criteria for anticipating the future performance (Fleming, 1967). In this sense attitude was similar to previous views of intelligence; something that the learners are born with as well as motor movements were regarded to be the central component of attitude (Zajonc & Markus, 1984).

Attitude most of the time has been associated with negative or positive and its role in performance and deeds of individuals is emphasized (Masgoret & Gardner, 2003). Attitudes toward foreign language acquisition have also been a determining factor of success or failure closely being associated with motivation to learn. It can be implied from research on second and foreign language acquisition that attitude toward intentional vocabulary acquisition can predict future success or failure in this regard and contribute to the processes of acquisition. For example, a positive attitude toward how foreign language speakers think can pave the way for interpreting the words uttered with the lens of foreign language speakers.

## **7. Methodology**

### **7.1 Participants and setting**

A sample of 60 participants was selected for the present study. They were all male students whose age ranged from 14-16. They were studying in the same school in Zanjan city. The name of the school was kept confidential due to an agreement with school principal in return for his permission to conduct the research in the school. Five of the participants from each group (10 totally) were selected randomly for qualitative study. Their school was a public school and the classes were divided according to their previous year average, so, a kind of homogeneity could be assumed (this was later confirmed by pre-test given to them).

### **7.2 Variables of the study**

One of the groups was taught vocabulary in explicit traditional way, i.e. giving the translation of them as they were taught in reading passages and the other one was taught by revealing the meaning of intended vocabulary by searching it online in Google image and some other online picture dictionaries. That is, the former group was presented with only the Persian equivalents of vocabulary but the latter was provided with ample opportunity to learn vocabulary in the context provided by an internet connected computer. So, there are two independent variables (1) explicit teaching of vocabulary and (2) technologically contextualized teaching of them. The dependent variable was the students' knowledge of the vocabulary gained as measured by multiple choice researcher made tests (see Appendix 1).

### **7.3 Instrument and material**

The instrument used in the study was tests selected and piloted by the researcher-teacher. The tests involved two packages of 30 vocabulary items which were piloted for the purpose of this study from among 85 original tests (see Appendix 1). One set was used as pretests and the other set as post-test. The vocabulary tests mostly were taken from Paul Nation 4000 vocabulary and an online quiz ([http://www.examenglish.com/KET/KET\\_vocab.htm](http://www.examenglish.com/KET/KET_vocab.htm)). The criteria for this selection were the simplicity of the texts (students were at elementary level) and multiple exercises which were provided at the end of each lesson for vocabulary learning. Another instrument was an open ended questionnaire for 5 of the students from each of the groups (see Appendix 2). They were asked about their general attitude toward teaching vocabulary at the end of the experiment. The open-ended questionnaires provided the data for qualitative section of the study.

### **7.4 Procedures**

#### **7.4.1 Data collection procedures**

The data for both pre-test and post-test as well as for open-ended questionnaires were collected at the same class in which the study were conducted. Because of the familiarity of the students with multiple-choice format no instructions were required on how to answer the questions. They were provided with an answer sheet. To reassure them that the scores they get are only used for research purposes they were asked to deliver only the answer sheet (and not the main papers involving the questions) with no names on it. This could also limit the possibility of cheating which could influence the findings of the study. For the questionnaire the researcher told the participants that there are no right or wrong answers and they only need to write down their thoughts.

#### **7.4.2 Data analysis procedures**

In the quantitative analysis of the study we used SPSS software program. The analysis involved two paired t-test for each of the groups to see the differences between their pre-tests and post-tests. Also two independent t-test were conducted; one for comparing two sets of pre-tests to ensure lack of significance differences before the treatment was applied and the other for comparing two sets of post-tests to look for possible differences.

The qualitative analysis procedure used in this study was Straus and Corbin's (1998) systematic approach. The data gathered through open ended questionnaire from 10 of the students were studied carefully. Then we used the constant comparative method which is the primary analysis technique in Straus and Corbin's model (Ary, 2010). In this model according to Ary (2010);

Open coding is used to develop major or core categories with axial coding to develop categories around the core. Think of a wheel with a center and spokes extending. The spokes are all related to the central category. A visual model is developed called an axial coding paradigm. Selective coding is then used to develop propositions or hypotheses based on the model, showing how the categories are related. The resulting theory can take the form of a narrative statement, a picture, or a series of hypotheses (p. 464).

The rationale for using qualitative analysis was that they provide the researchers with a means for an in-depth analysis of research topic. As Genesee (2009) points out, they offer an opportunity to view the problem from many perspectives.

## 8. Data analysis

As it was mentioned in previous chapter the data from this study comes from two sources; First, administrations of the vocabulary tests to the students of both of groups as well as open-ended questionnaire delivered to 10 of the students about their attitude toward the method that was adopted in their classes. The former aimed to address the first three research question regarding the effects of different vocabulary teaching methods on achieving them and the latter was aimed to provide the present researcher with the evidence by which to clarify how the learners view their foreign language vocabulary learning and how their learning processes interacts with the kind of teaching method they are exposed to.

### 8.1 Comparison of the pre-tests of two groups

To ensure that there were no pre-existing differences before the treatments, a pre-test was given to both of the groups. This test consisted of thirty vocabulary items. The descriptive statistics for this test for group one (technologically contextualized group) and group two (traditional explicit group) is presented in table 4.1. As it is clear from the table the means of the two groups before the start of the actual experiment are so close to each other 10.43 and 10.26 for technologically contextualized group and traditional explicit group, respectively.

*Table 4.1 descriptive statistics for pre-tests of the two groups*

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Group 1	30	10.43	3.53	.64449
Group 2	30	10.26	3.25	.59487

To see whether the difference is only attributed to chance factors or it is significant, we ran an inferential statistics. The results of the comparison of two independent means were calculated using independent sample t-test and are presented in table 4.2.

*Table 4.2 Independent t-tests for the two pre-tests*

Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
.054	.818	.190	58	.850	.16667	.87706	-1.5889	1.92229

Since the significance is about 0.82 (more than 0.05), we can say with certain degree of confidence that the groups has no differences (not more than chance differences) at the beginning of the experiment.



### 8.2 Traditional explicit group

The descriptive statistics for the group who received traditional instruction is presented in table 4.1 which involves pretest [M: 10.43, SD: 3.53 and SEM: 0.64] and post-test [M: 13.66, SD: 4.50 and SEM: 0.82] statistics.

#### 4.3 Descriptive Statistics for traditional group pre-test and post-test

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
pretest	10.4333	30	3.53000	.64449
posttest	13.6667	30	4.50542	.82257

To see the effectiveness of instructing the students by traditional explicit method, the researcher run inferential statistics to compare the mean of scores on pre-test and post-test. Since it was within the same group, paired sample t-test was used. The results are presented in

#### 4.4 Paired Sample t-test for traditional explicit group

	Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
Pair 1 pretest posttest	-3.23333	3.02499	.55229	-4.36288	-2.10378	-5.854	29	.000

As it is clear from the table the significance is less than .05, so we can say with considerable confidence that the instruction was effective and participants in traditional explicit group did gain some knowledge of vocabulary.

### 8.3 Technologically contextualized group

The comparison of pre-test and post-test for this group revealed that the participants have significantly improved their vocabulary knowledge. Table 4.5 and table 4.6 show descriptive and inferential statistics for this group, respectively. This improvement shows that treatment was actually effective for this group.

#### 4.5 Descriptive Statistics for Technologically contextualized group pre-test and post-test

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1 pretest	10.2667	30	3.25823	.59487
posttest	14.1333	30	3.85722	.70423

#### 4.6 Paired Sample t-test for Technologically contextualized group

	Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
Pair 1 pretest2 posttest2	-3.86667	3.07081	.56065	-5.01333	-2.72001	-6.897	29	.000

#### 8.4 Comparison of two post-tests

The two groups under investigation were finally given post-tests. The purpose was to see whether there was any significance difference between two groups after they had been subject to treatment. The descriptive statistics for the two groups are presented in Table 4.7.

*4.7 Descriptive statistics for post-tests of the two groups*

	VAR00001	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Group 1	1.00	30	13.6667	4.50542	.82257
Group 2	2.00	30	14.1333	3.85722	.70423

The means were 13.66 for traditional group and 14.13 for technologically contextualized group. As our later inferential analysis (Table 4.8) revealed there were no significant difference between the performances of the two groups. So the third null hypothesis cannot be rejected and it is retained.

*Table 4.8 Independent t-tests for the two pre-tests*

		t-test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
posttest	Equal variances assumed	-.431	58	.668	-.46667	1.08285	-2.63423	1.70090
	Equal variances not assumed	-.431	56.655	.668	-.46667	1.08285	-2.63533	1.70199

#### 8.5 Qualitative analysis of students' attitude

The data gathered through the questionnaire in its raw form did not reveal much about the students' attitude toward what they experimented in the classes. That was partly because the students who answered the questionnaire had not spent much time on answering the questions and some of them had only replied 'yes' or 'no'. So, the researcher conducted an informal session with the students. The answers to the questions along with the conversation the researcher had with the students provided a rich resource for enabling the researcher to answer the fourth research question.

Generally, most of the students in traditional group had not felt any considerable difference between this class and the other classes they had except the material used in the classes were more attractive for them. They said the class was much like they have seen of English classes. They said they had gained some knowledge and the class was generally useful for them. Students in the technologically contextualized class also found the class useful in terms of what they had learned. Unlike the other group, they indicated that the class was more interesting. One of the students asked the teacher to hold all their other classes in this way. The other student said the pictures helped me to remember the words. Still other one said I will try to check the word meaning online like what we did in the class instead of using paper or cellphone dictionary.

#### 9. Discussion of the results

As long as three decades ago, Long (1983) in a state of art article mentions that instruction is generally good. He tried to remind us that we need to examine every measure we take in educating the EFL learners to find the effectiveness of our activities as language teachers. This study is an attempt to answer research questions set out at chapter one which are repeated here as a matter of convenience:

1. Does the explicit traditional teaching of vocabulary have any effect on first grade high school students' vocabulary achievement?
2. Does the technologically contextualized teaching of vocabulary have an effect on first grade high school students' vocabulary achievement?
3. Are there any differences between the performances of the group taught by technologically contextualized vocabulary and the group who was taught by using traditional explicit method?
4. Are there any differences of attitude of first grade high school students toward explicit traditional teaching of vocabulary and contextualized teaching of vocabulary?

Regarding the first research question we found that traditional teaching was effective and the students did actually learned by traditional teaching of the vocabulary. And our participants gained some knowledge of vocabulary through explicit method. For the second research questions, the findings also indicated that there was a significant improvement in students' learning. Though the mean of this group was generally higher than traditional explicit group, statistical analysis revealed no significant difference between the performances of the groups. We can, however, talk about tendency. Contextually teaching of the vocabulary raised higher interests among students and students in this group tend to perform better than traditional group. This is supported by the qualitative study we conducted. This claim is confirmed by our qualitative analysis. There are some other studies in the context of Iran (Kamalian & Sayadian, 2014 among them), however, which have found considerable improvement in students' learning through some forms of technology.

## 10. Summary

The present study attempted to investigate the learning of technologically contextualized vocabulary on the Iranian EFL learners' vocabulary learning. To carry out the research, two groups of foreign language learners from a public school were selected. They were all in their first grade in a high school. In order to collect the relevant data, the material were administered to the participants by two methods; one through regular classroom teaching and other through computer. The analysis of the results revealed that the technologically contextualized group could not outperform the traditional group. So, the third null hypothesis could not be rejected and was retained. However, we are able to talk about some tendencies that were confirmed by our qualitative study. Technologically contextualized group was more eager to learn and had found greater interest in learning English which was not the case for traditional group. The results also clearly illustrated that both of the methods had a facilitative effect on L2 vocabulary learning. The findings of the study bear implications for EFL teachers and material designers.

## 11. Conclusion

Vocabulary learning is now regarded as an important aspect of learning four language skills. Students of second and foreign language often relate their lack of comprehension in listening and reading and their lack of ability in production skills (i.e. writing and speaking) to their inability to understand or produce vocabulary of target language (Huckin & Bloch, 1993). Traditional presentation of vocabulary has been with us for a so long time and in most parts of the world it will still continue within the walls of the classes. But the technological advances are there calling for appropriation to our classes. This study was conducted with this purpose in mind; how can language teachers improve the efficiency of their teaching by adopting computer technology to their classes.

## 12. Pedagogical Implications

Though we did not arrive to clear statistical confirmation of the superiority of technologically contextualized teaching of vocabulary, we did find some tendency among the group who participated in technologically administered materials. The results of this study can open new windows in methods of teaching vocabulary. In order to enhance vocabulary learning and to encourage them, utilizing technology as an available tool can be an innovative method in teaching English as a foreign language.

Learning a foreign language is stressful and demanding, so new methods and new technique need to be examined in order to improve quality of the teaching practices which enhances students motivation to learn and subsequently yields higher learning outcomes (Krashen, 1998). Hence, employing technology for presenting new

vocabulary might be a possible change in teaching English as foreign language. The use of technology for teaching vocabulary has its repercussions in other aspects of learning and teaching practices. Curriculum designers can plan teaching and learning activities to count on this technology in the course of learning a language and material developers can also devote a section of the textbooks to vocabulary to be learned on the bases of technology.

When we are going to teach something the natural and logical questions are; what is that 'something' we want to teach and how is it learned? As Robinson (2001) warns us it is not important what teachers teach but what is important is what students learn. No matter how teachers try to make their classes useful it is the way that the students approach and view the vocabulary which is important. Second, and along the same lines, whatever the teaching methodology the teachers adopt in their classes (whether grammar translation or communicative approaches) the words, the new words finally are there for students to learn. That is, adopting strategies of teaching vocabulary like guessing from context sometimes can be enhanced by using technology. This researcher has discussed the implications under two major themes; teachers and teaching practices and curriculum designing.

### 12.1 Teachers and teaching practices

There are many ways by which teachers can teach vocabulary. For example, Oxford (1990) suggests memory strategies to aid learning which can be divided into:

- creating mental linkages: grouping, associating, placing new words into a context;
- applying images and sounds: using imagery, semantic mapping, using keywords and representing sounds in memory;
- reviewing well, in a structured way;
- Employing action: physical response or sensation, using mechanical techniques.

Vocabulary is commonly taught using strategies such as defining synonyms and antonyms, illustrating the word in its different texts and contexts, giving the context or co-text that the vocabulary cannot be used and trying to relate the words to students' own lives and things that they are more interested in. In all of these and other methods of teaching, teachers should be concerned with the fact that how they can make vocabulary accessible to the students. The teachers are required to present different uses of vocabulary to facilitate students learning and this is made easier by technology.

### 12.2 Curriculum designing

"Curriculum designing is a 'how-to-do-it' activity" (Nation & Macalister, 2010, p. xv) which is considerably based on needs analysis of the learners. The knowledge of what the students know and how is the mechanism of gaining this knowledge can be a valuable resource for curriculum designers. The findings of this study can inspire material developers and curriculum designers to devote a section to contextualized vocabulary learning.

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# INVESTIGATING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND LISTENING COMPREHENSION OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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## ABSTRACT

Emotional intelligence, as concerned with how an individual recognizes and regulates his or her emotions, has been in limelight quite recently. Many studies have focused on examining the relationship between emotional intelligence and language skills. Among these skills, listening plays a significant role in daily communication and educational process. In spite of its importance, listening has long been the neglected skill in second language acquisition, research, teaching, and assessment. Hence, the aim of the present study is to investigate the relationship between emotional intelligence and listening comprehension. The statistical population comprised of university students studying at Payam-e Noor University majoring in English Translation. Using Morgan Table, 40 participants were chosen as the sample size. Bar-On's Emotional Quotient Inventory and researcher-developed questionnaire were employed to collect the required data. The reliability of the questionnaires was obtained as 0.829 using Cronbach alpha coefficients. Using Spearman and Pearson correlation coefficients, it was observed that there was a relationship between intrapersonal subscales of emotional intelligence and listening comprehension of EFL students; however, no relationship was found between interpersonal components of emotional intelligence and listening comprehension of EFL students.

Keywords: Emotional intelligence, listening comprehension, Payam-e Noor University

## 1. Introduction

The theory of Emotional Intelligence (EI), often called emotional quotient, was originally developed during the 1970's and 80's by the work and writings of psychologists Howard Gardner, Peter Salovey, and John Mayer (Lall, 2009). Later this notion formally became the center of interest with growing emphasis on research over the interaction of emotion and thought in the field of psychology in 1990's (Grewal & Salovey, 2005). The history of EI originated from the concept of social intelligence. Thorndike in 1920's viewed EI through the lens of social intelligence and mentioned that social intelligence is the ability to empathize with others and act wisely in human relationships (cited in Goleman, 1998), but his views were not taken seriously until years later. In 1948, emotional thought was considered to be in the realm of intelligence. No serious attempt was taken in this field until the mid-years of the 1980's, when Thorndike's view was born again in the works of Howard Gardner (Goleman, 1998).

Gardner (1983) introduced eight different types of intelligence, one of which, the personal intelligence, made way for the extensive development of EI. Finally, in 1990, Mayer and Salovey, based on Gardner's view and emphasis on individual differences, introduced their complete model of EI and defined it thoroughly (Bar-On, 1997). In fact, EI is largely accepted as the ability to understand and apply the knowledge created from our emotions to aid effective functioning, reduce the impact of stress, and enhance relationships (Motallebzadeh, 2009).

Salovey and Mayer (1990) were first to utilize the term —emotional intelligence to represent the ability to deal with emotions. They drew on relevant evidence from previous intelligence and emotion research and presented the first comprehensive model of EI. Later, Mayer and Salovey refined their 1990's model as reflected

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in number of their publications (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). They conceived EI as an ability to process the information contained in emotions to determine the meaning of emotions and their connections to one another; and to use emotional information as the basis for thought and decision making (Jahanvash, 2011).

Language remains unconscious until it is dealt with emotionally. Language and emotion are parallel systems in use, and their relationship exists in that one system (emotions) impacts on the performance of the other (language) and both of them share their functionality in the communicative process between people. Emotional Intelligence is the tool that evokes consciousness of language being learnt, enabling the learners to understand, clarify, and communicate ideas. It is one of the most widely discussed topics in current psychology.

The studies conducted on emotional intelligence have suggested that different terms are possible to be correlated with emotional intelligence. In addition, several studies have emphasized the role of emotional intelligence in improving EFL learners' use of meta-cognitive listening skills. In most cases, emotional intelligence is correlated with different notions, however, the purpose of the current study is to investigate the possible bond between emotional intelligence subscales and listening comprehension of EFL students. Specifically, the present paper aims at addressing the following research questions:

RQ1: Is there any relationship between emotional intelligence and listening comprehension of EFL students in Payame Noor University?

RQ2: Is there any relationship between interpersonal skill and listening comprehension of EFL students in Payame Noor University?

RQ3: Is there any relationship between intrapersonal skill and listening comprehension of EFL students in Payame Noor University?

## 2. Methodology

The focus of the study is to determine the possible relationship between emotional intelligence components and listening skill of EFL learners. Since the two variables are liable to be studied in relation to one another, the study follows a correlational design.

The population of the present study comprises of 45 university students of Payam-e Noor University majoring in English Translation who have entered the university in the year 1392. Using Morgan Table and random sampling method, 40 participants are chosen as the sample size.

Two instruments are employed in the present study to collect the required data. The first one is Bar-On's Emotional Quotient Inventory which was originally developed by Bar-On in 1980. This questionnaire is used to measure the emotional intelligence of the participants. Bar-On's inventory is a self-report questionnaire involving 133 questions categorized by Likert-5 scale ranging from very seldom to true of me. A translated version of this questionnaire is employed. Samouei (2005) translated the questionnaire to Persian and excluded a number of items due to some factors such as lack of conformity with Iranian context, offering low Cronbach alpha and etc. Hence, she reduced the number of questions to ninety. In addition, the reliability and validity of the questionnaire has been determined. (0.829).

## 3. Results

### *Hypothesis 1*

Null hypothesis: There is no relationship between interpersonal skill and listening comprehension of EFL students in Payame Noor University.

Alternative hypothesis: There is a relationship between interpersonal skill and listening comprehension of EFL students in Payame Noor University.

Pearson parametric correlation coefficient was run to address this statistical hypothesis.

$$\begin{cases} H_0: r = 0 \\ H_1: r \neq 0 \end{cases}$$



The following table represents the outcome of the analysis.

**Table 1. Correlations between interpersonal skill and listening comprehension**

		listening comprehension of EFL students	interpersonal skill
listening comprehension of EFL students	Pearson Correlation	1	.253
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.115
	N	40	40
interpersonal skill	Pearson Correlation	.253	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.115	
	N	40	40

According to the above table and the obtained analysis, the level of significance is 0.115. Since ( $p > 0.05$ ), null hypothesis is accepted and the alternative hypothesis is rejected. That is to say, there is no relationship between interpersonal skill and listening comprehension of EFL students in Payame Noor University.

### **Hypothesis 2**

Null hypothesis: There is no relationship between intrapersonal skill and listening comprehension of EFL students in Payame Noor University.

Alternative hypothesis: There is a relationship between intrapersonal skill and listening comprehension of EFL students in Payame Noor University. Pearson parametric correlation coefficient was run to address this statistical hypothesis.

$$\{H_0: r = 0$$

$$\{H_1: r \neq 0$$

The following table represents the outcome of the analysis.

**Table 2. Correlations between intrapersonal skill and listening comprehension**

		listening comprehension of EFL students	intrapersonal skill
listening comprehension of EFL students	Pearson Correlation	1	.421**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.007
	N	40	40
intrapersonal skill	Pearson Correlation	.421**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.007	
	N	40	40

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

According to the above table and the obtained analysis, the level of significance is 0.007. Since ( $p < 0.05$ ) or sig is less than 0.05, null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. That is to say that there is a relationship between intrapersonal skill and listening comprehension of EFL students in Payame Noor University. Also, Pearson correlation coefficient is 0.421 which implies that there is a positive relationship between intrapersonal skill and listening comprehension.

### Hypothesis 3

Null hypothesis: There is no relationship between emotional intelligence and listening comprehension of EFL students in Payame Noor University.

Alternative hypothesis: There is a relationship between emotional intelligence and listening comprehension of EFL students in Payame Noor University.

Spearman nonparametric correlation coefficient was run to study this statistical hypothesis.

$$\{H_0: r = 0$$

$$\{H_1: r \neq 0$$

The following table represents the outcome of the analysis.

**Table 3. Correlations between emotional intelligence and listening comprehension**

			listening comprehens ion of EFL students	emotional intelligence
Spearman's rho	listening comprehension of EFL students	Correlation	1.000	.568**
		Coefficient		
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
	emotional intelligence	N	40	40
		Correlation	.568**	1.000
		Coefficient		
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	40	40

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

According to the above table and the obtained analysis, the level of significance is 0.000. Since ( $p < 0.05$ ) or sig is less than 0.05, null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. That is to say that there is a relationship between emotional intelligence and listening comprehension of EFL students in Payame Noor University. Since Pearson correlation coefficient is .568, there is a positive relationship between emotional intelligence and listening comprehension.

## 4. Conclusions and discussion

The purpose of the present study was to investigate the relationship between emotional intelligence and listening comprehension. So, the researcher considered the following research questions:

RQ<sub>1</sub>: Is there any relationship between emotional intelligence and listening comprehension of EFL students in Payame Noor University?

RQ<sub>2</sub>: Is there any relationship between interpersonal skill and listening comprehension of EFL students in Payame Noor University?

RQ<sub>3</sub>: Is there any relationship between intrapersonal skill and listening comprehension of EFL students in Payame Noor University?

To address the above-mentioned questions, pertinent hypotheses were developed. To make statistical analysis, K-S test (Kolmogorov-Smirnov test) was used to study the type of variables distribution. Later, Spearman and Pearson correlation coefficients were employed to yield the final results. The results showed that

there was a relationship between emotional intelligence and listening comprehension of EFL students in general. Also, it was observed that there was a relationship between intrapersonal, subscale of emotional intelligence and listening comprehension of EFL students; however, no relationship was found between interpersonal as a components of emotional intelligence and listening comprehension of EFL students.

The studies related to the relationship between emotional intelligence and listening comprehension are so scant. However, the findings of the study regarding the relationship between emotional intelligence and listening skill are in line with the study of Aghasafari (2006) who found a positive relationship between overall emotional intelligence and language learning strategies. The findings of the study are also in line with Hasanzadeh and Shahmohamadi's (2011) study, where they found a positive relationship between Iranian learners' emotional intelligence and use of learning strategies; however, the findings are not the same since the subscales of emotional intelligences have not been examined individually.

It is worth noting that the study carried out by these authors have focused on all the learning strategies of four skills; however, their study included all the learning strategies of four skills, whereas the present study investigated the relationship between emotional intelligence and comprehension of listening. All in all, the results of the present study correspond with studies carried out concerning the relationship between emotional intelligence and listening strategies. Findings of the present study are in line with those reported by Motallebzadeh and Azizi (2012) in that there is a positive relationship between emotional intelligence abilities and its subcategories with writing comprehension. As the findings of the study indicate, only intrapersonal, subscales is positively correlated while the previous study reported the positive relationship with regard to all subscales of emotional intelligence.

The results indicated by Gilakjani and Ahmadi (2011) show that listening comprehension is affected by emotional intelligence subscales which confirms the findings of the present study.

Yet, considering emotional scales, they have some common and in some cases different results. This indicates that there is a need for further studies concerning the relationship between the emotional intelligent components and related skills.

Findings of Badakhshan (2012) regarding the relationship between emotional intelligence and listening comprehension of EFL intermediate learners showed a significant relationship between emotional intelligence and EFL learners' listening comprehension ability. In addition, SPSS and STATISTICA programs were used to analyze the data. Participants of the study were members of English Department of Ferdowsi University of Mashhad. Considering gender through estimating the relationship between emotional intelligence and listening comprehension ability, it was reported that components of emotional intelligence were in relationship with listening comprehension. These findings are in line with the results of the present study. However, the present study did not taken into account gender as another possible variable.

In a similar study, the impact of emotional intelligence on Iranian EFL learners' listening proficiency was examined by Jahandar, Khodabandelou, Seyedi, & Dolatbadi (2012). Using Anova, MANOVA, and F-test, it was found that emotional intelligence components had a significant impact on female learners. Subsequently, subscales of emotional intelligence were studied in relation to listening proficiency. It was shown that there was a significant relationship between emotional intelligence subscales and listening proficiency of female learners which is the partially the same as the one reported by the present study in that only three subscales of emotional intelligence are reported to be correlated when considering listening comprehension.

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# INVESTIGATING THE PREPOSITIONAL ERRORS IN THE WRITINGS OF IRANIAN TEFL POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS

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## ABSTRACT

The present study aimed at investigating prepositional errors in TEFL postgraduate students' writing. This study also explored the most frequent prepositional errors in terms of substitution of prepositions. To this end, forty two students from Busher and Marvdasht Azad University were asked to take part in the study. They consisted of twenty eight female and fourteen male TEFL postgraduate students. The participants were asked to write a composition in about four paragraphs. The compositions were analyzed in terms of prepositional errors (omission, addition, and substitution of prepositions). Results indicated that substitution of prepositions was the most frequent prepositional errors in Iranian TEFL postgraduate students' writing. The findings also revealed that there was a significant difference among the frequencies of the three types of prepositional errors (omission, addition, and substitution of prepositions). Based on the results, the use of "for" instead of "to" was the most frequent substitution of prepositions in Iranian TEFL postgraduate students' compositions. The results indicated that Iranian TEFL postgraduate students mostly used incorrect the propositions while writing.

**Key words:** Prepositional errors, Iranian TEFL postgraduate student, Writing

## 1. Introduction

As using prepositions helps promote self-presentation, it has always been a part of human communication. But prepositions are constructions that can cause a potential learnability problem. Previous research has shown that the preposition is one of the most problematic categories that students encounter in learning English (Richards, 1974; Ravina, 1982). The appropriate use of prepositions has always been a source of confusion to the Iranians EFL learners. As prepositions have polysemous nature in English language, they are difficult for English Language Learners to master. Even advanced learners of English are not quite at ease with it and often they use wrong prepositions. In the case of learning prepositions, implementing effective instructional methods to teach prepositions can lead to better learning on the part of learners. Such being the case, the present study endeavors to figure out what extent Iranian TEFL postgraduate students make the prepositional errors.

### 1.1 Definition of preposition

As prepositions are the most frequently occurring type of words in the English language, they are a very important word group to understand. There are numerous definitions of the word "preposition". According to Wishon & Burks (1980), Prepositions are "always followed by nouns or pronouns. They are connective words that show the relationship between the nouns following them and one of the basic sentences elements: subject, verb, object, or complement." (Wishon & Burks, 1980: p.285). Rice, Sandra, and Vanrespaille (1999)

define prepositions as typically polysemous items that can be explained and studied through prototype theory. Carter and McCarthy (2006) believe that “prepositions express a relation in space between two or more entities or a relation in time between two events, or various other abstract relations” (p. 462). “A preposition is a word placed before a noun or a pronoun to show in what relation the thing denoted by it stands in regard to something else” (Wren & Martin, 2006, p.106). Koffi (2010) indicated that English has a higher number of prepositions than most other languages about 60 to 70. According to Koffi, many prepositions are monosyllabic (on, for, to,) in English while half of them have two syllables (without, under, behind, without) or more (underneath, not withstanding) (as cited in Bilal, Tariq, Yaqub, & Kanwal, 2013).

## 2. Literature Review

As the language learning is a complex process, it involves committing many errors like any other process of acquiring any skill may include. According to Corder (1981), learner's errors provide an evidence of learning and reveal various strategies or procedures the learner is employing in the process of discovering the language.

Corder (1973) and Brown (2000) (as cited in Keshavarz, 2005), classified EFL learner errors into three categories: substitution, addition, and omission. Hamdallah (1988), Scott and Tucker (1974), and Tahaineh (2009) also studied errors of EFL students using the same classification of prepositional errors. They further delineated the three categories as: substitution, addition, and omission. Similarly, Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1999) reported that non-native speakers of English tend to have three types of problems with prepositions: (1) choosing the wrong preposition, (2) omitting a needed preposition, and (3) using a preposition where one is not needed. Vriend (1988) also concluded that ESL/EFL students in general often omit, displace, or misuse English prepositions.

Research (Dulay & Burt, 1974; Azeez, 2005; Scott & Tucker, 1974; Tahaineh, 2009; Vriend, 1988) has demonstrated that EFL learners have serious problems in the use and production of English prepositions. A small number of previous Persian studies (Yousefi, Soofi, and Janfaza, 2014; Mehrgan, 2013; Mahmoodzadeh, 2012; Jalali and Shojaei, 2012) also have been conducted to explore Persian EFL learners' prepositional errors.

Yousefi, Soofi, and Janfaza (2014) investigated the common preposition errors committed by Iranian students. A group of 35 intermediate students constituted the sample. The researchers used a diagnostic test (35 Multiple choice item) as the instrument of the study to test the students proficiency in using the prepositions. The results revealed that the prepositions “in”, “at” and “to” cause the most frequent errors. The researchers reported that the errors made by the participants were caused by two main factors: interference from Farsi and other learning problems. The researchers indicated that interference from Farsi had a more significant role in occurring preposition errors.

Mehrgan (2013) examined the relationship between Iranian EFL students' general knowledge of English and their use of English prepositions. He also investigated the differences between the female and male participants in using the prepositions. 32 male and 58 female learners constituted the sample. Based on the findings, the researcher concluded that there was a moderate and significant relationship between the learner's proficiency level and their use of prepositions. The results also showed that there were no significant differences between males and females in terms of using prepositions.

Mahmoodzadeh (2012) investigated the errors made by Iranian EFL learners due to the cross-linguistic influence between their L1/SL and L2/TL language (i.e. Persian & English respectively). The researcher conducted an error analysis to examine the status of different types of errors of prepositions made due to the transitional constraints between Persian and English languages. According to the results, the Iranian EFL learners were faced with the errors related to the wrong and redundant use of prepositions more frequently as compared with the errors related to the omission of prepositions in L2 while translating from Persian into English.

Jalali and Shojaei (2012) searched the developmental and fossilized prepositional errors in Persian EFL learners' compositions. The researchers concluded that most of the students committed fossilized errors, which shows the permanent retention of prepositional errors in their compositions.

Tetreault and Chodorow (2008) also searched the ups and downs of preposition error detection in ESL writing in order to describe a methodology for detecting preposition errors in the writing of non-native English speakers. They described a methodology for detecting preposition errors in the writing of non-native English speakers. Their system performed at 84% precision and close to 19% recall on a large set of student essays.

Chodorow, Tetreault and Han Na-Rae (2007) also worked on the detection of preposition errors of non-native speakers of English. They concluded that "prepositions account for a substantial proportion of all grammatical errors by ESL learners" (p. 1).

Lee and Knutsson (2008) explored the role of prepositional phrase (PP) attachment in preposition generation. They investigated the task of preposition generation in the context of a grammar checker. They developed a system that could automatically detect and correct preposition usage. They indicated that: "Relevant features for this task can range from lexical features, such as words and their part - of-speech tags in the vicinity of the preposition, to syntactic features that take into account the attachment site of the prepositional phrase, as well as its argument adjunct distinction" (p.643). Lee and Knutsson (2008) also believed that "preposition usage is among the most frequent types of errors made by non-native speakers of English" (p. 643).

### 3. Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the present study is to investigate prepositional errors in TEFL postgraduate students' writing. Most specifically, the researcher aims to conduct an error analysis to examine the status of different types of errors of prepositions and search if the differences among the different types of prepositional errors is significant.

### 4. Research Questions

Based on the objectives, this study seeks to answer the following questions.

1. To what extent do Iranian TEFL postgraduate students make the prepositional errors (omission, addition, and substitution of prepositions)?
2. Are the differences among the three types of prepositional errors significant?
3. What are the most frequent prepositional errors in terms of substitution of prepositions?

### 5. Methodology

#### 5.1 Participants

The participants were chosen from TEFL postgraduate students. All of the participants were native speakers of Persian. 42 students from Busher and Marvdasht Azad University constituted the sample. They were chosen randomly. The sample constituted 28 female and 14 male TEFL postgraduate students.

#### 5.2 Instruments

The corpus of data for this study was the university postgraduate students' compositions.

The participants were given three topics and were asked to choose one of them to write. The selected topics were: (1) Why do you use Internet? (2) What are the features of a good friend? (3) Why did you choose teaching English as your major?

The participants were asked to write their compositions in about four paragraphs. They were also asked to write on their own without consulting their classmates or teacher. Moreover, they were not informed about the purpose of the research.

### 6. Data Analysis

In the first step of data analysis, the compositions were analyzed in terms of prepositional errors (omission, addition, and substitution of prepositions) and the errors were assessed by an English professor to ensure that the errors were accurately spotted. Out of 42 compositions, 37 compositions contained errors in prepositions. By using the frameworks of Corder (1973) and Brown (2000) (as cited in Keshavarz, 2005), the prepositional errors were described and categorized. Based on the framework, the preposition errors are classified into three groups (omission, addition, and substitution of prepositions).

### 7. Results

To investigate what extent Iranian TEFL postgraduate students make the prepositional errors, the researcher ran the frequency analysis. Table1 shows the pertaining results.

*Table 1. Frequency of the prepositional errors*

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
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Valid	Omission	15	9.7	9.7	9.7
	Addition	68	43.9	43.9	53.5
	Substitution	72	46.5	46.5	100.0
	Total	155	100.0	100.0	

Table 1 shows that the participants under study have made errors related to substitution of prepositions more frequently as compared with errors related to omission and addition of prepositions. In particular, 46.5% of the errors belong to the substitution of prepositions. 43.9% of the errors are also related to addition of prepositions, whereas only 9.7 % of the errors are because of omission of prepositions. To sum up, it can be concluded that TEFL postgraduate students are more likely to suffer from some difficulties in distinguishing the right preposition.

To explore if the differences between the three types of prepositional errors are significant, Chi-square test was used. The findings are presented in Table 2.

*Table 2. Chi-square Test*

	Errors
Chi-Square	39.187 <sup>a</sup>
df	2
Asymp. Sig.	.000

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 51.7.

As presented by the Table 4.2, there is a significant difference among the frequencies of the three types of prepositional errors (omission, addition, and substitution of prepositions) (sig. =.000,  $p < .05$ ).

To search the most frequent prepositional errors, frequency analysis was run. After the data collection, a careful analysis showed that the compositions contained seven types of substitution error. Table 2 demonstrates the results.

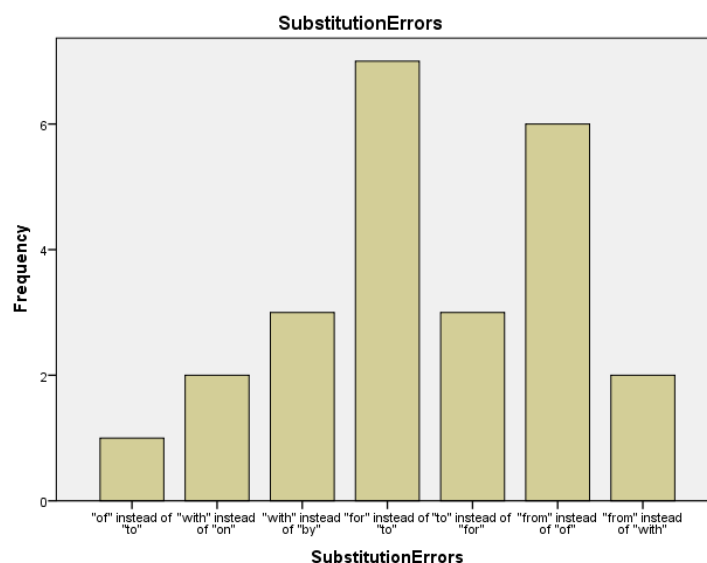
*Table 3. Frequency of Substitution Errors*

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	"of" instead of "to"	1	4.2	4.2
	"with" instead of "on"	2	8.3	12.5
	"with" instead of "by"	3	12.5	25.0
	"for" instead of "to"	7	29.2	54.2
	"to" instead of "for"	3	12.5	66.7
	"from" instead of "of"	6	25.0	91.7
	"from" instead of "with"	2	8.3	100.0
	Total	24	100.0	

Among the seven substitution errors found in the compositions, the substitution with highest frequency is the use of "for" instead of "to", followed by the use of "from" instead of "of", "to" instead of "for", "with" instead of "by", "with" instead of "on", "from" instead of "with", and "of" instead of "to". For the better understanding, the following bar graphs depict the frequency of the seven types of substitution errors (Figure 1).

*Figure 1 Frequency of the Seven Types of Substitution Errors*





## 8. Conclusion

The main objective of the present study was to find out to what extent Iranian TEFL postgraduate students make the prepositional errors (omission, addition, and substitution of prepositions). The results demonstrated that substitution of prepositions was more frequent as compared with errors related to omission and addition of prepositions. The results of Chi-square test revealed that the difference among the frequencies of the three types of prepositional errors (omission, addition, and substitution of prepositions) was significant. To know exactly the most frequent prepositional errors, frequency analysis was used. According to the results, the use of "for" instead of "to" was the most frequent substitution of prepositions (29.2%). The other substitution errors found in the compositions are presented below based on the frequency: "from" instead of "of" (25%), "to" instead of "for" (12.5%), "with" instead of "by" (12.5%), "with" instead of "on" (8.3%), "from" instead of "with" (8.3%), and "of" instead of "to" (4.2%).

The results of this study are in line with the previous research. Tavakoli (2008) found that prepositional substitution is difficult, even for advanced learners. Jalali and Shojaei (2012) also concluded that the majority of Persian EFL learners have difficulty in the selection of correct prepositions. The researchers found that the most frequently occurring categories of errors were in the following order: those preceding a noun, the wrong selection of a preposition after a noun, the wrong selection of a preposition after a verb, the omission of a preposition after a verb, and the addition of a preposition after a verb.

The results of the study suggest that even Iranian postgraduate students have problems in the use of prepositions. The substitution of prepositions was the most frequent prepositional error in Iranian TEFL postgraduate students' compositions. The findings also revealed that the use of "for" instead of "to" was the most frequent substitution of prepositions. Equipped with this knowledge, English teachers will be in a better position to boost their students' knowledge of prepositions.

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# ENGLISH PROFICIENCY AND IRANIAN EFL LEARNERS' MOTIVATION IN LANGUAGE INSTITUTES

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## Abstract

Motivation can presumably be named a fundamental factor in learning a new language. In fact, it plays an effective role on academic achievement among EFL learners. Accordingly, the current study is to shed light on English learning motivation among three levels of study; namely, elementary, intermediate, and advanced. Regarding subjects, 48 EFL learners in 3 different levels of English proficiency who had been studying in Kish Air language institute participated in this study. In practice, purposive sampling has been used for selecting the subjects. In each level, the subjects were asked to complete an English motivation questionnaire which was designed according to Liker scale. After analyzing the result, it has been proved that the advanced students were the most motivated group among the other two groups. Amazingly enough, the elementary level students were placed after advanced level. Thus, the intermediate level was placed the last from motivation perspective. Therefore, English teachers should be aware of these differences among different proficiency levels and try to manage the class appropriately according to the students level of proficiency.

**Keywords:** English Motivation, level of proficiency, language institutes, EFL learners.

## 1. Introduction

It is said that motivation is an integral part in the achievement of any aim. In fact, it can have a positive effect on any kinds of learning, specifically, learning a new language. Broadly, it is defined as an internal state that arouses, directs and maintains behavior. Nevertheless, different scholars have different definition of motivation. For instance, Gardner (2001) defines "Motivation as an internal process that activates, guides and maintains behavior over time". It is highly said that elements such as positive attitude interrelated to motivation, so it must be sustained for successful transfer of language learning. Therefore, to encourage positive vibe and to stimulate learning, specifically, learning a second or third language an environment which conducts the learning vibe should be created. According to Krashan (1987) a learning situation which has a low affective filter can create an environment that the students can learn in non-threatening way. Thus, this factor can be very important in any language learning program. In other words, the enrichment part of a language curriculum must encompass these factors. In essence, it can encourage successful transfer and learning of the target language. On the other hand, it is said that motivation can fluctuate in different level of English proficiency, namely, elementary, intermediate, and advanced. Therefore, the current study is to provide answer to the following question: Are there any differences between English motivation and level of English proficiency?

## 2. Review of Literature

Motivation is considered as an important factor in learning. Accordingly, there have been a lot of scholars who have touched upon this point. For instance, Dittus R.C (2012) believed that the learners with positive attitude towards English language learning are highly motivated both instrumentally and integratively. He further claimed that learners' motivation is not affected by external factors. Christo Moskovsy and Fakieh Alrabai (2009) opined that EFL learning is more influenced by instrumental motivation, by contrast, ESL learning is more dependent on integrative motivation.

According to Brown et al (2001) there is inner motivation when the necessity of learning is taking place for the sake of learning not for the sake of earning something else. In essence, inner motivation is vital to get the best result of learning situations. In fact, it is said that those learners who have inner motivation can adopt advanced methods of studying rather than those who have a kind of motivation that comes from outer rewards.

What is more, it is highly mentioned that the students who are motivated can presumably learn more effective than demotivated learners; furthermore, they make sacrifices so as to achieve their goals in leaning L2. In this sense, Cook (2001) argued that the strong desire for L2 learning contributes a lot to gain high degree of competence to be successful in the accomplishment of learners' language learning goals. On the other hand, Brown (2000) stated that motivation refers to the intensity of one's inner drive to learn. It can be mentioned that integrative orientation means that the learner is learning L2 for social and cultural goals. However, the motivation for learning and for getting the goal can be high or low.

Ellis (1997) clarified that English learners learn target language in order to fulfill the desire to mix up in the people and culture of the target language. Therefore, they tend to integrate or connect to target society. On the other hand, there are some learners who want to learn a language because of a practical reason such as getting a salary/ bonus or getting into college. This kind of motivation is named instrumental motivation. Gardner and Lambert (1972) considered instrumental motivation as a means to get social and economic reward through L2 learning. Ellis (1997:76) pointed that motivation varies from person to person depending on learning context and task.

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1 Subjects

The participants of the current study were 48 English students in three levels of English proficiency in Kish Air language institute in Sirjan, Iran. The subjects' age range was between 14-24 (Both male and female). Strictly speaking, they were in three different levels of study, elementary, intermediate, and advanced level.

#### 3.2 Instruments

An English motivation questionnaire with sixteen questions has been adopted and adapted to this study. The reliability of the questionnaire has been calculated. According to KR-21 formulae, the reliability was .74, which is highly significant. However, some of the items were modified after the results of the tests were analyzed.

#### 3.3 Procedures

First and foremost, the level of the students has been specified according to the institute class levels. Three classes in three different levels have purposefully been selected. Then, an English motivation questionnaire with 16 questions has been distributed among them. They were supposed to answer the questions according to Likert scale options. In the end, the questionnaires were analyzed. The mean score and standard deviation of three different groups have been calculated in details. It is worth mentioning that in case of students misunderstanding of some questions, those questions have orally been translated into their first language, Persian.

### 4. Results and discussion

In the following part the mean and standard deviation of three different groups; namely, elementary, intermediate, and advanced students have been displayed in three specific tables.

**Table 1**  
Mean score and standard deviation of elementary level

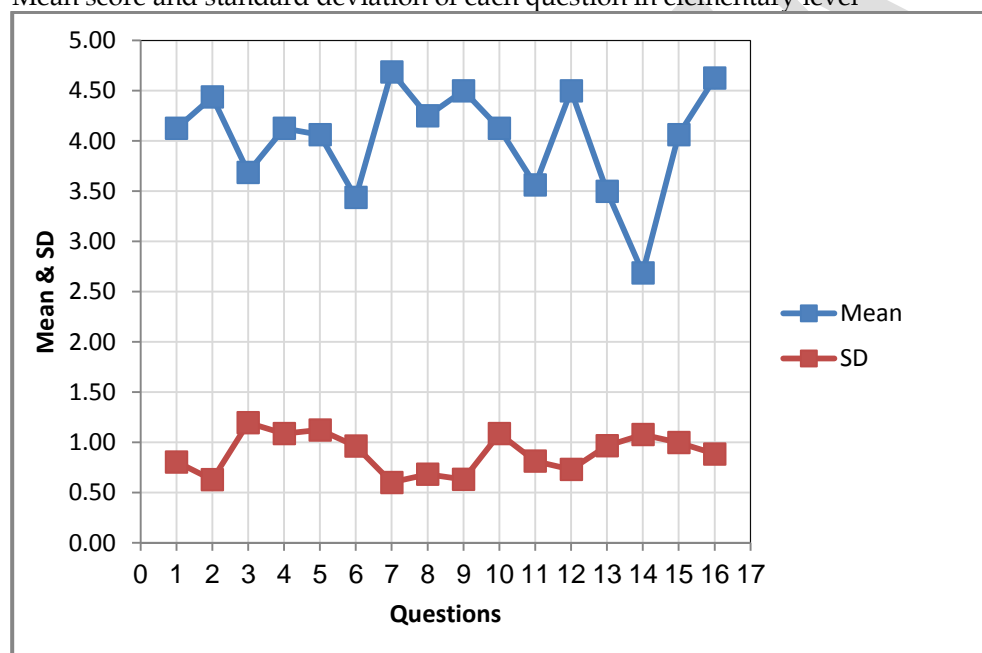
Items	Mean	SD
1. English will help me acquire new ideas and broaden my outlook.	4.13	0.81
2. English will enable me to better understand and appreciate English culture.	4.44	0.63
3. I am interested in English music.	3.69	1.20
4. I can learn more about the world through learning English	4.13	1.09
5. English is necessary to get a good job.	4.06	1.12

6. English is essential to be active in society	3.44	0.96
7. English will help me if I should ever travel abroad.	4.69	0.60
8. English is essential for personal development.	4.25	0.68
9. English will be helpful for my future career.	4.50	0.63
10. English will help me to pass my exams and graduate from the college.	4.13	1.09
11. I like to discuss something in English but not in first language.	3.56	0.81
12. I enjoy discussions in English class.	4.50	0.73
13. It is important to use a course book in class.	3.50	0.97
14. I feel freer to express myself in English than I do in first language.	2.69	1.08
15. I try to use English as much as possible in class time.	4.06	1.00
16. I always enjoy learning English.	4.63	0.89

According to table 1, the mean and standard deviation of elementary students' motivation have been displayed. Accordingly, 16 questions regarding students' English motivation have been calculated and revealed separately.

**Graph 1**

Mean score and standard deviation of each question in elementary level



Graph 1 reveals the precise specification of each question's mean score and standard deviation of the subjects in elementary group. As it shows, question No. 14 has the lowest mean score. On the other hand, question NO. 7 has the highest mean score in this group.

**Table 2**

Mean score and standard deviation of intermediate level

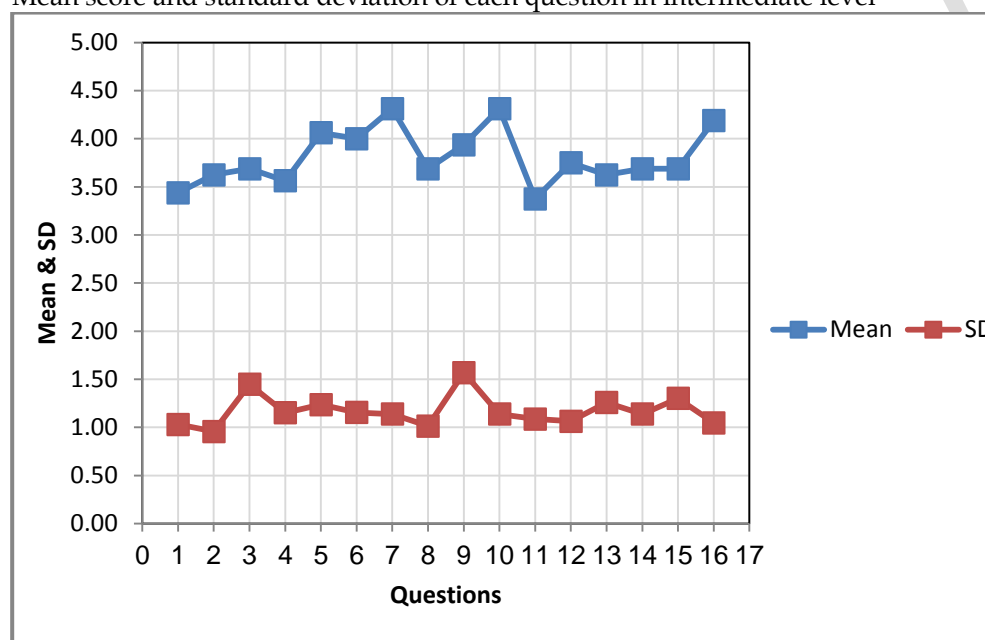
Items	Mean	SD
1. English will help me acquire new ideas and broaden my outlook.	3.44	1.03
2. English will enable me to better understand and appreciate English culture.	3.63	0.96
3. I am interested in English music.	3.69	1.45
4. I can learn more about the world through learning English	3.56	1.15
5. English is necessary to get a good job.	4.06	1.24
6. English is essential to be active in society	4.00	1.15
7. English will help me if I should ever travel abroad.	4.31	1.14
8. English is essential for personal development.	3.69	1.01

9. English will be helpful for my future career.	3.94	1.57
10. English will help me to pass my exams and graduate from the college.	4.31	1.14
11. I like to discuss something in English but not in first language.	3.38	1.09
12. I enjoy discussions in English class.	3.75	1.06
13. It is important to use a course book in class.	3.63	1.26
14. I feel freer to express myself in English than I do in first language.	3.69	1.14
15. I try to use English as much as possible in class time.	3.69	1.30
16. I always enjoy learning English.	4.19	1.05

The mean score and standard deviation of elementary students' motivation have been revealed in table 2. Accordingly, 16 questions regarding students' English motivation have been calculated and revealed separately.

**Graph 2**

Mean score and standard deviation of each question in intermediate level



Graph 2 reveals the exact specification of each question's mean score and standard deviation of the subjects in intermediate group. Accordingly, question No. 11 has the lowest mean score. On the other hand, question NO. 10 has the highest mean score.

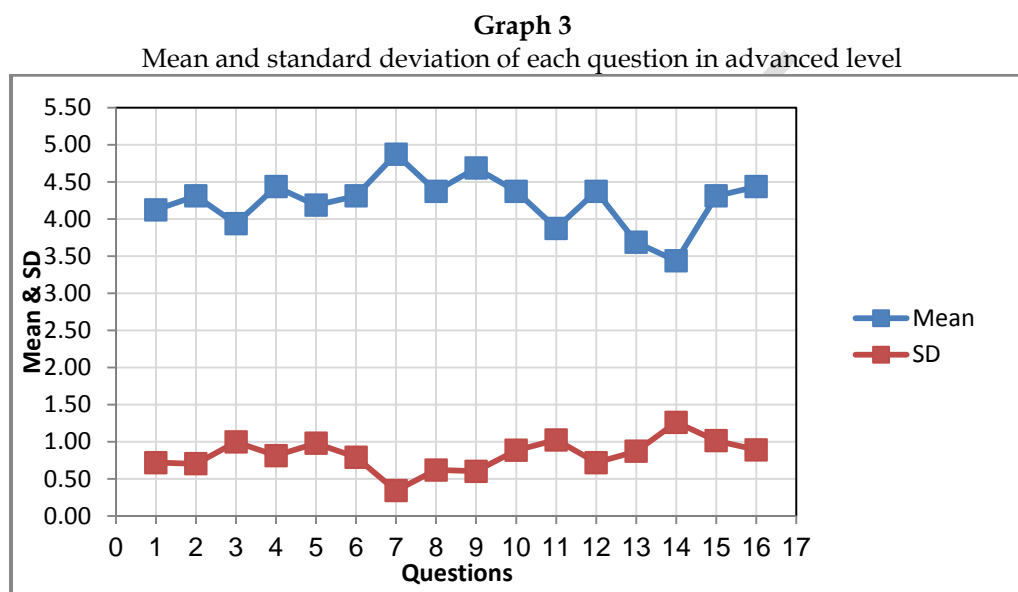
**Table 3**

Mean score and standard deviation of intermediate level

Items	Mean	SD
1. English will help me acquire new ideas and broaden my outlook.	4.13	0.72
2. English will enable me to better understand and appreciate English culture.	4.31	0.70
3. I am interested in English music.	3.94	1.00
4. I can learn more about the world through learning English	4.44	0.81
5. English is necessary to get a good job.	4.19	0.98
6. English is essential to be active in society	4.31	0.79
7. English will help me if I should ever travel abroad.	4.88	0.34
8. English is essential for personal development.	4.38	0.62
9. English will be helpful for my future career.	4.69	0.60
10. English will help me to pass my exams and graduate from the college.	4.38	0.89
11. I like to discuss something in English but not in first language.	3.88	1.02
12. I enjoy discussions in English class.	4.38	0.72

13. It is important to use a course book in class.	3.69	0.87
14. I feel freer to express myself in English than I do in first language.	3.44	1.26
15. I try to use English as much as possible in class time.	4.31	1.01
16. I always enjoy learning English.	4.44	0.89

Table 3 has revealed the mean and standard deviation of advanced level students' motivation. Accordingly, 16 questions regarding students' English motivation have been calculated and revealed separately.



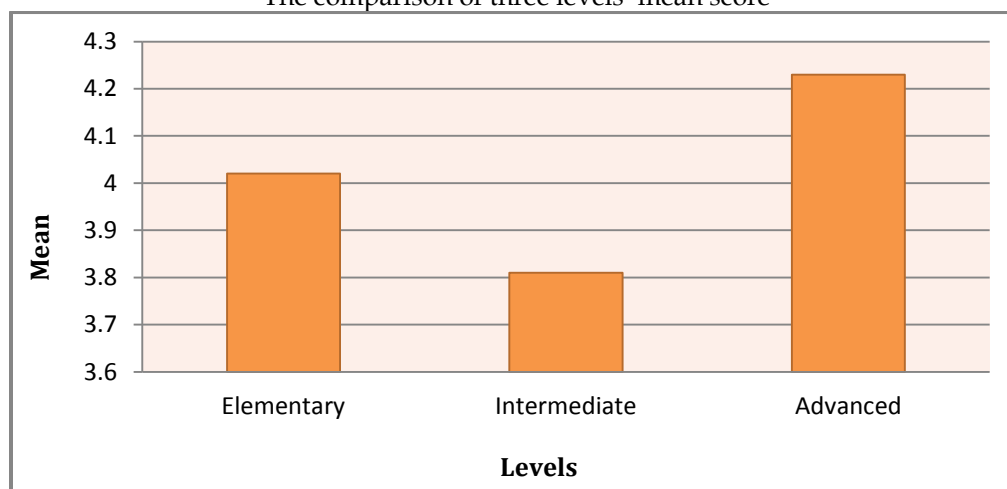
Graph 3 reveals the precise display of each question's mean score and standard deviation of the subjects in intermediate group. As it shows, question No. 11 has the lowest mean score. On the other hand, question NO. 10 has the highest mean score.

**Table 4**  
Total mean and standard deviation of three levels

Levels	Mean	SD
Elementary level students	4.02	0.1971035
Intermediate level students	3.81	0.1615624
Advanced level students	4.23	0.2154848

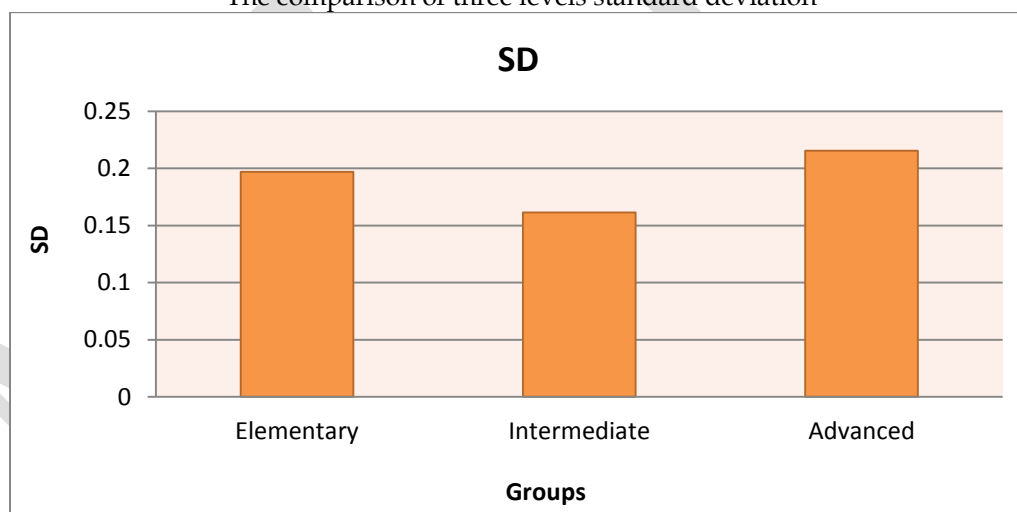
Table 4 reveals the general mean and standard deviation of elementary, intermediate, and advanced levels. Accordingly, the total mean score of the students in elementary level is 4.02 and its standard deviation is 0.1971035 which shows the lowest level of motivation in this research study. On the other sense, the intermediate students mean score and standard deviation are 3.81 and 0.1615624 consecutively. Therefore, it reveals, lower level of motivation in compare with elementary group. Amazingly, regarding advanced level students, the mean score and standard deviation are 4.23 and 0.2154848. Thus, it reveals the highest level of motivation in advanced level in this institute context.

**Graph 4**  
The comparison of three levels' mean score



Graph 4 has revealed the comparison of three different levels. According to this graph, the students in advanced level had the most English motivation and intermediate students had the least English motivation in institute context. However, the elementary level had more English motivation than intermediate level and less English motivation than advanced level.

**Graph 5**  
The comparison of three levels standard deviation



Graph 5 has revealed the standard deviation of elementary, intermediate, and advanced level students. It reveals that advanced level students are much more motivated than the other levels in this institute.

## 5. Conclusion

Motivation is considered one of the most important driving force in teaching and learning English. Personally speaking, a good English teacher must equip him/herself with up-to date techniques and methods of motivating students. Accordingly, this study went through the evaluation of English motivation from different levels perspective. As the result of three groups revealed, the advanced level students' motivation was quite much more than the other two levels. On the other hand, the intermediate level students had the lowest motivation. Therefore, it can presumably be mentioned that the students in intermediate level are a bit demotivated in this institute. Interestingly enough, elementary and advanced level students' motivation had more motivation rather



than intermediate levels. Therefore, it shows that the students in specific levels of proficiency have special level of motivation. Therefore, a sophisticated language teacher should recognize the differences among the students motivation and try to motivate the students appropriately. That is to say, it is teachers' art to handle the class according to the level of students' proficiency.

Pedagogically, it seems essential for a teacher to recognize the students' motivation in each level and try to search for and deal with demotivated students. In other words, putting the result and findings of every research into practice so as to improve students and teachers knowledge is the most significant aim and challenge of every scientific research. Considering the fact that motivation is a crucial construct shaping learners' behavior and performance, and determination to achieve future goals, it is essential to note that teachers and trainers should focus on the development of learners' motivation and metacognition. Consequently, English teachers should be fully aware of students in different level of study and behave the students according to their needs and enthusiasm. In other words, they should put a great deal of thought and attention into learning programs which sustain and boost students' interest and help them to achieve their final aim. It is suggested that Iranian English teachers should acquire sufficient strategies that can be helpful for EFL learners.

To sum up, it is teachers' responsibility to make English class as interesting as possible. In order to make the language learning process a more motivating experience, language teachers need to pay special attention into developing programs according to the students' level. That is to say, behaving in elementary class can be different with behaving in intermediate or advanced levels. As the result of this study revealed, intermediate level students need to be more motivated than the other levels. However, the result of this study cannot be generalized to the other institutes or other age ranges as well. Thus, it can be suggested that the upcoming researchers can conduct similar studies in different institutes, colleges, or schools with different age range so as to evaluate the other students as well.

### Acknowledgement

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# BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE HISTORY OF GRAMMAR

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## Abstract

A glance through the past century or so of linguistics gives us an interesting picture of different interpretations of the linguistic theories. In the 1940s and 1950s, the structural, or descriptive, school of linguistics, with its supporters try to apply scientific observations of human language. In the decade of the 1960, generative –transformational linguistics was emerged by Noam Chomsky. The generative linguists describe language, and arrive at explanatory level of adequacy language. Chomsky (1964) states that “principled basis, independent of any particular language, for the selection of the descriptively adequate grammar of each.” (p.63). This study attempts to describe different linguistic theories and their properties, and it explains why the new theories are emerged, and what needs to be reworked.

**Key words:** Syntactic Structure, THE Extended Standard Theory and the Revised Extended Standard Theory, X-bar theory, Government and binding Theory, Principles and Parameters approach, Minimalist Program

## Introduction

Scientific grammar goes back to the middle Ages, and specifically the study, by Modistic philosophers, of language as a phenomenon independent of thought. The tradition is dating back to Classical Antiquity, and every traditional writing system presupposes some serious linguistic theorizing.

In the humanistic Renaissance, philosophers started worrying, also, about the relation between language and mind, and as the Ages of Exploration and Reason came to be, about the problem of creativity and what it reveals about the natural world – where according to Descartes it effectively constituted a “second substance”. By the time Darwin began to revolutionize our thinking about human nature, philology was a profession in its own right, so much so that the discovery of the Indo-European ancestry and how it gave rise to hundreds of different languages served as a central inspiration in Darwin’s evolutionary theory. Many of the theoretical insights of linguistics in the twentieth century date back to this modern tradition, particularly as coupled together with late nineteenth and early twentieth century developments in mathematical logic and philosophy more generally.

Saussure (1916) initiated contemporary structural linguistics, by emphasizing how language should be conceived as separate from what it is used for, and by concentrating on how language is, not how it changes. Bloomfield (1933), Wells (1947) and Harris (1951) developed structuralism further and Noam Chomsky’s work developed in particular in immediate reaction to Harris’s program. A fundamental difference between structuralism and generative grammar stems from the fact that Chomsky focused on those aspects of structure that make the system recursive, whereas structuralism left those for the performance. Structuralism in fact focused on finite levels of language, such as morphophonemics, where notions like “linguistic feature” or the paradigmatic inventory underlying phonemics came to be understood.

But it was the syntax put to the side at the time that especially interested Chomsky, particularly since it was taken to address a key element in the problem of linguistic creativity. For this purpose, Chomsky borrowed

from the axiomatic-deductive method in mathematical logic, developed a generation earlier in its computational formulation. Chomsky systematized and generalized Emil Post's version of "recursive function theory", and eventually came to propose formal devices of his own ("transformations").

Generative Grammar, since its inception in 1950s, has been constantly developing and has had a profound influence on linguistics. Its affects are still being worked out. Chomsky himself and so many linguists throughout the world have been contributing in these developments. It has undergone numerous revisions.

### 1 - Syntactic Structure (1957)

In 1957, Noam Chomsky published Syntactic Structures. In Syntactic Structure model, syntax consisted of three kinds of rules:

- 1 - The phrase structure rules created the deep structures of sentences.
- 2 - Transformational rules operated on these deep structures to produce the Surface structures of the language. By these transformational rules (Negative, Interrogative, Passive...etc.), simple and complex, were derived from these kernels by successive optional transformational rules.
- 3 - Morphophonemic rules changed lexical forms where necessary (e.g. come+past =came).

The main difference between SS model and Aspect Model is the insertion of semantic component into the theoretical framework of TG grammar. The main aspect of Standard Theory is the difference between two levels of a sentence, called Deep structure and Surface structure. The two representations are linked to each other by transformational grammar. The deep structure represented the core semantic relations of a sentence, and was mapped on to the surface structure (which followed the phonological form of the sentence very closely) via transformations.

### 2. THE Extended Standard Theory and the Revised Extended Standard Theory

By 1972 more revisions in the model took place and this led to a renaming of the standard theory to The Extended Standard Theory. This new insight of generative grammar was presented by Ray Jackendoff. He proposed that transformations should be applied without having to mention semantic information such as referentiality within a table of coreference, the use of index markers, etc. This could be done, by changing the kind of information allowed in the deep structure in the Standard Theory.

Sadighi (2008) pointed that based on the Revised Extended Standard Theory, semantic interpretation must occur at the level of surface structure. The Extended Standard Theory (EST) and the Revised Extended Theory (REST) are known by the recognition that some aspects of meaning are determined by derived structure (Jackendoff 1972). The level of LOGICAL FORM (LF) was introduced, the output of a transformation was based on general principles rather than the description of the transformation, constraining phrase structure through the X' schema, and the introduction of TRACES. This introduction of abstract elements into the deep structure of sentences led to the emergence of GB Theory.

### 3 - X-bar theory

X-bar theory was developed by R. Jackendoff and Chomsky in 1970. It is a theory about the internal structure of syntactic constituents proposed as an alternative system to traditional account of Phrase Structure and Lexical categories. The theory claims that there are certain structural similarities among all phrasal categories of all languages. It attempts to identify universal syntactic features common to all human languages presupposed in (1965) model. In this theory three levels of categories are specified (Phrasal category XP), (X-bar category X-bar), and (Lexical category X). XP dominates a specifier and X-bar. In X-Bar Theory branching is always binary. So the top-level XP branches into X' and the specifier. The lowest X' branches into X and something else, which is called the complement. The last rule in X-Bar Syntax is the recursive rule that allows X-Bar to duplicate itself. The recursiveness of constituents within a phrase marker is a fact about natural language and the theory must account for this generative capacity within the grammar.

The development of X'' theory was an early stage in the effort to resolve the tension between explanatory and descriptive adequacy. A first step was to separate the lexicon from the computations, thus eliminating a serious redundancy between lexical properties and phrase structure rules and allowing the latter to be reduced to the simplest (context-)free form. X'' theory sought to eliminate such rules altogether, leaving only the general X'' theoretic format of UG.

The attempt was to do away with redundancies in favor of larger generalizations. Another way to say this is that when we impose strict constraints, the PS rules themselves vanish.

It is possible to view the change from phrase structure rules to X-bar theory in the same way as Chomsky's (1973) generalization of some of Ross's (1967) locality "island". Stowell (1981: 70) summarizes the general characteristics of X-bar theory as follows:

- a. Every phrase is endocentric.
  - b. Specifiers appear at the XP-level; subcategorized complements appear within X".
  - c. The head always appears adjacent to one boundary of X".
  - d. The head term is one bar-level lower than the immediately dominating phrasal node.
  - e. Only maximal projections may appear as non-head terms within a phrase.
- Koizumi (1995) argues that the traditional X-bar schema can be seen as expressing three claims:
- a. Asymmetry: A node is projected from only one of its daughters.
  - b. Binarity: A node may have at most two daughters.
  - c. Maximality: A head may project (at most) two non-minimal projections (p.137).

#### 4 - Government and binding Theory

Government and binding is a theory of syntax developed by Chomsky in the 1980s. It assumes that sentences have three levels: D - Structure, S - Structure and Logical form. S - Structure is derived from D - Structure and logical form from S - Structure by a single transformation called MOVE ALPHA. Many subtheories overlap with X - Bar, THETA, CASE, BINDING, CONTROL and GOVERNMENT theory. The name refers to two central of these subtheories:

- 1) - government, which is an abstract syntactic relation.

Abstract case is taken to be universal. In GB, abstract case is assigned to NP's by case assigners, namely verbs, prepositions, and INFL. Verbs and prepositions are said to assign accusative case to NP's that they govern, and INFL assigns nominative case to NP's that it governs.

- 2) - binding, deals with the referents of anaphors, pronouns, and referential expressions. GB distinguishes three types of NP. The applicable rules are called Binding Principle A, Binding Principle B, and Binding Principle C. Principle A: Reciprocal and reflexive NPs, whose reference is bound by a preceding NP in the same clause. Principle B: Personal pronouns, which can be interpreted anaphorically or deictically.

Principle C: All NPs which do not fall into (A) or (B), e.g. proper nouns.

#### 5 - Principles and Parameters approach

The Principles and Parameters (P &P) approach is a theoretical Framework within generative linguistics presented by Chomsky in his paper lectures on Government and Binding in 1979. According to this theory the syntax of a language is described in accordance with general principles (i.e. abstract rules or grammars) and specific parameters (i.e. markers, switches). This theory stresses on the point that the grammatical principles underlying languages are innate and fixed, and the differences among the languages are characterized in terms of parameter settings in the brain. This indicates the fact that a child learning a language needs only acquire the necessary lexical items (words, grammatical morphemes, and idioms, and the appropriate parameter settings).

The central idea of principles and parameters is that a person's syntactic knowledge consist of two aspects:

- 1 - A finite set of fundamental principles that are common to all languages;
- 2 - A finite set of parameters that determine syntactic variability amongst languages.

Within this framework, the goal of linguistics is to identify all of the principles and parameters that are universal to human language (Universal Grammar).

X-bar syntax replaces large numbers of rewrite rules with general principles, it captures properties of all phrases, and it bases syntax on categories that tie in with the lexicon. X-bar syntax strives for the maximum generality. The principles and parameters approach rejected the concept of rule and grammatical construction entirely; the familiar grammatical constructions are taken to be taxonomic artifact, with no theoretical standing.

Based on Principle and Parameter /GB theory, completely replacing Phrase structure rules with X-bar principles gets rid of the redundancy of categorial information. It is the lexicon that determines the specific properties of actual phrases through the notion of projection. Syntactic structures are projected from the lexicon in that they must satisfy the sub-categorization requirements of the lexical items.

## 6 - Minimalist Program

In the late 1980s, Chomsky started to explore what has become known as the Minimalist Program, with its emphasis on simplicity in theorizing and on moving beyond explanatory adequacy in the sense of asking why the language faculty has the properties it does. Chomsky presents MP as a program, and not as a theory, the Minimalist Program works on the assumption that Universal Grammar constitutes a perfect design in the sense that it contains only what is necessary to meet our conceptual, physical and biological needs. This approach proposes the existence of a fixed set of principles valid for all languages.

MP was not developed because of the failure of GB Theory, for GB Theory is very successful. But GB was not perfect and suffer from Certain conceptual and empirical problems. This approach is most explicitly outlined in Chomsky (1995b). Recent and ongoing work by Chomsky (2000, 2001, 2004, 2007, 2008) and many others continues to develop this framework. Chomsky's goal in the Minimalist Program (MP) is to reduce GB/PPT as much as possible to general principles of economy, to reduce derivations to their most primitive components.

An accompanying goal is to investigate the extent to which natural language syntax can be viewed as deviating minimally from an ideal computational system.

For instance, PSRs were eliminated in MP in favor of a primitive MERGE operation that combines two objects  $\alpha$  and  $\beta$ , which are words or phrases, into a new object; this operation is "external" Merge. Movement, or "internal Merge", is understood in MP as a combination of copying and deletion, an idea that has its roots in Chomsky's earliest work (Chomsky 1955).

Movement is licensed when there is a feature of the merged constituent, the GOAL, that agrees with some feature of a head, the PROBE. The operation AGREE erases the feature of the goal if it matches that of the probe. Features that are not erased result in illegitimate derivations.

There are no island constraints in MP; rather, movement is constrained by DERIVATIONAL ECONOMY: each movement operation, or the length of each operation, or both, contributes to the complexity of a derivation (Chomsky 1995; Zwart 1996).

The phonological form of a phrase is specified as it is constructed by Merge, by the operation SPELL-OUT, and its interpretation is also assumed to be constructed dynamically in the course of the derivation.

The notion of economy developed in late 1980s within the GB framework was a reason for developing MP.

Cook and Newson (2009) stated three kinds of economy:

1. Economy of representation: "There should be no superfluous elements in the representation of a structure."
2. Economy of derivation: "There should be no superfluous in a derivation. This Kind of economy prefers shorter derivations which make the fewest step."
3. Economy of grammar: This is the heart of a minimalist approach to language (p.249).

AN example of an economy condition relates to the Extension Condition. This condition requires that a transformational operation extends the tree upwards. Generally this is known as the requirement of cyclicity. Chomsky used this to explain the absence of certain kinds of derivations, but also as an argument against generalized transformations and for D-structure.

But it was cyclicity, rather than D-structure, that was crucial in the account. As we have discussed above, Minimalism rejects D-structure and reinstates generalized transformations, but it still preserves cyclicity, thus ruling out the anticyclical derivations that were the original concern.

The syntax interfaces directly with sound and meaning. To make this discussion rather more concrete, it is supposed that a grammar of a language is organized as follows. One component of a grammar is a Lexicon, and in forming a given sentence out of a set of words, we first have to take the relevant words out of the lexicon. Our chosen words are then combined together by a series of syntactic computations in the syntax (i.e. in the syntactic/computational component of the grammar), thereby forming a syntactic structure. This syntactic structure serves as input into two other components of the grammar. One

is the semantic component which maps (i.e. 'converts') the syntactic structure into a corresponding semantic representation (i.e. to a representation of linguistic aspects of its meaning): the other is a PF component, so called because it maps the syntactic structure into a PF representation (i.e. a representation of its Phonetic Form, giving us a phonetic spell out for each word, telling us how it is pronounced). The semantic representation interfaces with systems of thought, and the PF representation with systems of speech.

### Conclusion

It is important to know the history of the grammar in order to fully understand current development. Each period is characterized by certain concepts, which was rejected in the next period. There are changes in the concept of syntax, leading to a series of apparent discontinuous directions.

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# THE EFFECT OF GRAPHIC ORGANIZERS ON EFL LEARNERS' WRITING SKILL

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## Abstract:

The present study is an attempt to investigate the impact of Graphic Organizers on developing writing skills of Iranian intermediate EFL learners, and to compare two major types of GOs (discourse structure graphic organizer and generic format graphic organizer). Attaining forgoing goals two groups of experimental and one group of control were chosen among female high school students of Khalkhal who had passed at least 20 semesters in language institutes. These samples were in sum 60 students in 3 intact classes. By administering pretest it was proved that these groups were homogenous. The control group was trained by conventional instruction of writing textbook whereas one of the experimental groups was treated by means of discourse structure graphic organizer and the other experimental group was trained using generic format graphic organizer. After one semester of treatment, posttest was administered to all groups of study and after analyzing the obtained data by SPSS software, we could conclude that both DSGOs and GFGO improved the students writing skill and comparing the effect of these two it was proved that both types had roughly the same effect and DSGO was not more effective than GFGO type. Therefore, if in teaching writing we make the students familiar with two major types of GOs we can get the best result, namely if students can distinguish between the organization of words and sentences in two GO types surly their writing will be improved.

**Key words:** Graphic Organizers, Discourse structure graphic organizer, Generic format graphic organizer, and intermediate level.

## 1.1. Introduction

Learning to write is an activity that children engage in throughout their elementary school years. Clarke (1990) defines graphic organizers as words on paper arranged to represent an individual's understanding of the relationship between words. Whereas conventions of sentences structure make most writing linear in form, graphic organizers take their forms from the presumed structure of relationship among ideas. Another explanation of graphic organizer is given by Tate (2003), who defines them as visual representation. He mentioned that it can help the left and right hemispheres of the brain by making sense out of information and searching for pattern in the information it process.

As an educator one of the most important tasks is to introduce students to the written language and teach them how to use written language to communicate effectively. As an English foreign language learner, I used visual aids in the early years studying English. I noticed the trend of using visual aids, including concept maps in science and Graphic Organizers (GO) in social and language studies as part of instructional methodologies.

The evident benefits of using visual aids to enhance learning in science and language by native speakers of English (NSEs) spurred my desire to find out if these tools could benefit English as foreign language learners (EFLs) and also EFL learners, whose command of the English language is assumed to be less proficient than NSEs. In particular, I felt the need to ascertain through this preliminary empirical investigation if second language learners could improve their writing skill through the use of GOs.

Since most EFL students are not familiar with the structure and effectiveness of graphic organizers and rely on their previous knowledge for writing, this can be the main reason for their weaknesses in writing. Everyone who is engaged in teaching English in Iran knows that most of the students have difficulties in writing and they cannot write effectively. Learners are unable to produce cohesive and coherent sentences and this is because of the fact that they are not familiar with Graphic organizer. Thus, presenting an approach seems to be beneficial and research-based instructional strategies, which have been proven to meet the goals established, are greatly needed in educational system of Iran. This research study tries to examine systematically forgoing problems and verify whether GOs are beneficial or not, whether Discourse Structure Graphic Organizer (DSGO) has precedence over Generic Format of Graphic Organizer (GFGO). This research, therefore, addresses the following questions and hypotheses.

Q1: Is the discourse structure graphic organizer-based instruction more effective than the conventional instruction in developing Iranian EFL learners writing skill?

Q2: Is the generic format graphic organizer-based instruction more effective than the conventional instruction in developing Iranian EFL learners writing skill?

Q3: Is the discourse structure graphic organizer-based instruction more effective than the generic format graphic organizer-based instruction in developing Iranian EFL learners writing skill?

H<sub>0</sub>1: The generic format graphic organizer-based instruction is not more effective than the conventional instruction in developing Iranian EFL learners writing skill.

H<sub>0</sub>2: The discourse structure graphic organizer-based instruction is not more effective than the conventional instruction in developing Iranian EFL learners writing skill.

H<sub>0</sub>3: The discourse structure graphic organizer-based instruction is not more effective than the generic format graphic organizer-based instruction in developing Iranian EFL learners writing skill.

## 2. Review of literature

Visual organizers are visual systems of using spatial frameworks such as diagrams, maps, or charts to organize and present structural knowledge in a content domain. They can be defined as spatial representations or visual displays of the conceptual framework, or key elements of the subject matter in a given area. Simply put, they are a creative technique used to present information through graphic depictions of the relationships between concepts. Graphic organizers come in many different forms, each one best suited to organizing to particular type of information. The following are examples of the different types and uses of graphic organizers. One type is hierarchical organizers. they present main ideas and supporting details in ranking order. Another type is comparative organizers, which depict similarities among key concepts. Sequential organizers illustrate a series of steps or place events in a chronological order, and diagrams depict actual objects and systems in the real world. Cyclical organizers depict a series of events that have no beginning or end. Another type of graphic organizer is conceptual organizers that include a main concept with supporting facts, evidence, or characteristics (Jacobson & Dottle, 2003).

Many L1 researchers have offered their own definitions and procedural descriptions of GOs (e.g., Alvermann, Boothby, 1984; Armbruster, Anderson, & Ostertag, 1987; Bean, Singer, Sorter, & Frazee, 1986)). From implementations of the various GO methodologies proposed, a body of empirical research has provided preliminary but inconclusive findings of the facilitative effect of GOs on students' comprehension and retention of information from expository texts. Bean et al. (1986) found GO training no more effective than instruction in outlining if not combined with previous summarization training. Graphic organizers can help a wide array of students, no matter what their ability. However, students that struggle can benefit greatly from the use of graphic organizers (Blanchowicz & Fisher, 2004).

After synthesizing findings from meta-analyses, research reviews, and research studies on the impact of GOs, Griffin and Tulbert (1995) cast some doubt on their facilitative effect in reading instruction. They concluded that "much of this research provides contradictory results and recommendations" (p. 84). They asserted that studies of GOs in the past 20 years "have failed to increase significantly our knowledge base



concerning GOs” and “have not added to our knowledge about the effectiveness of the GO” (p. 84). From their perspective, “no clear trend in the literature is evident at this point” (p. 84).

Bean et al. (1986) explored the effect of GO instruction versus outlining on students’ L1 text recall in 10th-grade world history. The GOs used in the study displayed the interrelationships among ideas in the text but did not focus on the discourse structure of the text. Three groups of students participated in this study: one GO group with previous training in summarizing, another group trained in a generic GO, and the third group receiving instruction in outlining. The results from the first five quizzes did not show significant differences for the three groups; however, the sixth quiz, administered after the strategy had been phased out, indicated that the GO group with previous summarization training achieved significantly higher quiz scores than the basic GO and outlining groups; that is to say, the GO training alone was no more effective than instruction in outlining. The delayed recall involving a difficult college level passage showed that the GO group with previous summarization training achieved a significantly higher score than the other two groups. The authors suggested a cumulative, long-range view of metacognitive instruction and recommended that GO instruction should take at least 14 weeks. However, their results may be based, at least in part, on summary training and practice.

### 3. Methodology:

#### *Participants*

A proficiency test was administered to the participants to obtain a homogenous sample. As a result, sixty intermediate participants had the required language qualification for a homogeneous sample to fulfill the purpose of the study. The research population for this study included sixty female students in Khalkhal studying English in Zabangostar institute, whose age ranged from fifteen to seventeen. Also, they have passed some semesters in this language institute. It is also worth mentioning that these participants were selected randomly. Later, the participants were divided into three classes in a way that each class contained twenty students. These three groups learned the English writing skill in various ways. The classes were assigned to a control group which only uses the textbook to develop their writing skill, the first experimental group which uses the Discourse Structure Graphic Organizer (DSGO), and the second experimental group which uses the Generic Format of Graphic Organizer (GFGO) to learn and improve the English writing skill.

#### *Instruments*

To select the participants of this study, one hundred students took a quick placement test version 2. This test is published by Oxford University Press and University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate. The aim of taking this test is to find a homogeneous sample (regarding the language proficiency) for conducting the study. A test was used as both the pre-test and the post-test. This test includes some topics for writing. These subjects, which were diverse in topics, were selected from ‘The Practical Writer with Readings’ by Edward P. Bailey and Philip A. Powell. It is also worth pointing out that the scores of the pre-test and the post-test were considered out of twenty. Graphic Organizer (GO) tasks were utilized as a quantified indicator to improve the students’ use of graphic organizers after the training. The tasks were administered after the GO training and before writing the given topics. They include seven subtasks which require students to draw seven GOs for seven provided concept boxes. The textbook that was used in this research study was ‘Writing with Confidence, Writing Effective Sentences and Paragraphs’ by Alan Meyers. This is an English book that can be employed for teaching and learning writing for intermediate and advanced learners. This book provides essential instructions and practice in writing skill.

#### *Procedure*

By using a proficiency test, the researcher selected sixty participants in a way they were homogeneous in term of language background. They were selected from among language learners in the Zabangostar institute, Khalkhal. These students were studying English at the intermediate level, and they were assigned into three classes, one control group and two experimental groups (one was trained by DSGO and the other group by GFGO). After randomly classifying the participants into three groups, all of them were given a writing task as the pre-test. The scores obtained from this test were analyzed to see whether there was any difference between the three groups or not before applying the treatment. Moreover, these scores were used in order to be compared with the post-test scores to assess which group is more successful.

Then after they took the writing task, the treatment sessions were started. The students in the experimental groups were instructed by different types of graphic organizers. The GO training lessons were incorporated into the regular coursework by the class instructor to improve the students’ writing skill. First of all, the teacher

introduced GOs to the students and along with every GO, she provided relevant passages. Then while explaining every part of the text, she referred it in relevant part of related GO and made association between the passage and its GO. After they got partial mastery in coping with GO, she made them provide missed parts of GOs according to the writing passage, and at last she made them provide GOs for any intact passage. After the end of the treatment and before the post-test, some tasks were administered to the experimental groups in order to assist the students to cope with the GOs tasks better. As for the control group, the students improved their writing skill by simply covering and following the textbook without any further instruction. At the end of the treatment, the experimental and the control groups received the post-test which was parallel to the pre-test. Finally, the results of the students' scores in both pre-and post-test were compared and analyzed to see whether there is any significant difference among them or not. It is also worth pointing out that all of the three groups improved their writing skill during 9 weeks.

#### *Data analysis*

The results of this research were analyzed quantitatively. It was mentioned that the participants took a test as both the pre-test and the post-test. The students' scores of the pre-test and the post-test were analyzed by descriptive statistics and ANOVA. The scores of the three groups were compared together in order to indicate which group is more successful. All of these analyses were performed by using SPSS version 16. The results of the research are also shown in the form of some tables and charts that can be of great use for a better understanding of the results.

#### **4. Results**

##### *Results of the pre-test*

As mentioned before, the participants (n= 60) of this study were selected randomly. They were given a language proficiency test, i.e. Oxford Placement test, in order to make sure about their homogeneity regarding English language proficiency level. Later, they were divided into three groups of English language learning. Each group consisted of twenty language learners. All of the participants took the pre-test. As mentioned before, the first experimental group developed their writing skill by using the Discourse Structure Graphic Organizer Group (DSGO). The second experimental group developed their writing skill by using the Generic Format of Graphic Organizer (GFGO). And, the control group developed their writing skill by simply using the textbook. Finally, all of the participants took the post-test to discover which technique is more beneficial for developing the writing skill.

The post-test was employed to determine the progress of the language learners. More specifically, it is conducted to check which technique of teaching writing skill is more beneficial. The learners' pre-test scores from the three groups were compared with each other to check the mean average of the scores. Later, the learners' post-test scores from the three groups were compared with each other by using ANOVA.

The scores of pre-test were entered into the SPSS. It is also worth mentioning that the scores of the pre-test and post-test were out of twenty. Table 4.1 represents the descriptive statistics for the three groups regarding their pre-test scores.

Table 4.1 Descriptive statistics for the results of the pre-test

#### **Descriptives**

Scores								
					95% Confidence Interval for Mean			
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Minimum	Maximum
Control Group	20	14.05	.999	.223	13.58	14.52	13	16
Experimental Group 1	20	14.60	.883	.197	14.19	15.01	13	16
Experimental Group 2	20	14.40	.995	.222	13.93	14.87	13	16

**Descriptives**

Scores								
					95% Confidence Interval for Mean			
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Minimum	Maximum
Control Group	20	14.05	.999	.223	13.58	14.52	13	16
Experimental Group 1	20	14.60	.883	.197	14.19	15.01	13	16
Experimental Group 2	20	14.40	.995	.222	13.93	14.87	13	16
Total	60	14.35	.971	.125	14.10	14.60	13	16

As the table indicates, the mean of the scores are almost so close; they are 14.05 for the control group, 14.60 for the first experimental group, and 14.40 for the second experimental group respectively. It reveals that before applying the treatment, the three groups were quite similar to each other regarding the knowledge of writing skill. However, to assure that these groups are similar, it is recommended to run ANOVA.

**4.2 One-way ANOVA for the pre-test scores****ANOVA**

Scores					
	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	3.100	2	1.550	1.681	.195
Within Groups	52.550	57	.922		
Total	55.650	59			

As can be seen in the table, the sig value is 0.195 which is above 0.05 ( $0.195 > 0.05$ ). Thus, there is no significant difference among these groups before applying the treatment.

For a better understanding of the result of the analysis, a visual representation of the results is presented in Figure 4.1 as a chart of the relationship among the groups regarding the pre-test scores.

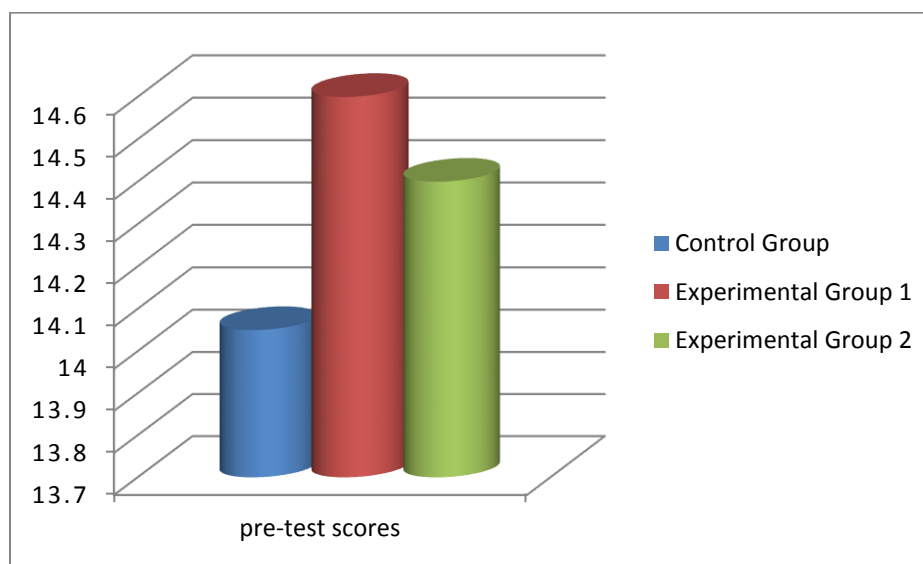


Figure 4.1 The chart of the pre-test scores

As can be seen in the chart, the pre-test scores of the three groups are so close to each other. And it is essential to know whether they can continue to be this close after conducting the treatment.

#### *Results of the post-test*

As mentioned before, at the end of the course, all of the participants took a post-test. The aim of the post-test was to investigate the progress of the learners in writing skill in order to discover which technique is more beneficial for the language learners.

One-way ANOVA was run on the scores of the students in the post-test. One-way ANOVA is employed to compare a specific variable among three or more unmatched groups. The following table provides simple summaries about the basic features of the data. It is also worth mentioning that the scores of the post-test are out of twenty.

Table 4.3 Descriptive statistics of the post-test scores

#### Descriptives

scores								
					95% Confidence Interval for Mean			
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Minimum	Maximum
Control Group	20	15.10	.968	.216	14.65	15.55	14	17
Experimental Group 1	20	16.50	.761	.170	16.14	16.86	15	18
Experimental Group 2	20	16.40	.940	.210	15.96	16.84	15	18
Total	60	16.00	1.089	.141	15.72	16.28	14	18

The above table provided the descriptive statistics including the mean, standard deviation and 95% confidence intervals for the variable for each separate group (control group, experimental group 1 and

experimental group 2), as well as when all groups are combined (Total). In other words, Table 4.3 indicates the variables being analyzed and the name of each variable is listed in the left column of the table (control group, experimental group 1 and experimental group 2). And N shows the sample size of each group, which was 20, and also the total sample size which was 60.

Table 4.4 shows the output of the ANOVA test and whether there is a statistically significant difference among three groups. The sum of squares and the mean squares of between groups and within groups are specified in the table.

Table 4.4 Results of One- way ANOVA

## ANOVA

scores					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	24.400	2	12.200	15.250	.000
Within Groups	45.600	57	.800		
Total	70.000	59			

As shown in the table, the significance level is 0.00 ( $p = .000$ ), which is below 0.05.; therefore, there is a statistically significant difference in the post-test scores of the three groups. In other words, there is a statistically significant difference among the groups as determined by One-way ANOVA ( $F(2, 57) = 15.250, p = .000$ ). In order to find out which of the three groups had outperformed others, a post-hoc test was conducted. The following table demonstrates the results of Tukey's post-hoc test.

## 4.5 Results of Tukey's post-hoc test

## Multiple Comparisons

scores  
Tukey HSD

(I) groups	(J) groups	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Control Group	Experimental Group 1	-1.400*	.283	.000	-2.08	-.72
	Experimental Group 2	-1.300*	.283	.000	-1.98	-.62
Experimental Group 1	Control Group	1.400*	.283	.000	.72	2.08
	Experimental Group 2	.100	.283	.934	-.58	.78
Experimental Group 2	Control Group	1.300*	.283	.000	.62	1.98
	Experimental Group 1	-.100	.283	.934	-.78	.58

## Multiple Comparisons

scores  
Tukey HSD

(I) groups	(J) groups	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Control Group	Experimental Group 1	-1.400*	.283	.000	-2.08	-.72
	Experimental Group 2	-1.300*	.283	.000	-1.98	-.62
Experimental Group 1	Control Group	1.400*	.283	.000	.72	2.08
	Experimental Group 2	.100	.283	.934	-.58	.78
Experimental Group 2	Control Group	1.300*	.283	.000	.62	1.98
	Experimental Group 1	-.100	.283	.934	-.78	.58

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

From the results so far, we know that there are significant differences among the groups as a whole. Table 4.5, multiple comparisons, showed which groups differed from each other. The Tukey post-hoc test is generally the preferred test for conducting post-hoc tests on a one-way ANOVA. We can see in the table above that there is a significant difference between the control group and the experimental group 1 ( $p = .000$ ), as well as between the control group and the experimental group 2 ( $p = .000$ ). However, the difference between the experimental group 1 and the experimental group 2 ( $p = .934$ ) is not significant ( $.934 > 0.05$ ). Therefore, it can be concluded that both of the experimental groups has made greater changes in their post-test scores. And both of the two techniques of DSGO and GFGO can considered as effective ways to improve the learners' writing skill.

The following is a visualized data about both the pre-test and the post-test scores of the two groups.



Figure 4.2 The line chart of the pre-test and the post-test scores of the three groups

This line chart employed the scores of the pre-test and the post-test; therefore, it can effectively show the progress of the three groups during the course. As can be seen in the chart, the two experimental groups proved to be more successful than the control group. Therefore, the first null hypothesis can be rejected in that there is a significant difference between the generic format graphic organizer-based instruction and the conventional instruction in developing Iranian EFL learners writing skill. Similarly, the second null hypothesis can be rejected in that there is a significant difference between the discourse structure graphic organizer-based instruction and the conventional instruction in developing Iranian EFL learners writing skill. However, the third hypothesis can be confirmed since the discourse structure graphic organizer-based instruction and the generic format graphic organizer-based instruction are almost equally effective in developing Iranian EFL learners writing skill.

## 5. Discussion

This study showed that during the introduction to both kinds of graphic organizers, i.e. generic format and discourse structure, the students increased their writing skills. The students' writing skill improved after they were taught instruction on two kinds of graphic organizers.

Considering the first research question, the results showed that discourse-based instruction was more effective in developing Iranian EFL learners' writing skill. The results are consistent with the research done by Armbruster et al. (1987) and Guri-Rosenblit (1989). GOs have consistently shown the impact of GOs in facilitating comprehension of macrostructures and recall of main ideas. The results are also in congruent with research done by Spiegel and Barufaldi (1994), who investigated the cumulative effect of text structure awareness and GOs. They concluded that the GO instruction of discourse structure should encourage self-regulated learning strategies with active involvement of the students.

Finally, the results are in agreement with the research by Armbruster et al. (1987) on the effect of text structure training on L1 writing skill which showed the treatment group who received direct instruction in recognizing and summarizing a problem-solution text along with schematic representation exceeded the control group by 50% more of macrostructure ideas.

Regarding the second research question, the results showed that generic format graphic organizers could improve Iranian EFL learners' writing skill. This could be because graphic organizers have been proven to help students increase comprehension (Ellis, 2004). Writing test was administered prior to and at the end of the graphic organizer training showed an increase in the knowledge of most participants. This may be due to the fact that graphic organizers give the students a visual representation and help enhance learning. Graphic organizers help develop, organize, and communicate ideas.

Moreover, findings were similar to the those in Billmeyer and Barton's (1998) study that found graphic organizers are known to reduce boredom in learners, increase motivation, and help develop a better understanding of the lesson presented. This, in turn helps promote student participation in class.

The findings of this study revealed that graphic organizers increased students' pretest and posttest percentages, but not their overall grade-level writing skill. Also, the students' attitudes toward writing and their participation during writing class increased. Results of this study will provide relevant information for educators interested in using graphic organizers.

As far as the results concerning the third research question are concerned, there was no difference between the effect of generic format graphic organizer and discourse-based graphic organizer.

In general, this study has found evidence that GOs are effective. Specifically, GO use has been statistically seen as effective for EFL learners. This finding could support previous claims concerning the use of visual aids in helping these learners recognize text structures and transferring linear text to a visual format. Based on the findings, I would like to encourage teachers to use GOs as an instructional strategy, especially in writing classes. However, teachers need to consider the length of the GO instructions as well as the types of GOs for effective instructional results. They also need to select the types of discourse structures of writing text book with care and consider the amount of practice.

In conclusion, it is likely that some of the posttest scores increased because of the use of graphic organizers. There are many other factors that could have influenced the results. Overall, the students' attitude and participation in writing class improved during the introduction of graphic organizers into writing class after the researcher talked to some participants after training program.

## 6. Conclusion

Being able to write well is more than just an option. In other words, writing skill can be considered as a necessity especially in today's worlds. To teach a foreign language, writing skillfully is rarely considered as an integral part of the learning process. Writing is one of the skills which is usually ignored since most of the time, the main focus is on making the language learners able to be a good communicator of the target language. Language learners, no matter what kind of course they attend to, should have enough chances in order to develop and increase their learning skills. Having appropriate skills can assist language learners to become motivated learners who have gotten enough capabilities in learning.

The results of the present study can be in harmony with some other research studies that were conducted by Ching and Chee (2010), Delrose (2011), Brown (2011), Unzueta, and Barbett (2012). The outcome of these studies suggest that language learners can benefit from using GO in order to improve their writing performance, comprehension, retention of what they have read before, the number of written words and supporting details. According to these research studies, graphic organizers can assist the language learners to stick to the topic by having their thoughts in front of them as they are writing. They also assist the language learners to keep their ideas in the correct order. Graphic organizers are effective enough to be used as a tool that can help the language learners during the four stages of the writing process: prewriting, drafting, revising, and publishing and sharing.

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# APPLYING THE BACKWARD DESIGN PLANNING PROCESS TO TEACH ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE READING COMPREHENSION STRATEGIES INSTRUCTION

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## Abstract

This study is primarily concerned with adapting the backward design process to teach reading comprehension strategies in EFL reading instruction. Using backward design, teaching for understanding, and requiring students to apply and demonstrate their learning are not new concepts in American schools, but are brand new concepts in Taiwan's education system. To be able to use the backward design process, the designer is required to decide on what is essential for pupils to know; what is at the core of designer's discipline and then must decide how the designer will know when pupils have achieved that goal. In doing so, designing assessment is a significant step that must occur at the beginning of the design process to give both the designer and students a clear destination for the lesson plan. Once the destination is clear, the designer is able to set up the best roadmap to get there. This study hopes that there will be a growing number Taiwan teachers who can use backward design to promote teaching design in a wide variety of fields, because teachers are not only the instructors but the designers.

**Key Words:** the backward design process, EFL reading instruction, lesson plan

## The Definition of Backward Design

What is backward design? In theory, backward design starts with the end in mind: What enduring understanding do the teachers want to their pupils to know? How will students demonstrate their understanding when the unit is completed? How will the teachers ensure that students have the skills and the understanding of the concepts required on the summative assessment? In short, it is a method of creating lessons. It was developed by Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe (1998) and employs identifying concepts that have lasting value, listing evidence that informs educators that their pupils have deep understanding of the concepts and creating an assessment that adopts this learning evidence. From the assessment the teacher develops lessons that make sure all pupils will be successful in the assessment. A simple answer would be this backward design: It means to start with the end in mind. This provides for a clearer understanding of your destination. It also means to know where you are going so that you can understand where you are now. In doing so, the steps you take are always in the right direction (Wiggins & McTighe, 1998).

To properly practice backward design in curriculum, the educator has to begin with the desired results of a lesson. The first step for the educator is to identify the goals and objectives for the lesson. Once the goals and objectives have been identified, the educator then derives the curriculum from the evidence of learning called for by the standard and the instruction needed to equip pupils to live up to proficient levels.

## The Backward Design Planning Process

Generally speaking, the logic of backward design suggests a planning sequence for curriculum. This sequence has three stages in the backward design: (1) Identify desired results, (2) Determine acceptable evidence, and (3) Plan learning experiences and instruction (Wiggins & McTighe, 1998).

### Stage 1. Identify Desired Results

In terms of this first stage, teachers should take the following questions into "curriculum" consideration: What should learners know, understand, and be able to do? What is worthy of understanding? To what extent does the idea, topic or process represent an important idea? To what extent does the idea, topic or process exist in the heart of

the discipline? To what extent does the idea, topic, or process need minimal coverage? , and to what extent does the idea, topic, or process provide the potential for engaging students? In doing so, teachers can start with a clear understanding of their destination. In the long run, their steps will always be in the right direction (Wiggins & McTighe, 1998).

#### Stage 2. Determine Acceptable Evidence

In terms of this second stage, teachers should take the following questions into “assessment” consideration: How can we know if our students have achieved the goals and met the standards? What can we accept as evidence of student understanding and learning proficiency? The backward design encourages instructors and curriculum designers to think like a learning assessor prior to designing specific lessons, and thus to judge how they can be sure learners have achieved the desired goals. This continuum of assessment methods includes a variety of checks of understanding, such as traditional quizzes and tests, oral questions, classroom observations, informal classroom dialogues, open-ended questions, and performance tasks and projects. “They vary in scope (from simple to complex), time frame (from short-term to long-term), setting (from decontextualized to authentic contexts), and structure (from highly structured to nonstructured) (Wiggins & McTighe, 1998, p.13)”.

#### Stage 3. Plan Learning Experiences and Instruction.

In terms of this third stage, educators should take the following questions into “instruction” consideration: What knowledge and skills will students require to perform effectively and achieve learning goals? What learning activities will provide students with the required knowledge and skills? What will need to be taught, and how should it best be taught, in terms of performance goals? , and Is the overall design coherent and effective? (Wiggins & McTighe, 1998).

In conclusion, creating a unit using the backward design planning process is not an easy tidy task process. It is a recursive one; the designer will move back and forth across the designing map, making revisions and refinements each time the designer adds something to a section of curriculum planning. To sum up, the backward design is a purposeful task analysis that integrates curriculum, assessment, and instruction.

#### Elements of A Good Backward Design

Generally speaking, elements of a good backward design are composed of four dimensions: the unit design, the instructor, the learners, and the classroom environment. In the following section, we present conceptual framework and empirical practice to each of the above four elements for designer (Wiggins & McTighe, 1998).

##### The Unit Design

- ⊙ Uses big ideas and essential questions to clearly guide the designs and are used along with, assessment and instruction and learning activities.
- ⊙ Adapts a wide variety of forms of assessment to let pupils demonstrate their understanding in different ways.
- ⊙ Uses clear attainable criteria and performance standards for instructor, peer and self-evaluations of student products and performances.
- ⊙ Enables students to revisit and rethink important ideas to deepen their enduring understanding.
- ⊙ Incorporates a variety of resources. The textbook is only one resource among many teaching tools.

##### The Instructor

- ⊙ Informs learners of a big ideas and essential questions, performance requirements, and evaluative criteria at the beginning of the unit.
- ⊙ Holds learners' interest when they explore big ideas and essential questions.
- ⊙ Adapts different strategies to promote deeper understanding of learning.
- ⊙ Facilitates learners' active construction of meaning (instead of simply direct teaching)
- ⊙ Promotes opportunities for learners to incorporate the six facets of understanding—to explain, interpret, apply, shift perspective, empathize, and self-assess.
- ⊙ Uses information from ongoing assessments and evaluations as feedback to adjust instruction.
- ⊙ Uses a variety of teaching resources (beyond the textbook) to promote understanding.

##### The Learners

- ⊙ Are able to describe the main goal and performance requirements of the unit.
- ⊙ Are capable of describing the criteria by which their work will be evaluated.
- ⊙ Are engaged in learning activities that help them learn the big ideas and answer the essential questions.
- ⊙ Are engaged in activities that promote explanation, interpretation, application, perspective taking, empathy, and self- assessment (the six facets)
- ⊙ Are involved in self-or peer-assessment based on established criteria and performance standards.
- ⊙ Use the established criteria or rubric to adjust and revise their work.

### **In the Classroom Environment**

- ◎ The big ideas and essential questions are central to the learning of students, the classroom activity.
- ◎ All students and their ideas are treated with dignity and respect.

### **Application of Backward Design to English Reading Comprehension Strategies Instruction**

As English teachers, how often have we designed our units around a particular text that we are teaching? In the following section the author will provide the teachers with English reading comprehension strategies instruction taught using backward design.

#### **Stage 1. Identify Desired Results**

The most important goal is for Senior High School English teachers to teach suitable and efficient reading strategies to their students. Teaching EFL students reading strategies is a complicated but worthwhile task for EFL teachers. EFL teachers, in particular, should be aware of the fact that teaching reading strategies will lead students to become successful, independent, proficient readers. In view of these more efficient teaching possibilities, it is important to review literature to find useful and efficient reading strategies for students. According to Pressley (1995, 1998), skilled reading is a coordination of higher-order processes (e.g., comprehension) and lower-order processes (e.g., decoding). In general, highly skilled readers adjust their strategies to the type of text and to the purpose of reading while they are reading (Block, 1986). As noted above, we know that using reading strategies plays an important role in reading texts. With that in mind, the designer should take the following questions into consideration: How can a curriculum in EFL reading for students be designed to facilitate the students' application of reading strategies? More specifically, what are the most effective reading strategies for these students? How can these reading strategies be used effectively?

#### **Stage 2. Determine Acceptable Evidence**

Once the learning desires are set up, the designer will think about "how do I design an assessment before I teach a unit?" To be able to do this, you need to decide what is essential for students to know and then determine how students will demonstrate their understanding. Designing an assessment will give you and your students a clear destination for the unit; the teacher will then be able to create the best roadmap for the learning experiences required to get there. Some considerations are: What cognitive and metacognitive knowledge reading strategies do successful readers use when reading a text? How do they learn to read English while dealing with the challenges of unknown English vocabulary?

To explore readers' ongoing processing of text information, a growing number of researchers have turned to thinking aloud by collecting the verbal reports generated by subjects when they read (Afflerbach & Johnston, 1984). Protocol analysis has been used to explore the range of reading strategies and behaviors of readers while they read, and to better understand the cognitive processes used during reading (Afflerbach & Johnston, 1984; Pressley & Afflerbach, 1995; Wade, 1990). Although thinking aloud has been used in cognitive science research for almost 50 years (Ericsson & Simon, 1993), it is still a maturing methodology in literacy research (Pressley & Afflerbach, 1995). A comprehensive and in-depth overview of how verbal reports can and are adopted in language testing has been provided by Green (1998). According to Green, "Verbal protocols are increasingly playing a vital role in the validation of assessment instruments and methods in that they offer a means for more directly gathering evidence that supports judgments regarding validity than some of the other more quantitative methods" (p.3).

The verbal protocol analysis method is accepted by a large section of the psychological field and is being used in a variety of different research areas. For example, Loxterman and Beck (1994), Jimenez, Earnest, & Pearson (1996), Kucan and Beck (1996), Tang (1997), Feng (1998), Yang (2002), Sainsbury (2003), and Majid, Jelas, and Azman, (2003) have adopted the method to explore reading comprehension strategies. Verbal protocol analysis has been applied in chemistry, physics, and math problem solving, and it can provide diagnostic information for teachers. As noted previously, the think-aloud protocol can apply to different areas and play an important role in different research fields.

#### **Stage 3. Plan Learning Experiences and Instruction.**

Think-aloud protocols, when used correctly reveal readers' cognitive and metacognitive strategies and processes during text comprehension--successful and unsuccessful strategies employed by readers at various proficiency levels. Specifically, they can explore the lexical inferencing procedures based on proficiency levels of high and low level readers and investigate what knowledge sources and cues they appeal to when confronted with unfamiliar words in a written text.

Based on the findings of thinking aloud assessment, it is worthwhile to use the think-aloud protocol to explore readers in terms of their cognitive and metacognitive reading strategies and lexical inferencing procedures. On the other hand, the designer would use a variety of reading strategies to design the reading strategies lesson plan for their students, and then the students will become independent, skillful readers.

Literacy researchers Taylor, Harris, Pearson, and Garcia (1995) identify six recursive steps that apply to this kind of reading strategies instruction. The six recursive steps are the following:

1. The teacher explains what a strategy is composed of.
2. The teacher explains why this strategy is significant.
3. The teacher explains when to use the strategy in actual text.
4. The teacher models how to perform the strategy in an actual context
5. The teacher guides learner practice.
6. The readers independently use the strategy as they pursue their own reading and projects in their daily life.

In conclusion, think- aloud instruction can help teachers to 1). uncover their own awareness of the reading process, 2). use this heightened awareness of their strategic and interpretive processes to help model these strategies to pupils, 3). find what pupils do and don't do as they read, which helps the teacher to assess readers and plan appropriate instruction in the readers' "zone of proximal development", 4) help readers to identify problems and monitor their own comprehension. On the other hand, think- aloud instruction can help students to 1). realize that reading should make sense, 2) shift beyond literal decoding to comprehending the global meanings of text, 3) learn how to read by using a variety of skillful strategies, 4) use particular strategies when reading particular text types, 5). become a independent and strategic reader when reading (Wilhelm, 2001).

### Conclusion

Creating a unit adapting the backward design planning process is a complicated process. It is a recursive one; the designer has to move back and forth across the curriculum, assessment, and instruction maps, making revisions and refinement each time the designer adds something to a section of the curriculum planning. Using backward design, teaching for understanding, and requiring students to apply and demonstrate their learning are not new concepts in the USA, but are brand new concepts in Taiwan's education system. This study hopes that there will be a growing number Taiwan teachers who can use backward design to promote teaching design in a wide variety of fields, because teachers are not only the instructors but the designers at school.

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# SOCIOPRAGMATIC FAILURES IN EFL SETTINGS: THE THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES AND EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

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## ABSTRACT

This article aims at reviewing theoretical perspectives and empirical findings on socio-pragmatic failures. It distills the core of sociolinguistic elements of learning a language and propounds the view that socio-pragmatic failure is closely related to the knowledge and capability of using the language in situational context. On the basis of evidences currently available, then, a closer look will be generated to discuss the underlying factors of socio-pragmatic errors in favor of language teaching and error correction in EFL settings. When it comes to error correction, language teachers in Iran focus on linguistic errors and ignore the socio-pragmatic failures. To this end, previous studies where which supported the idea were collected and then they were analyzed to establish a solid theoretical foundation for the study and then the empirical findings were presented as a separate rubric to substantiate the point of the study and then they were deeply evaluated to draw implications for practice. The study would be fruitful for instructional curriculum to help students to bridge the gap in cultural differences.

**KEY WORDS:** Socio-pragmatic failures; Theoretical perspectives; Empirical findings; Implications for practice

## 1- Introduction

The process of learning a foreign language is an arduous task which emphasizes the need for becoming aware of both linguistic and pragmatic failures. Therefore, it shows the significance of teachers' role in class while correcting errors to consider socio-cultural errors as well. Generally, it has provided the rise of concern about ignoring the cultural differences which makes students socio-linguistically incompetent. Teachers' correction of linguistic errors doesn't guarantee the actual and correct use of social and cultural aspects of language such as politeness, registers, formality and cultural values. One of the teachers' leading concerns is to show learners how to reconstruct their learning and understanding framework by presenting them awareness of cultural gaps and social differences. This study aims to:

- establish the theoretical framework of socio-pragmatic failures
- present the empirical findings
- present implications for practice

What is called error in second/foreign language learning is producing something wrong which must be avoided in order to maintain the communication. Apparently, it could be the result of social interaction which means the different use of language in different society with variety of cultural components and social issues. In other words, what is considered as error is a deviation from standards of what native speakers would produce. (Maicusi, Maicusi & Lopez, 1999)

In the last years of teaching foreign and second language, there has been a shift to communicative approach. Then, it shows the importance of emphasis on error correction in the area of pragmatics, sociolinguistics and interaction. Nowadays, error correction is likely to be meaning-based and to improve the process of interaction and cognitive development which is a complicated process in the field of foreign language learning. It also shows the great distinction between formal and informal use of language as well. On the other hand, to avoid the miscommunication and misunderstanding, learners apparently need to care about sending a

message which should be linguistically correct and socio-linguistically appropriate. Moreover, it seems that foreign learners specifically are considered as the most vulnerable group in the field of making socio-pragmatic failures. That is actually why we motivated to study the process of making socio-pragmatic failures and its effects on teaching pragmatics in EFL settings.

Briefly, language is a social practice not an independent construct which shapes and being shaped by the society. Moreover, as Freeman and Anderson (2000, p. 115-130) state, it is perhaps the chief concern of CLT which is asking teachers to focus on students' involvement in communication not only the grammar and vocabulary.

Simply put, the view that language is contextualized is in line with the fact of differences between using the language in the concrete, not in the artificial atmosphere of the classroom or course books. By the same token, sociolinguistic is the term which comes from the equality of the importance of social and cultural issues in communication with the smart choice of correct forms of linguistic elements which is needed to mediate the interaction.

Indeed, meaning as the pivotal factor in communication transforms by rules of speaking and shows the speaker's attitude toward other participants in conversation and to the topic of the dialogue (Dell Hymes, 1972); however, it doesn't mean a neglect of linguistic competence as Chomsky has suggested that. In the education system of learning a foreign language, it seems that teachers correct learners' linguistic errors, but do not take the sociolinguistic errors into account. In some classrooms atmosphere, the significance of context and situation is simply ignored and learners may have negative cultural transfer from their mother tongue to target language in the case of sociolinguistic factors. This could be due to the lack of proper knowledge of L2 norms and conventions.

In what follows, the researchers will first define and explain error and pragmatic errors and the main areas of making errors, and then they will present a deep explanation of pragmatic situations and cultural differences in EFL settings to provide stakeholders with useful techniques that can be used to solve the problem of making socio-pragmatic failures.

### Theoretical Perspectives

What are important in the case of error correction are simply where errors come from and the rationale behind making error in the process of learning a second language. Lado's findings (1957) lend support to the claim that the prediction and description of patterns which cause difficulty in learning a language and those which do not cause difficulty is possible by a systematic comparison between languages. However, the shortcoming of contrastive analysis is that all errors occurring in the process of learning a second language are not predictable by CA. In this case, as an alternative for CA, Error Analysis was established by Stephen Pit Corder (1960) which pertains to the learners' issue of new language rules (Rustipa, 2011). Of equal importance, since identifying and minimizing pragmatic failures is one of the important factors to have successful communication, is to take communicative competence and its dimensions into consideration too. The theoretical foundations for what became known as communicative competence were formulated in theories of Dell Hymes, Canale and Swain and others. It shows that there is no universal explanation for communicative competence. Hymes (1972, p.37-69) believes that grammatical competence alone cannot guarantee the actual use of language for communication and pragmatic and sociolinguistic factors are crucial as well. Bachman (2010, p.81-97) argues that sociolinguistic competence is the appropriateness of functions in different contexts according to sociolinguistic and discoursal features. Canale and Swain (1980) state that communicative competence is a focus on functions of language and is of three types: grammatical, sociolinguistic and strategic competence.

The foregoing discussion seems to suggest that differences and similarities among languages which are problematic could be in line with cultural and social differences as well. It means that one possible reason for being socio-linguistically incompetent could be where language learners are improving their second language and where the mother tongue overlaps with second language in communication process. Generally, these all lead to the concept of lacking pragmatic knowledge or making pragmatic error. In this paper we specifically focus on socio-pragmatic failures as a branch of pragmatic errors.

In terms of sociolinguistic errors which are called socio-pragmatic failures by Thomas (1983) these errors arise when speakers put linguistic knowledge into practice. She states that the concept of pragmatic failure is "the inability to understand what is meant by what is said" (1983, p.22). It means that these errors arise out of socio-cultural incompetence (Yang, 2010). Generally, if second language learners do not have proper knowledge



of social and cultural differences and values among languages, these types of errors occur. It can be seen from the above explanations that students will learn how to use language in a particular situation appropriately and how integrate the knowledge of their utterances with functions according to the principle of discourse. The deviation from what they say would be considered as socio-cultural errors. Furthermore, Thomas (1983, p.110) believes that it is cardinal to expose learners to the target culture to avoid socio-pragmatic failures. She also states that teaching a language is something “beyond the realms of mere training” and thus to overcome the problem, it would be fruitful to give the learners the knowledge of norms and pragmatic differences. She suggests that teachers should allow foreign learners to experience the exact way as the native speakers do to bridge the gap in differences.

In addition, in the case of pragmatic failures, Kasper & Blum-Kulka (1993, p.12-13) believe that pragmatic failure differs from grammatical errors and it is not easily recognizable without training in pragmatics. They also suggest that identifying cross-cultural and “cross-linguistic” differences and similarities as well as pragmatic failures lead to successful interactional sociolinguistics. Brown (2006, p.195) proposed that “a language is a part of a culture, and a culture is a part of a language.” Therefore, the interrelation and inseparability of language and culture are salient factors.

In this area, dividing pragmatic failures to “*intralingual pragmatic failure*” and “*interlingual pragmatic failure*”, Ziran\_ (2003, p.26) states that “speaking improperly” and “expressing ideas in unidiomatic way” are the reasons behind making pragmatic failures. Xiubai (2002, p.195) believes that interpersonal norms, cultural values and social aspects will be violated when speakers use the language improperly or neglect the time or space of communication. This leads to the kind of error which is called pragmatic failure. In the case of cross-cultural pragmatic failures, Li-ming & Yan (2010) also state that non-verbal and verbal elements, inappropriate use of body language and pragma- behavioral factors are cardinal in the case of pragmatic failures. The process of understanding cultural similarities and differences will happen gradually based on the learning purposes and attitudes toward the new conventions. However, as Chastain (1988, p. 303) points out the teachers’ attitude also would be the “crucial factor in determining the extent to which cultural objectives are attained.”

All in all, we are not suggested a mere focus on sociolinguistic elements of language as Canale and Swain (1980) have provided an ample support for grammatical competence too. The evidences have clearly shown that what is central to language learning is the simultaneous presence of grammatical, discoursal, cultural and functional features in communication. One of the views which has brought this about is Savignon (1991) view in the equality of the involvement of the meaning and the form in communication process development. Then, to predict the occurrence of both grammatical and socio-pragmatic failures in especially EFL settings, it would be beneficial to take care of teaching these elements and be cautious about correcting errors of these types.

### Empirical Findings

Many supporting articles for error correction and the strategies for correcting different types of errors have been published. The mainstream of them focus on grammatical and linguistic errors. Shahin (2011) conducted a study and found that the most kinds of errors which are treated are of grammatical type. The result of his study revealed that errors are mostly considered as accuracy rather than fluency. However, we are inclined to believe that learners’ needs are more than just grammatical knowledge in order to have an effective communication.

In line with the above-mentioned idea, another study has been conducted by Bardovi and Dornyei (1998) in two countries. In the study of 543 learners and their teachers they found that EFL learners and their teachers rank grammatical errors as more serious than pragmatic errors but it is totally opposite in ESL settings. Therefore, based on their findings it is safe to conclude that in an EFL setting with poor chance of interaction out of the class environment, learners rarely experience a real communication to master over the pragmatic and social meaning. Although social research are generally engaged in the sort of cross-cultural issues to deal with the language and cultural differences, EFL context commonly have no access to deeply experience the particular existing situations. Idri (2014) in a qualitative study on Algerian advanced EFL learners interviewed teachers to explore the reason behind the pragmatic errors. She found that students even in their advanced level commit a number of pragmatic errors in oral communication. Based on participants’ explanation, she found that not only teachers focus on linguistic errors but there is a little chance to use English out of the classroom, and then learners even in advanced level commit pragmatic errors when using English to communicate orally. The result of another study confirmed the idea of lacking opportunity for an authentic communication in EFL settings.

Shen (2013) studied Chinese ELT classrooms and found that factors such as “lack of authentic input” and “teaching English without considering cultural differences” are seen as the contributing factors of pragmatic failures in China’s ELT classrooms.

Along similar lines, in another study which has been done in Japan, Inoue and Kubota (1994) found that teachers who were teaching Japanese to American undergraduate and graduate students, correct grammatical errors more than sociolinguistic errors. They also found that the number of sociolinguistic errors occur in class is smaller than linguistic errors and basically when learners violate the social and cultural norms, teachers are mostly explain the appropriate form of sociolinguistic errors whilst leaving some informal and politeness interaction between students untreated. Thus, their findings suggest that a basic emphasis is rather given to grammatical accuracy than social appropriacy in the classroom through a correction program of grammatical errors. On balance, we tend to believe that the complexity of the speaking process restricts the possibility of acceptable and plausible field of treatment in an EFL artificial classroom. Generally, one question that might need to be asked is that the grammar is not the only matter of interaction. It is not actually suggested as the main and developmental factor in communicative competence. However, these findings do not suggest that grammatical and pragmatic errors are classified as less or more in the case of importance. It is clear that both competencies are needed to be able to maintain communication. In this case, in a corpus study of written texts by undergraduate students in Spain, Pastor and Mestre (2013) found a correspondence between grammatical and pragmatic errors. They found that grammar should be considered as a vital part in effective communication and accuracy errors are placed in line with pragmatic errors.

In accordance with the different types of pragmatic failures, Lihui & Jianbin (2010) studied college English learners in China and investigated the area in which learners tend to commit pragmatic failures in cross-cultural communication. They found that four major sources of pragmatic failures are “cultural differences”, “negative pragmatic transfer”, “teaching-induced errors” and “foreigners’ tolerance towards Chinese speakers’ pragmatic failure”. In the same study, through interview they also found that the lack of knowledge about target culture has been the main cause of pragmatic errors.

In addition, Charlebois (2003) identified three factors causing cross-cultural pragmatic failures for Japanese. He found that “pragmatic transfer”, “different realization of speech acts cross-culturally”, and “inadequate pragmatic knowledge” are the main factors causing pragmatic failures. Since inadequate pragmatic knowledge considered as the main factor in the most of articles, it should be categorized as the first and the most important factor in making pragmatic failures. It is a complicated process and difficult task to raise pragmatic knowledge which is the awareness of social rules and cultural norms. Pragmatic instruction is a necessary complement for language learners especially in EFL settings. Being pragmatically well-informed in an EFL context will help the learners to overcome the difficulty of communication and committing pragmatic failures. In this case, Shojaee, Pazhakh & Alavinia (2014) in another study in Iran studied the effect of pragmatic consciousness rising on apology strategies among Iranian learners. They found that although English major students should have a good command of English, the problem with Iranian learners is that they are not pragmatically well-informed speakers of English. The obvious conclusion to be drawn is that pragmatic for EFL learners is regarded as a vital skill in language use and change the learners’ language according to the situation and following rules for verbal and non-verbal interactions. It also shows the importance of having pragmatic knowledge as a key factor to be pragmatically competent.

On these grounds, in a study of young EFL learners in China, Muir & Xu (2011) studied pragmatic failures into the writing of EFL learners. They found that learner’ socio-pragmatic failures lies in their perception of specific Chinese-based norms. On the other hand, they found that “pragmatic transfer” and “linguistic proficiency” are considered as two main causes of pragmatic failures. In other words, in addition to learners’ tendency to transfer rules from their mother tongue, they revealed that low L2 linguistic proficiency can play an effective role in deviation from native speakers’ norms. Furthermore, Jie (2010) analyzed and compared anecdotes of pragmatic failure in cross-cultural communication and showed a must for cultural-linguistic instruction in EFL environment.

Specifically, some researchers have been conducted different studies and focused on some speech acts as the cultural factors in languages. Politeness as a cultural element and as an example of speech act can be considered to be problematic in language learning. It is also considered as socio-pragmatic failure due to the different ways of expressing politeness in different languages. In a study of Indonesian, Mulyanah (2013) found that western people fail to get the meaning of *Yes* or *No* as for Indonesian, *No* used when offered something

while the reality is *Yes*. He also found that nodding head and smile are the area of failures when communicating with western people and are considered as barriers in communication. He revealed that Indonesian also try to be polite by saying *Yes* since they are hard to say *No*. Regarding the politeness as the area of making socio-pragmatic error, in another article, Amaya (2008) used several examples to study the effect of pragmatic failures on the messages' interpretation. He evidently showed that certain messages are different from one linguistic community to another. For example, he found that learners need to know that messages produce differently in different cultures and that how these differences are oriented towards positive or negative politeness in Spanish and English respectively.

According to the literatures, it is safe to conclude that society as the main and real place in which interaction happens enjoys totally different conditions compared to classroom. Then, second and specifically foreign language learners are confronted with a number of problems in the situation of using language. They also show that teaching grammar and linguistic aspects of languages are considered as the main objective in the process of foreign language learning. Generally, literatures show a lack of concentration on how to correct cultural and social errors and how to put students in the conditions to commit pragmatic failures. Since errors happen in the environment with high level of interaction and communication, it would be beneficial to consider the significance of interaction in EFL and ESL setting as well. We are not alone in our view that the classroom is the main source of interaction especially in EFL settings. Then, in EFL classes, teachers should concern with making learners knowledgeable about new culture and follow realistic expectations as well (Chastain, 1988, p.307). As Wardhough (2010, p.12) states, the word society means "a group of people who are drawn together for a certain purpose or purposes." People use language as a system for communication and interaction following some cultural issues and backgrounds.

Looking from the muddier glasses to the topic, it is essential to mention that due to the fact that language is the main tool to develop and transform different cultural dimensions from one society to another, pedagogy attracts the most attention toward the elements of content, context, material and the like in teaching culture. Therefore, it is vulnerable that values, norms and tastes of the societies may begin to weaken in the process of acculturation and globalization. However, at the same time, it can be argued that in the growing technological world, boundaries remain ineffective in transforming information and reshape the relationship between societies.

As a result, through a cross-cultural communication, learners learn several parameters which may be perceived differently in different cultural contexts. It would be fruitful to increase the acceptability and adaptability of new culture so as to adjust to new condition. It also illuminates a light shine on achieving appropriate rules of speaking rather simply uttering the linguistic elements of a language.

### **Implications for Practice**

In light of socio-pragmatic failures and taking the foregoing theoretical perspectives and empirical findings into account, following implications are offered.

- Learners should expose to pragmatic knowledge directly in the environment of the classroom to uncover the layers of pragmatic competence.
- The findings are significant in that they give voice to teachers, course book designers and all who are responsible in educational system as well as developing materials.
- Students should be given the chance of self and peer correction as an important contribution to a satisfactory understanding of a relationship.
- Teaching collocations and expressions would be beneficial to learners for having successful communication. They will learn the use of appropriate words in contexts.
- The findings are significant in that they suggest pragmatic instruction especially in EFL settings to improve learners' awareness of cultural differences and values in different languages.
- Task and activities should be responsive to learners' needs and purposes. Findings of the current study suggest an emphasis on learners' purpose of learning the language and correct their errors based on their needs.
- These beneficial developments will greatly increase when the proponents of the norms and conventions of the languages are carefully compared to and considered as the actual need and central concern for language teachers in the classroom environment.
- It is important for teachers to create an authentic atmosphere in the class in which students play different roles and experience real communication. This would be beneficial for teachers to find the

area of learners' problems and errors to help them overcome the difficulties.

- The findings also emphasize the need for more research to conduct in the case of pragmatics and socio-pragmatic failures especially the techniques for correcting pragmatic errors.

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# A STUDY ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF CONNECTED SPEECH INSTRUCTION ON IRANIAN INTERMEDIATE EFL LEARNERS' LISTENING COMPREHENSION ABILITY

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## Abstract

Listening comprehension is usually considered as one of the most difficult language skills for EFL learners due to the unavoidable presence of connected speech forms in authentic speech. This study is an attempt to investigate the effect of connected speech instruction on Iranian EFL learners' listening comprehension ability. The main concern is to evaluate the learners' performance in listening to some of the connected speech aspects such as Elision and linking. Learners were homogenized by Oxford Placement Test (OPT) and 40 of them were selected. Then they were divided into two groups. The control group got the regular treatment of the institute, but the experimental group got treatment on connected speech in addition to the routine of the institute. The data were collected from 40 EFL learners by using PET pre and post-test listening and a pre dictation test. The T-test and ANCOVA indicated that connected speech instruction affected learners' listening comprehension ability. Pre-test and post-test conduction confirms that almost all the tested learners are not only unaware of the significance of connected speech in listening but also they are unable to perceive such forms. The results also indicated that there was no significant difference between males and females in this research.

**Keywords:** Citation form, connected speech, Elision, Linking, Listening Comprehension.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Despite the fact that listening has an important role in language learning, it is still the most neglected language skill. In order to comprehend, the learner must immediately process and segment an ongoing stream of sounds. What prevents EFL learners from comprehending speech, is their weak ability to segment speech and recognize words (Chen, 2002; Chang, 2011; Goh, 2000; Sun, 2000). Some researchers believe that EFL learners would not be able to improve their listening skill, because most of the instructional materials used in the classrooms are simplified and unnatural. (e. g. Brown & Yule, 1983; Rosa, 2002). Students are taught grammar and vocabulary, and practice conversations and dialogues to learn a new language. Language teachers speak clearly and provide listening materials that are full of clearly pronounced and articulated speech. Language learners develop their listening and speaking skills based on this adapted English speaking style. Therefore, being exposed to the modified and unnatural language used in the classrooms, the learners often fail to comprehend the real language used by native speakers or the authentic one they hear.

Some researchers have referred to connected speech, commonly found in spoken English, as the hurdle to comprehension (Bowen, 1975; Brown & Hilferty, 1986; Ito, 2001; Rosa, 2002; Weinstein, 2001). Connected speech designates "the processes of contraction, elision, assimilation, and reduction" (Brown & Hilferty, 1986). Connected Speech has been identified as an important Characteristic of Spoken English and some researchers (Brown 1977; Underwood, 1989; Ur, 1984) have advocated the importance of teaching connected Speech.

## STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In spite of the fact that in recent years listening is the focus of interest both for teachers and learners, most of the times Iranian students, just as many students in other countries, express that they can understand their conversational text books listening well, while they constantly complain about their disability in listening

comprehension. They encounter great difficulty when they are suddenly faced with spoken English produced by native speakers.

What makes listening so difficult? Is it the case that learners do not have enough range of vocabulary or their lack and shortage of structure and grammar is the reason?

There must be something beyond vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation. According to fan (2003) English used in the classroom is usually different from real speech produced by native and proficient speakers. Because classroom teachers often over articulate to facilitate learners' comprehension and listening materials are full of clearly pronounced and articulated speech. Language learners often develop their listening and speaking skills based on these false premises. Natural English, whether formal or informal, fast or slow, is full of connected speech and this creates a serious obstacle for students who have little or no exposure to connected speech (Rosa 2002). Equally, some ability to use these features in their own speech will also be likely to make students more confident and fluent speakers. Although there are some researches done in this area, the necessity of more researches is inevitable.

The present study recruited intermediate English learners in different institutes for further investigation of the effectiveness of connected speech instruction on listening comprehension. The present study aims to explore the effect of linking and elision on listening comprehension.

### Significance of the study

Unfortunately, there have been very few studies in the area of connected speech, in spite of the fact that it has been identified as an important characteristic of spoken English and some researchers like Brown 1997; Underwood 1989; Ur; 1984; believe it is important to teach connected speech, up to now not many books were written to show how to teach connected speech and what are the effective instructional materials and ways to deal with this very important element of listening comprehension.

Most of the previous researches worked in the area of instruction, but not on considering the homework assignment as an aid. In this study the experimental group of students is asked to keep a weekly journal as a homework assignment to focus more on these forms for better learning

The findings of this study apparently will affect the learners' way of speaking. They will change their speech and pronunciation more naturally, very similar to native speakers. It can also benefit course designers and material developers to develop course books which can meet the teachers and learners' needs.

### Review of the Related Literature

Briefly, what does the applied linguistics literature have to offer to date on the topic of connected speech? Unfortunately, there is not as much written about connected speech as there is about many other issues in applied linguistics.

A new book (Brown and Kondo-Brown, 2006) offers a collection of (mostly) new research papers about connected speech. In this book there are different topics like:

- 1- Introducing connected speech (Brown & Kondo-Brown).
- 2- The significance of reduced forms (Ito).
- 3- What do textbooks have to offer to teachers of connected speech? (Brown)
- 4- The effectiveness of teaching reduced forms for listening comprehension (Brown & Hilferty).
- 5- Comprehension of English reduced forms by Japanese business people and the effectiveness of instruction (Matsuzawa).
- 6- Effect of reduced forms on input-intake process (Ito).
- 7- Don'cha know? A survey of ESL teachers' perspectives on reduced forms instruction (Rosa).
- 8- Teaching reduced interrogative forms to low-level students (Cahill).
- 9- Visualizing English speech reductions using the free phonetic software package WASP (Varden).
- 10- Categories and instances of reduced forms in connected speech in Japanese (Hasegawa).
- 11- Pedagogical issues related to teaching listening to oral Japanese with a focus on reduced forms (Toda).
- 12- Use of CAI learning materials for teaching sound changes in spoken Japanese (Sakai & Igashima).
- 13- Why second language learners of Japanese need to learn difficult minute sounds in connected speech (Hirata)
- 14- Testing students' abilities to understand and used connected speech (Brown & Kondo-Brown).

Brown and Hilferty (1986/2006) recruited 32 Chinese graduate students of the age around 40. The participants were randomly assigned to the experimental group or the control group. The experimental group received four weeks of daily 10-minute lesson on reduced forms, while the control group received a daily practice of 10 minutes drill in discriminating minimal pairs. The results showed that the experimental group gained significantly higher scores than the control group on the posttest. The four-week instruction had a marked effect on the participants' spoken word recognition.

Rosa (2002) conducted a study called DON'CHA KNOW? A survey of ESL teachers' perspectives on reduced forms instruction. A total of 52 survey questionnaires were distributed to ESL instructors. Of the 45 respondents, ESL teaching experience ranged from half a year to 35 years. Thirty-four of the teachers were native speakers of English, and 11 of the teachers were non-native speakers of English. The teachers predominantly were involved in intensive English programs as well as English for academic purposes. The survey took an average of about five minutes to complete. The finding showed that connected speech forms are an integral and pervasive aspect of spoken English that is seriously neglected in both research and materials development.

Kuo (2012) recruited sophomore English majors for further investigation of the effectiveness of connected speech instruction. Connected speech forms instructed in Kuo's study were contraction, elision, C-V linking, /h/-deletion, palatalization and flapping. The participants were two intact classes of sophomore English majors in a university in central Taiwan. The students had focused on literature, linguistics and general language skills of English language since they attended university. Since the subjects were majors of English Literature and Linguistics, songs were inspiring materials for learning reduced forms, and students could focus on not only forms but also content when listening to songs. The results showed that flapping and /h/-deletion posed problems not only to non-English majors but also to English majors.

khaghaninezhad & Jafarzadeh(2013) conducted a study to investigate the Effect of Reduced Forms Instruction on EFL Learners' Listening and Speaking Abilities. This study was an attempt to investigate the effect of explicit "reduced forms" instruction on Iranian EFL learners' overall listening comprehension and their ability to recognize and produce them in their daily conversations. The participants of this study were 50 intermediate English learners who were randomly assigned as the experimental and the control groups of the study. Three pre-tests were administered at the commencement of the study to see if the participants of both groups were at the same level of listening comprehension and "reduced forms" awareness. After the pre-tests, the participants in the experimental group received instruction on "reduced forms" while the control participants continued their regular classes. At the end of the 10-week instruction, the participants were given three post-tests to see if they had improved their listening comprehension ability and their ability to recognize and produce the "reduced forms" recurrently in their daily speech. Although the control participants had significantly improved their listening comprehension, the fact that the experimental participants had outperformed implied the efficacy of "reduced forms" training on the overall listening comprehension's betterment. The results also revealed that the experimental participants significantly improved their "reduced forms" awareness as well as their ability to produce "reduced forms" at the end of training course while the control participants did not.

Doostkam, M (2014) set out a study called *Iranian EFL Learners' Familiarity with Reduced Forms* in Spoken English based on their Proficiency Level to examine the familiarity of Iranian EFL learners with reduced forms as well as the relationship between the proficiency level of language learners and their familiarity with reduced forms. To this end, a test of RFs on listening comprehension was developed based on the literature and findings of a pilot study. Afterward, 306 English language learners were selected from two Iranian cities of Shiraz and Ahwaz based on multi-stage cluster sampling to participate in the study. The results of this study indicated that Iranian EFL learners were not familiar with RFs in spoken language. However, in contrast to earlier findings, there was a significant difference between the performance of advanced and intermediate learners based on their familiarity with reduced forms.

## Materials and Methods

In this study Oxford Placement Test Was used to make sure of the homogeneity of the groups. The Listening section of PET test was used as pretest and posttest of listening comprehension. A pretest of dictation was used too.

## Data Analysis Procedure



The results of post-test were analyzed for further discussion via ANCOVA on the scores obtained from experimental and control group to see whether connected speech had any effects on EFL learners' listening comprehension. A t-test was used to see if there is any difference between male and female performance on listening comprehension via connected speech instruction.

#### Descriptive Analysis of the Data

A descriptive statistical analysis was done on the collected data of OPT (Oxford Placement Test) test. The results are shown in Table 1:

**Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for the Proficiency Test**

Mean	44.93
Median	46
Mode	48.00
Std. Deviation	5.72
Variance	32.79

This table shows the mean, median and standard deviation of the scores the participants obtained in the placement test.

**Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for Gender**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Male	56	50.9	50.9	50.9
Female	54	49.1	49.1	100.0
Total	110	100.0	100.0	

This table illustrates the number of male and female participants who took the placement test. The chart below illustrates the percentage of male and female participants.

Table 3: shows the number of students who took the pre-test and post-test. It should be mentioned that no one excluded.

**Table 3: Number of Students Participated in Pre-test and Post-test Cases**

Included	Excluded		Total			
N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	
Pre-test*group	40	100%	0	0%	40	100%
Post-test*group	40	100%	0	0%	40	100%

Forty participants were selected for this study. They were divided into two groups, the experimental and the control.

The descriptive statistical analysis done on the collected data of pre-test and post-test is shown in table 4.

**Table 4: Descriptive statistical analysis done on the collected data of pre-test and post-test**

Group		Pre-test	Post-test
Experimental	Mean	59.9	68.4
	N	20	20
	SD	4.8	4.7

Control	Mean	58.45	58.1
	N	20	20
	SD	5.64	5.2
Total	Mean	59.15	63.25
	N	40	40
	SD	5.216	7.121

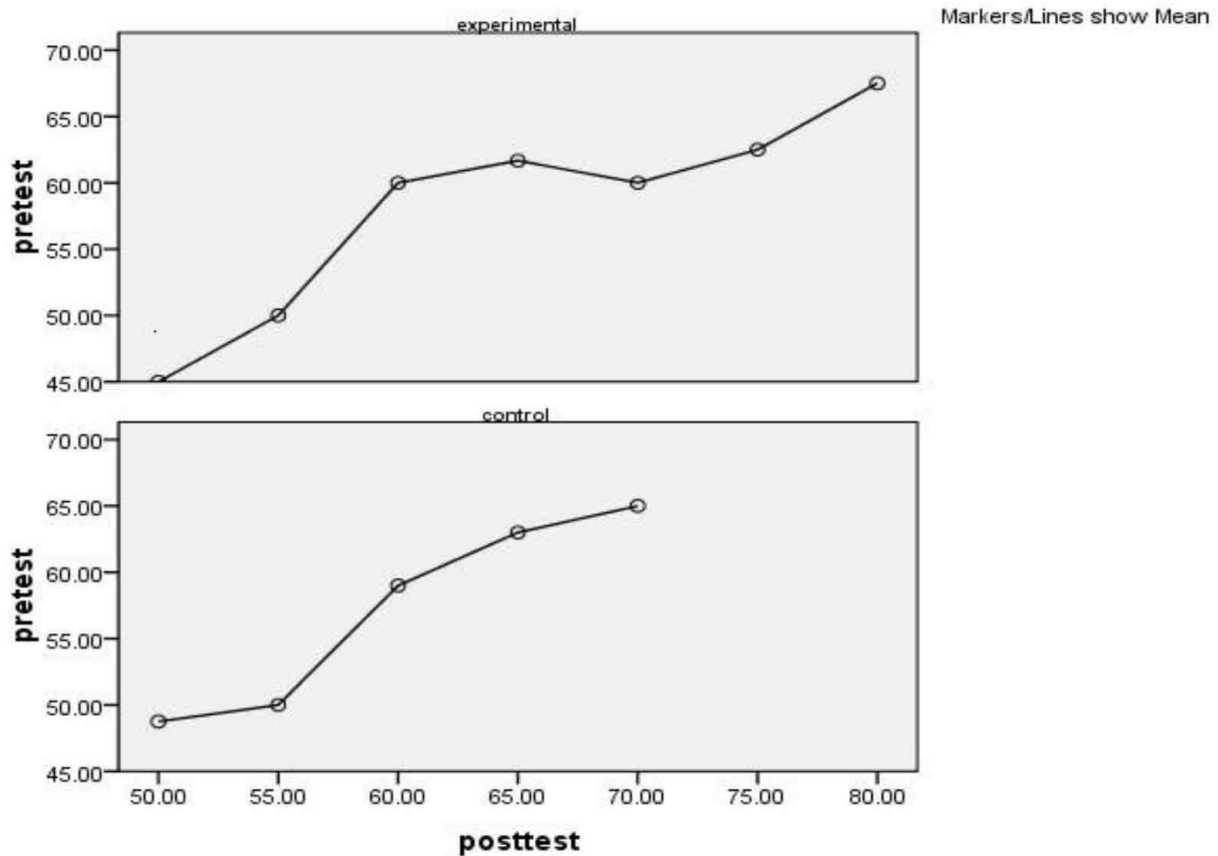
### Inferential Statistics

Analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) is particularly appropriate when subjects in two or more groups are found to differ on a pre-test or other initial variable. In this case, the effects of the pre-test and/or other relevant variables are partialled out, and the resulting adjusted means of the post-test scores are compared. Through ANCOVA differences in the initial status of the groups can be removed statistically so that they can be compared as though their initial status had been equated. In this study, in order to investigate the research hypothesis " Connected speech instruction does not have any effect on Iranian intermediate EFL learners' listening comprehension ability" , the differences between mean scores of pre-test and post-test of control and experimental group were calculated through ANCOVA. Before running ANCOVA, the following hypotheses were examined:

1. Linear relationship between variables (pre-test and post-test)
2. Equality of Variances
3. Homogeneity of regression

The linear relationship between pre-test and post-test was examined through spread plot,

Graph 1:



As graph 1 shows, because the regression lines are parallel, so there is a linear relationship between the two variables, pre-test and post-test. It means that the relationship between the two variables in both groups is the same.

In order to examine the equality of variances, Levine's Test of Equality of Error Variances was run. It tests the null hypothesis that the error variance of the dependent variable is equal across groups.

**Table 5: Levine's Test of Equality of Error Variance**

F	df1	df2	Sig
.26	1	38	.61

According to table 5, the calculated F is not significant. So there is equality of variances and ANCOVA can be run.

The data in table 6 are related to test of homogeneity of regression. Before running covariance, between-subjects effects of pre-test-group should be investigated.

**Table 6: Tests of Between-Subjects Effects**

Source	Type III Sum of Square	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
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Corrected Model	1879.82	3	626.61	230.93	.00
Group (a)	17.86	1	17.86	6.6	.015
Pretest (b)	802.97	1	802	295.95	.00
Group*pre-test (a*b)	.41	1	.41	.15	.7
Error	97.68	36	2.71		
Total	46200	40			

As table 6 shows, between -subjects effect (a\*b) is not significant ( $F=0.15$ ,  $Sig=0.7$ ). It shows that the data supports homogeneity of regression. Therefore, covariance should be run just for between - subjects effect of post-test and group to show whether mean scores of two groups are the same or not. The results of this analysis are demonstrated in table 7.

**Table 7: Mean and Corrected Mean of Listening Comprehension Ability**

Source	Posttest		Corrected Mean	
	M	SD	M	SE
Experimental	38.4	4.7	37.77	.36
Control	28.1	5.11	28.72	.36

Table 7 shows the corrected means of dependent variable Cooperative learning. The data demonstrate that the means of experimental group are upper than control group.

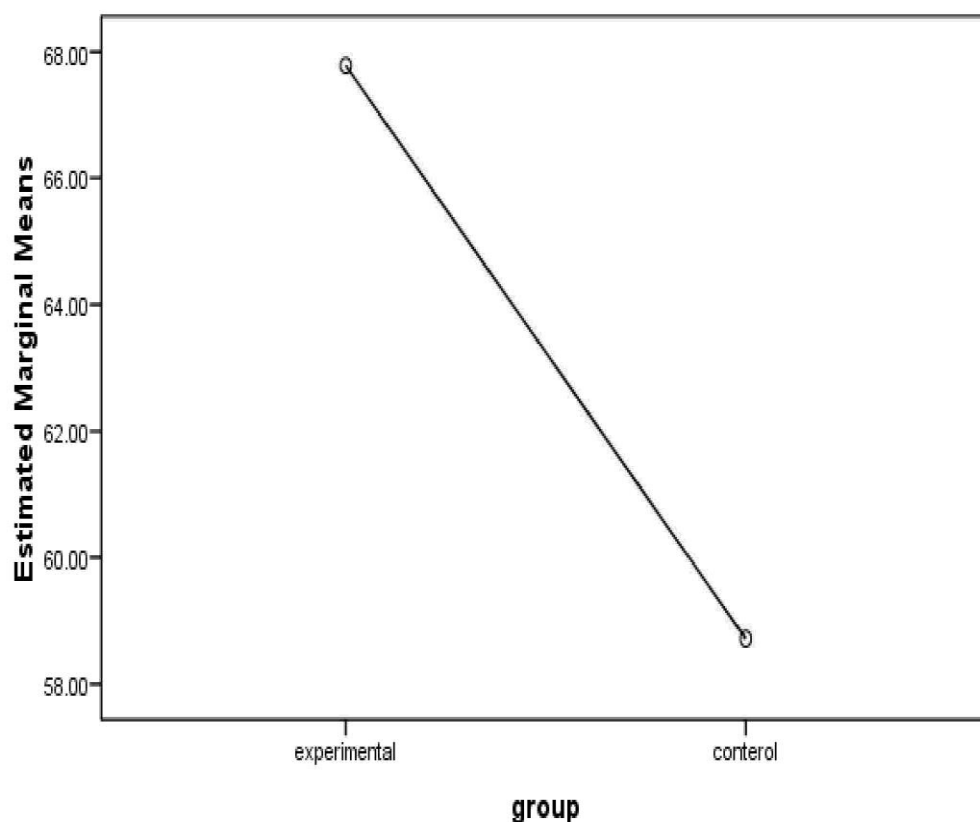
Sum of analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) of Cooperative learning in experimental and control group after eliminating between-subjects effect is demonstrated in table 8:

**Table 8: Sum of analysis of covariance**

Source	Type III Sum of Square	df	Mean Square	F	Sig	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	1879.415	2	939.71	354.48	.00	.95
Pretest	818.52	1	818.52	308.76	.00	.89
Group	805.42	1	805.48	303.84	.00	.89
Error	98.08	37	2.65			
Total	46200	40				

As it can be seen, the corrected model ( $f=00$ ,  $F=354.48$ ) is statistically significant. The results ( $F=303.84$ ,  $Sig=.00$ ,  $Eta=.89$ ) show that there is a difference between two groups. It means that there is significant difference between experimental and control group. As a result, the null hypothesis "connected speech instruction does not have any effect on Iranian intermediate EFL learners' listening comprehension ability" was rejected, so it can be concluded that connected speech instruction can help students' listening comprehension.

To clarify the result, the data are demonstrated in graph 3. The vertical axis represents the post-test and the horizontal axis represent experimental and control group.



The graph shows that there is a significant difference between the listening comprehension in experimental and control group. It clearly shows that the experimental group who received treatment on connected speech instruction had better scores on post-test.

**Table 9: independent t-test for male and female performance in Listening Comprehension**

Levine's Test for Equality of Variances					t-test for Equality of Means		
F	Sig	t	df	sig (two-tailed)	mean difference	Std. Error	Difference
.243	.628	-.298	18	.769	-.28283		.94995
		-.306	17.973	.763	-.28283	.92561	

The results in this table indicate that there was not a significant difference between male and female performance in listening comprehension via connected speech instruction.

### Conclusion

The results of ANCOVA indicated that connected speech instruction did significantly raise the experimental groups listening comprehension ability. The second research question examined the effect of gender difference on listening comprehension via connected speech instruction. The results of independent sample T-test showed that the effect of connected speech instruction did not vary according to their gender difference.

On the light of the findings, it is recommended that the connected speech forms should be given more attention in teaching. It can help learners to comprehend and communicate appropriately in real life situations. Teaching connected speech and considering homework and having a journal can help learners to distinguish the difference between writing and spoken forms and hence increase their listening and speaking ability. It is argued that the simple awareness of connected speech features existence in a typical conversation can be of great help in enabling learners to better understand the language they hear (Field, 2003). Field contends that teachers should inform their students about the features of fast spontaneous speech (p.327). Brown (1990) argues that it is utmost importance that teachers help learners develop their listening skill and more beyond deliberate and slow

speech to more natural forms, which will enable them to cope with streamed speech as it is naturally spoken by English native speakers.

Teachers should have the opportunity for teacher training in the role of connected speech in spoken English and the effects of connected speech instruction. The lack of knowledge and practice of connected speech can lead to unsatisfactory performance of English listening and speaking even for intermediate learners with good and enough vocabulary and grammar Knowledge.

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# THE EFFECT OF WRITTEN FEEDBACK ON IRANIAN EFL EXTROVERT STUDENTS' WRITING

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## ABSTRACT

The present study aims at exploring the effect of written feedback (WF) on Iranian EFL extrovert students' writing. Therefore, 50 male and female students were selected based on Nelson English Proficiency Test scores and Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (EPQ) among intermediate participants in Payame Noor University of Takab, Iran. The study compared the written feedback given to 25 extrovert students in experimental group, with their writing performance on a composition test with other 25 control groups' writing.. The main finding was that, written feedback had a significant effect on extrovert students' writing.

**Keywords:** EFL, Extroversion, and Written Feedback.

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Background of the Study

In recent decades, the affective factors and individual differences have received a considerable attention in language learning and educational psychology. Among a number of personality variables in predicting English language proficiency, extroversion has been extensively studied than other personality traits. Extroverts are characterized as sociable, active, risk taking, impulsive, expressive and they enjoy participating in groups (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1975; 1985). Extroversion is potentially important factor in second language acquisition (Brown, 2007). Ellis (1994) identifies that extroverted learners do better in acquisition of basic interpersonal communication skills. Thus it is worth investigating how to give influential feed back to their writings.

From the other side in recent decades, attitudes towards the role of feedback have changed along with teaching methodologies for effective second language (L2) acquisition. Truscott (1996), for example, claimed that feedback should be discarded because it is ineffective and harmful. Ferris (1997), on the other hand, argued that feedback is virtuous as it enables L2 students to revise their own writing and assists them in acquiring correct English. Because research evidence was scarce in support of feedback on extrovert students, both Truscott (1996) and Ferris (1997) called for further research into questions about the impact of feedback on these students' writing (Bitchener & Knoch, 2009). Accordingly, a great body of research has been conducted with a look into teacher written feedback: correction strategies (e.g., Bitchener, Young, & Cameron, 2005; Ferris, 1997; Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Lee, 1997; Sugita, 2006), feedback forms (e.g., Hyland & Hyland, 2001; Silver & Lee, 2007; Treglia, 2008), students' attitudes toward feedback (e.g., Alamis, 2010; Lee, 2004, 2008a; Saito, 1994; Treglia, 2008). These studies suggested that feedback plays a pivotal role in helping L2 students to improve the quality of their writing. This finding is in line with Vygotskian Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), in which learners need to be provided with scaffolding to be capable of reaching a stage of autonomy and accuracy (Ferris, 1997). Most of the researches in English language learning with respect to extroversion have been concentrated on identifying the qualities of a good language learner and to what extent extroversion influences English language skills particularly written proficiency (Oya *et al.*, 2004).

Therefore, this study aimed to find out whether written feedback has influences on Iranian EFL extrovert learners' writing ability. Besides, up to present, no study has been conducted to investigate the influences of written feedback on Iranian EFL extrovert learners' writing ability.

### 1.2 Statement of the Problem

In Iranian EFL learning context, teachers give more feedback to students who use more interactional strategies in the classroom, without having knowledge of extroversion's biological bases. Consequently, teachers may have a positive view toward extroverts, and this positive view affects their judgments about the students' writing ability in EFL. Furthermore, the issue of giving proper feedback to students becomes more salient when it is discussed in relation to extrovert students where these students need more feedback for their writing purposes.

Writing is one of the four basic communication skills whose learning can lead to learning a second language. According to Bello (1997), writing increases language acquisition because learners deal with words, sentences, and other elements of writing to convey their ideas effectively and to reinforce the grammar and vocabulary they are learning in class. As a skill, production of a piece of writing which is coherent, fluent, and extended is probably the most difficult task to do with language, even for a native speaker (Nunan, 2003).

Iran is an obvious example of such societies in which the writing demands in foreign language is minimal. Thus, it is obvious that writing is lost among most Iranians. Moreover, for academic or occupational purposes, a foreign language writing is needed and this writing, in most of the cases, is English which is introduced minimally in Junior high school. Some language institutes also start to train children to write in English even from very early ages.

Cumming (2006), emphasizing the role personality plays in writing, defined this skill as a "uniquely personal form of individual expression" (p. 473). The belief that each student, as an individual, has individual traits that uniquely influence his or her behavior and the difficulties most learners face in producing a coherent, fluent, and extended piece of writing persuades the present researchers to design this study focusing on EFL learners' personality type and its effect on their writing ability.

The findings of the most studies were vague and controversial owing to varied designs, methods, and contexts, therefore this study investigated the effect of teacher's written feedback on extrovert students' writing.

### 1.3 Research Question

As can be seen, no research had been conducted before to explore the comparative effectiveness of written feedback on extrovert students' writing in the context where English is taught as a Foreign Language. Accordingly, the present study set out to look for answers to the following question:

Q : Does written feedback has any significant effect on Iranian EFL extrovert students?

### 1.4 Research Hypothesis

Accordingly, in line with the research question above, the following null hypothesis addressed in this study:

H<sub>01</sub>: written feedback does not have any significant effect on Iranian EFL extrovert students.

### 1.5 Purpose of the Study

The point is that as teachers may use different types of feedback, students with different personalities may react differently to different types of feedback. This means that learners may react to one type of feedback positively and to the other type negatively. Knowing about different types of feedback will enable teachers to give proper feedback.

From the other hand, writing as a difficult skill, needs appropriate feedback type. Our proper feedback will enhance students' writing. Among the given types of feedback to learners' writing, is written feedback. But there is another important factor that should be considered here, and this is students' personalities.

Generally speaking, individual differences now have an important position in every teaching/learning context. Furthermore, one of the individual differences that is believed to moderate language acquisition process is extroversion.

Learners from one category of personality type may differ from other learners from different categories in following different features of writing, such as organization, sentence structure, development and support, choice of vocabulary, grammar, and mechanical conventions. Because of the importance of feedback on



students' willingness to learn a language, both in theory and in practice and difficulties in instruction and mastering of EFL, especially in writing, the present researcher tried to investigate the possible effects of written feedback on extrovert students' writing skill.

### 1.6 Significance of the Study

Classroom as a multidimensional atmosphere enjoys wide diversity in terms of students take part in. And, a noticeable part of the time is given to teacher-student interaction. An important part of this interaction is a feedback which is given to different students with different characteristics. The process of giving feedback is always present in classroom and allocates most of the class time. And the proper feedback is the cornerstone of progress and motivation in classroom.

Equipping with the insights that feedback process can influence the development of extrovert learners' writing, the findings of this study will be helpful for teachers and learners.

The findings will be influential for educators to provide them with insights about the proper type of feedback given to students to improve their writing skill and will remind them that all the learners will not have a similar starting point for writing in English and will help them to employ teaching strategies which fit different characteristics of extrovert and introvert learners. Also it will change their views over the role of personality factors in writing and other language skills in EFL classes, and also it will affect teachers' pre-judgments and evaluating factors of students' writing.

Furthermore, the results also can be helpful for learners themselves. It will familiarize learners more with their personalities, and this familiarity with their personalities, in turn, will give learners confidence to start taking chances and risks in language learning include writing skill and will make learners aware of their own characteristics in order to develop their most preferred strategy, and practice their less preferred one to compensate for their weak points.

Researchers can expand their knowledge on other domains of feedback and extrovert students, which impacts their writings and this may, in turn, trigger novel ideas for further research in this area and other similar areas.

## 2. Review of the Literature

### Extroversion and Writing Skill

Carell *et al.*, (1996) conducted a research on a group of Indonesian EFL learners participated in a longitudinal study, one-semester long course which included a series of EFL language measures like nonstandardized, monthly tests of reading, grammar, vocabulary and writing, to investigate the relationship between extroversion and EFL proficiency. The participants' personality types were measured by means of the MBTI instrument. The study found two results: first, there was a slightly negative link between extroversion and students' vocabulary test performance. Second, there was no significant relationship reported between extroverts and their performance on grammar, writing and reading comprehension tests. Nejad *et al.*, (2012), attempted to examine to what extent extroversion could foretell academic writing ability among 30 junior university students; male and female, studying English literature in junior at Ilam University, Iran. The result of study revealed that there is no significant relationship between extroversion /introversion and writing ability. Nejad *et al.* (2012) mentioned that the findings refuted the cliché that the extroverts outperform the introverts in skills like writing. Haji mohammadi and Mukundan (2011) investigated the impact of two different correction methods, on one hand, and extroversion-introversion, on the other hand, on 120 pre-intermediate Iranian female students. They were given five expository topics to write about in five-week duration. The findings of this study clarified that both extroverts and introverts can improve their writings and being extroverted or introverted has no significant impact of the writing progress of students.

### Written Feedback

A number of studies have been done to examine what should be commented on in L2 student writing for substantive revision. For example, Ellis (1994), reviewing several studies on what effect formal corrections have on language acquisition, concluded that the learners whose errors are corrected improve the accuracy of producing existential structures (i.e. *There is/are*). In another study, Leki (1991) asked 100 ESL freshmen to complete questionnaires to examine how effective feedback was and how they reacted to the positive and negative comments on both form and content. She found that correcting errors in both form and content is

beneficial since good writing is viewed as equated with error-free writing. Weaver (2006) explored how 44 students perceived written feedback and if the feedback that they received showed a student-centered approach to learning. Through analysis of interviews, questionnaires, and feedback content, she found that teacher comments are useful only if they are specific and clear, give sufficient guidance, focus on positive points, and are related to assessment criteria. Ferris (1997), examining over 1,600 marginal and end comments written on 110 first drafts by 47 university ESL students, found that marginal comments are more immediate and easier for students to locate errors and revise, whereas end comments can be more useful for writing development since they summarize major problems. Marginal comments are also deemed to be more motivating since the reader is actively engaged with the writer's text (Hyland & Hyland, 2006).

Sugita (2006) analyzed 115 revised papers by 75 EFL students at a private university in Japan. He found that imperatives in feedback are more effective than statements and questions. In contrast, Conrad and Goldstein (1990, as cited in Hyland & Hyland, 2006) found that imperatives, declaratives, or questions in feedback were less effective than the type of problem in the feedback. They further explained that problems related with facts and details were successfully revised by 50%, while those dealing with argumentation and analysis were successfully revised only by 10%. Alamis (2010) investigated the reactions and responses of 141 students towards teacher written feedback. Using questionnaires and student essays, Alamis found that praise is superior to criticisms and that content feedback should entail suggestions rather than the three forms: questions, direct corrections, and indirect corrections.

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1 Introduction

This study carried out in Payame Noor University of Takab, Iran. University is responsible for giving general and special English classes to all students. It is decided to employ a quasi-experimental design.

#### 3.2 Participants

The study conducted with 50 EFL learners participating at General English course at intermediate level in Payame Noor University of Takab, Iran. They were selected out of 75 (AGE 18 to 23). In order to make sure of the homogeneity, the Nelson English Proficiency Test was administered between 75 participants. A total of 50 homogeneous students were selected based on their result on Nelson English Proficiency Test ( $\pm 1$  SD from the mean score). Then the selected homogenous students were asked to fill up the EPQ in 15 minutes. According to EPQ, 50 students were divided into two groups: Twenty five extrovert students were put into the written feedback (WF) group. Twenty five students were assigned to control group which received regular feedback pattern.

#### 3.3 Instrumentation

In order to examine the research question and hypothesis, these instruments employed in this study all of which used for data triangulation:

##### 3.3.1 Nelson English Proficiency Test (Homogeneity Test)

A Nelson English Proficiency Test, which consisted of 50 multiple choice items of knowledge of English structures, administered to ensure the homogeneity of the subjects. The scoring estimated out of 50 and the time allotted to take this test was 25 minutes. To estimate whether these 50 learners are homogeneous regarding their proficiency level, an Independent Sample *t*-test was ran. Based on the obtained scores it confirmed that all the participants enjoyed similar level of language proficiency.

##### 3.3.2 Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (EPQ):

It has been developed by Eysenck and Eysenck (1975) and measures certain personality dimensions, such as extroversion, etc. EPQ is a standardized test and refined several times. The reliability of 90 items EPQ has been evaluated in Iranian context ( $E=.92$ ), which shows a high degree of value (Ashtiani, 2009).

##### 3.3.3 Free Writing Test

The third instrument was a free writing test; the participants were asked to write one paragraph about 250 words on a specific topic. They progress showed the effect of treatment phase.

### 3.4 Procedure

#### 3.4.1 Pretest Phase

After selecting 50 students homogeneously based on their result on Nelson English Proficiency Test, 25 extrovert students assigned in to the experimental group and 25 students assigned to control group. Then the students were given a situational writing task on a specific topic in order to write one paragraph composition in a determined time of 20 minutes. The students' paragraphs were collected before and after the treatment and inter-rated by two well-trained teachers, each with more than four years of experience in teaching English writing to university students and the degree of correlation coefficient between the scorers of the writing test (inter-rater reliability) and the reliability of writing test were computed through running Pearson correlation test. The result showed an acceptable correlation between the raters' given scores and writing tests.

#### 3.4.2 Treatment Phase

The feedback written on students' drafts constituted the written feedback data for this study. The teacher-researcher gave a specified topic to 25 extrovert students in experiential group. Written feedback on students' first drafts (D1s) involved both grammar and content feedback. In the D1s, the teacher-researcher identified the location of the error by underlining the error. The paragraphs were then inter-rated by two teachers. In the second drafts (D2s), he made checkmarks for the errors that corrected accurately and underlined those that had been revised inaccurately by the student. The teacher-researcher blended content and grammar feedback in all drafts. At the end of students' D1s and D2s, the teacher-researcher gave written commentary in the form of text-specific comments or questions and summary comments on grammar, organization, content, and vocabulary. This process held for ten sessions of writing.

Thus, the feedback procedures on students' drafts summed up in the following way:

- (a) First Draft: The writing topic set as take-home assignment. After students produced a D1, the teacher provided written feedback on it.
- (b) Second Draft: In order to produce the D2, students made revisions outside class based on written teacher feedback given to the D1. The teacher then provided written feedback on the D2.
- (c) Final draft: Students used the written feedback from the D2 to produce a final draft of the essay.

#### 3.4.3 Post test Phase

At the final stage the teacher- researcher gave a topic to all 50 students to write about it. Finally, they were required to submit a writing sample on the determined topic to assess their writing ability. Writings of 2 groups judged by two expert teachers and the results of each group were compared to each other. Since the writing test is subjective one, so two raters scored all the pretest and post test papers.

### 4. Results and Discussion

In analyzing the data, (SPSS) a statistical package, was used to generate the frequencies, percentages of each variable and the relationships between them. Independent sample T-test was applied between the scores of pre-test of two groups and the results achieved. The mean of the pretest of the control group was 13.35 and that of experimental group was 14.10. The p value, a pre determined significance level to be compared with observed level, was 0.06 in the study. The p value (0.060) > 0.05 revealed the fact that the two groups were not significantly different at 0.05 levels in terms of the writing ability.

**Table 1. Group statistics of the pre-test scores of experimental and control group**

Group	N	Mean	Std. deviation	Std. error mean
Control	25	13.35	1.94	.37
Experimental	25	14.10	1.95	.35

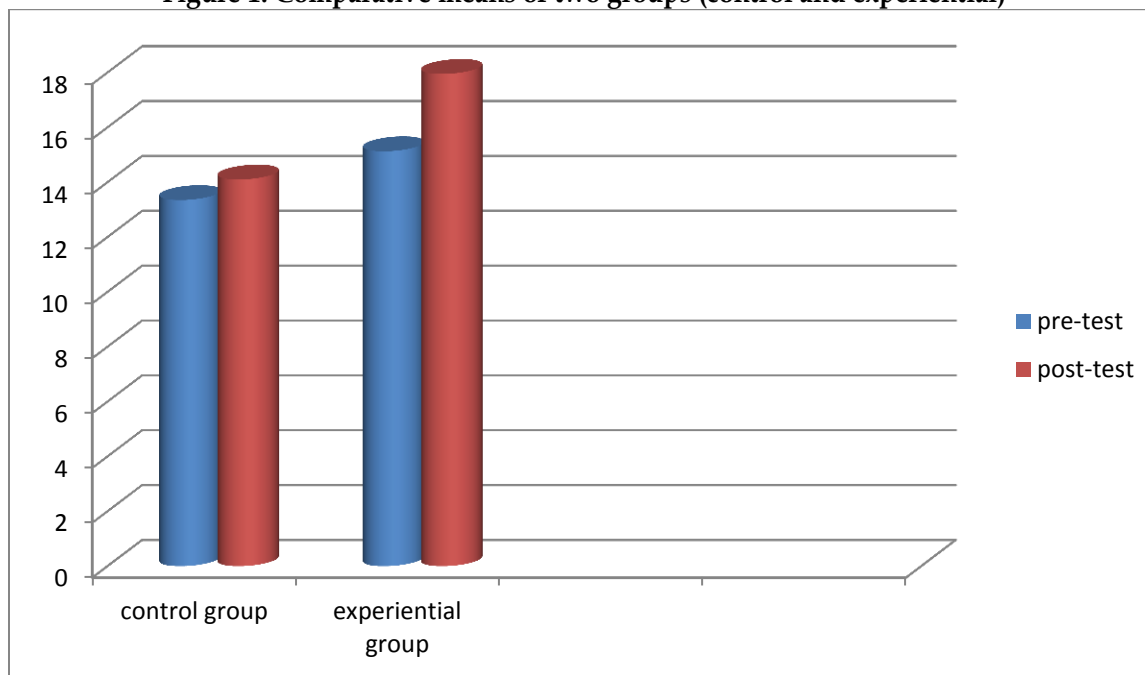
To evaluate the effectiveness of written feedback on extroverts' writing, the mean of the post test of the control group was 15.13 and that of experimental group was 17.95. A significant difference was between the two groups in terms of the mean. In addition, the p value of  $0.00 < 0.05$  indicated that the two groups were different significantly. In all of the post treatment phase, the observed t (7.280) exceeded the critical t (1.90) (observed t >

critical  $t = 7.280 > 1.90$ ) as well. So by 95% confidence, it was obvious that there were differences between control group and experimental group.

**Table 2. Group statistics of the post test scores of experimental and control group**

Group	N	Mean	Std. deviation	Std. error mean
Control	25	15.13	1.73	.3023
Experimental	25	17.95	1.23	.2260

**Figure 1. Comparative means of two groups (control and experiential)**



As seen from figure 1, the findings rejected the null hypothesis and declared that teachers' written feedback has a significant effect on the writing ability of Iranian EFL extrovert learners at intermediate level.

The finding of the present study seems to be compatible with the some said studies. Ahmadian and Yadegari (2011) believes that teachers can group students based on their personality traits and give them appropriate communicative tasks to develop their speaking and writing skills as well. It gives a clear answer to the previous mixed results in this area and decreases the role of personality in language proficiency, particularly writing.

From the other hand it is obvious that the delivery of feedback, whether oral or written, must be made comprehensive, comprehensible, inoffensive, and meaningful to student-writers.

In a similar vein, students should always be alert and actively engaged when interacting with the teacher-reader and with the feedback provided. The success of incorporating feedback into revision largely depends on feedback strategies, which need to be varied or mixed, and on the internal quality of each feedback mode. This means that the feedback must be delivered with caution and adequate scaffolding, and that autonomous learning through consulting useful learning resources (e.g., grammar books, dictionaries, etc.) needs to be inculcated as an additive process of the feedback mode.

## 5. Conclusion

The findings rejected the null hypothesis and declared that teacher's written feedback has a significant effect on Iranian EFL extrovert students' writing skill. The researcher concludes that, the view to extroverts as good learners due to their sociability behaviors, can affect the way they accept teacher's feedback. Such admiring positive views toward extroverts have influenced teacher's perceptions and judgments about the students (brown, 2007).

In addition, McDonough (2002) believes that although some personality types such as; introversion, self-confidence and self-efficacy have been suggested that they are conducive to learning a foreign language; these

correlations have proved to have effect on learning how to write. The finding of the present study seems to be compatible with the above said studies, and the findings of Carell *et al.*'s (1996) study reported that, there was significant relationship between extroverts and their performance on grammar, writing and reading comprehension tests.

Moreover the findings of this research are compatible with some linguists and psychologists theories at least in writing skill. Ahmadian and Yadegari (2011) believes that teachers can group students based on their personality traits and give them appropriate communicative tasks and proper feedback to develop their speaking skills and writing skills as well. The findings, with emphasizing on impact of extroversion on language ability, could resolve all disagreements. It gives a clear answer to the previous mixed results in this area and decreases the role of personality in language proficiency, particularly writing. In the other word, the notion of the person who is skilled at learning who then applies that skill to a language resolves some of the problems of conceptualizing individual differences and their significance (McDonough, 2002).

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# THE IMPACT OF USING OPEN TASKS VS. CLOSED TASKS ON IRANIAN INTERMEDIATE EFL LEARNERS' WRITING PARAGRAPH

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## Abstract

This study was conducted to investigate the effect of closed vs. open tasks on intermediate Iranian EFL Learners' ability in paragraph writing. For this purpose 100 learners of English at Ava institute participated in this study. Having being homogenized by an Oxford placement test (OPT), learners were selected randomly assigned into two groups of 30, control and experimental. Then both groups sat for a pre-test, which was writing a paragraph to describe their great day in life. The purpose of this test was to measure the learners' initial subject knowledge of paragraph writing. Then one group as control group received closed tasks which are somehow near to the tasks mostly done in schools and institutes (placebo). However, the other group as experimental one was delivered open tasks as a new treatment. The treatment procedure took 5 sessions for each group. Finally, at the end of the course both groups sat for the posttest which was the repetition of the pretest. Then the statistical analysis was run through Pearson formula and t-test sample. It was explored from the study there is no difference at frequency level among those participants who undertook the closed tasks at the end of the programme from those who underwent open tasks. On the other hand, those participants who undertook the closed tasks had upper accuracy level at the end of the programme than those who underwent open tasks.

**Key words:** closed tasks, open tasks and paragraph writing

## Introduction

Writing is one of the most important productive activities in order to learn a foreign language. Although writing is often relegated to homework and takes place in unsupported conditions of learning, it's obvious that through exchanging ideas, discussion, collaboration and feedback, learners get valuable opportunities for improvement in writing.

According to Nunan (1999), "in terms of skills, producing a coherent, fluent, extended piece of writing, is probably the most difficult thing which is to do in languages. It is something most native speakers never master". Moreover, some translation of the writings of Iranian learners may appear to be word for word translation of the Persian language structure into English. In the process of writing, learners may make errors rooted in their mother tongue. (Yarmohammadi, 2000)

As Richards and Renandya believe, there is no doubt that writing is the most difficult skill for second language learners to master. The difficulty lies not only in generating and organizing ideas but also in translating those ideas into meaningful texts. Tasks are, therefore, fundamental in learning to write and represent a central aspect of the teacher's planning and delivery of a writing course. The tasks teachers assign will help students to learn from their experience, to develop an understanding of the text and to control their writing skill.

Writing needs practicing and internalizing a set of structures that can promote a balanced development of learners' fluency, accuracy, and complexity in the target language. As Skehan emphasizes, "the more the task is planned, the less computational work needs to be done during the task performance. Things being equal, the

result is more, when attention is given as a general tool to achieve a variety of goals such as greater fluency, accuracy, and complexity" (p. 73). He also distinguishes three aspects of linguistic performance: (a) Fluency, which is concerned with the learners' capacity to produce language in real time without any pauses or hesitations. Fluency is measured in different ways, such as speech rate, length of the run, pause length, false starts repetitions, and reformulating; (b) Accuracy, which is the extent to which the language produced conforms to the target language norms. There are different researches to accuracy either as an error free piece of language or accurate use of specific forms (Skehan and Foster, 1997); and, (c) Complexity which is the elaboration of the language produced by EFL learners. Researchers usually measure complexity by relating how much subordination is used per T-units or C- units.

### Review of literature

At the beginning of the 21st century, writing classrooms have achieved a more balanced perspective of composition theory. Consequently, new pedagogy has begun to develop traditional teachers-centered approaches into more learner-centered courses so academic writing was viewed as communicative social act.

Based on a widely accepted categorization, writing tasks in second/foreign language classes are either *real-world* tasks, which are directly based on the learners' communicative goals, or *pedagogic* tasks which are designed to develop students' genre knowledge and composing skills.

Many pedagogic tasks aim to promote discrete skills, such as improving punctuation, developing pre-writing abilities, or increasing an understanding of rhetorical forms. These tasks are selected on the basis of meta-cognitive criteria, or what students need to know in order to build the competence required to accomplish real-world objectives on later stages.

Pedagogical tasks provide a vehicle for the presentation of appropriate target language samples to learners and for the delivery of comprehension and production opportunities of negotiable difficulty. Murphy emphasizes the fact that communicative tasks may be chosen and implemented so that particular pedagogical outcomes are achieved. Such tasks should carefully be designed to lead students to the intended objectives. He also distinguishes among the factors that affect learning outcome, contribution of individual learner, the task performance, and the situation in which the task is performed.

In topic writing tasks, for example, students are required to write free compositions on carefully chosen realistic topics. Composition can be a useful writing assessment task, too. "Topic writing tasks provide students with an opportunity to demonstrate their ability to organize language materials, using their own words and ideas to communicate. In topic writing students should be presented with a carefully defined problem which motivates them to write. They should also have an audience in mind when they write".

Second language writers have to challenge higher-level skills of planning and organizing, as well as lower level skills of spelling, punctuation, and word choice. One of the challenges in working on second language acquisition is to address the concurrent need for maintaining complexity, fluency, and accuracy in EFL learners' language. The desire to investigate motors of change contributes to the challenge. Teachers can help students to be a successful writer by teaching strategies for planning, revising and editing through doing contextualized tasks which can be performed in the form of closed or open tasks.

Through the last twenty years, tasks have got a very important role in curriculum planning, implementation, and evaluation in language teaching and learning. In task-based language teaching, language production; both writing and speaking, in which students can negotiate meaning in the process of using language and then they can be able to communicate with others in real situations. Therefore, syllabus content and instructional process are selected so that the communicative goals can be gained. The tasks are made and gathered with the reference to learners' needs in the outside of the classroom, and also with the reference to the approaches and empirical insights into those social and psycholinguistic processes which facilitate language acquisition.

As Skehan [1] states, a communicative task is an activity in which, (a) meaning is primary, (b) there is some sort of relationship to real world tasks (c) task completion has some sort of priority, and (d) assessment of task



performance is determined in terms of task outcomes. Similarly, Nunan [2] believes that a task is a classroom work that engages learners in completing, manipulating, producing, or interacting in the target language while the attention is focused on meaning rather than on form. Also, Crabbe [3] asserts that task can provide a framework for communicative performance. Therefore, behind every task there is a set of learning opportunities and potential activities for learning.

EFL teachers' duty is to provide their students with different tasks as teaching different materials in their classrooms. Using these tasks would be helpful in teaching and assessing writing performance, too. Creating a new and different situation for language learners, communicative tasks will help them use their abilities to solve language problems in doing tasks; hence language learning experience would be easier and more interesting. Such a communication in a second or foreign language is a highly complex but fascinating activity.

Tasks mostly used in communicative teaching can be interactive or non interactive. In other words they respectively are as reciprocal or non-reciprocal. (Ellis, 2001). In non-reciprocal tasks, learner performs the activities without any opportunity to interact, for example when learners follow the directions and do the exercise. like: Find the topic sentence in a reading and paraphrase it, whereas in reciprocal task, learners involve in the classroom communication to perform the task. Therefore, in these both closed and open tasks which are information gap tasks using the later can be much more effective.

Since the goal of task-based teaching and learning language is to involve the participants in class activities, it's important to realize whether these tasks can be effective to obtain the purpose or not. Therefore it is under question which one of closed or open tasks can make any progress to achieve such a communicative goal. Evidence suggests that closed tasks lead to more negotiation (Loschky, 1989; Long, 1990); greater grammatical core vocabulary (Kim, 1995); greater accuracy (Rankin, 1990) and greater fluency, Rahimpour (1997, 2007, 2008).

Both kinds of mentioned tasks are information gap tasks in which information is transferred among participants. To provide distinctive definitions of these two kinds of tasks, it should be explained that closed activities are ones for which students know there is a correct answer or small set of answers are expected to produce. Thus it can be said that an answer is right or wrong. Open activities, conversely, are those for which there is no correct answer or answers; everyone can have their own opinion. An answer is neither right nor wrong.

In order to find a proper way to help students to be a good writer, this study tries to suggest if using closed or open tasks can highlight the road which has to be taken. Therefore, the current study was an attempt to shed more light on the notion of communicative closed and open tasks in EFL language teaching and assessment with a specific attention to using tasks in one of the most complex and critical language skills, i.e., writing. Moreover, the major objective in the current study was to investigate whether these types of tasks would have any significant impacts on the fluency, accuracy aspects of Iranian EFL learners' writing performance.

### **Purpose of the study**

As it is said earlier, the present study is an attempt to ameliorate the pedagogical and practical implication and application of the effect of closed vs. open tasks on Iranian intermediate EFL learners' on writing paragraph skill. However, the study tries to answer the following question that might yield message to curriculum innovation and policy.

Do closed vs. open tasks have any effect on Iranian intermediate EFL students' ability on writing paragraph?

### **Research question**

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

**RQ:** Does closed vs. open tasks have any significant effect on Iranian intermediate EFL students' ability in writing paragraph?

### **Research hypothesis**

In order to answer the research question, the following null hypothesis has been formulated as follows:

**H0:** Closed vs. open tasks do not have any significant effect on Iranian intermediate EFL students' ability in writing paragraph.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Introduction

The present study sought to investigate the effect of open vs. closed tasks on EFL intermediate learners' ability in paragraph writing in Iran. This part describes the participants of the study, the materials and instruments used for data collection, the procedures, and statistical procedures

### Design of the study

The design of this study is quasi- experimental which is the pretest and posttest design. Descriptive statistics was performed to report the mean scores of the participants on OPT test. In order to answer the research question of the study, the following statistical analyses were employed. It is necessary to say that the learners given the closed tasks were considered as control group since the procedures somehow near to what is being done in schools and many institutes (placebo), and the learners delivered the open tasks were regarded as an experimental group because its phases are mostly ignored at schools even in institutes. To find out the differences between the learners' writing ability of the experimental and the control groups, Pearson formula was used to compare their pretest scores. Also, T-test independent scores were run to investigate whether any significant difference existed between the experimental and the control group with regard to the posttest scores of paragraph written by learners.

### Participants

The participants of the study were 100 intermediate students both male and female. After administration of OPT test, 60 intermediate students whose scores were at least 47 through 70 were selected. They were divided into two groups: 30 EFL learners were randomly assigned to the control group and 30 learners were assigned to the experimental group.

### Materials

Three instruments were used in this study. To determine the students' language proficiency and to homogenize them, an OPT test was administered to the students.

In addition, before providing the treatment, in order to check the performance of both the experimental and control groups in writing paragraph, a pretest of a paragraph was administered.

Then, the learners in the experimental group were presented the tasks related to what was done in pretest. It's obvious that the tasks had been prepared according to the students' needs for writing the paragraph about the topic of pretest and posttest.

On the other hand, a series of closed task were given to control group through 5 sessions. These tasks were designed and selected so that they could provide students with vocabulary and structures related to the topic which had been given to learners in pretest and at the end to post test.

After the treatment stage, as post -test, the pretest was administered to both groups again to check whether there was any significant difference between the performances of the two groups.

### Procedure

The study investigated the possible effect of open tasks vs. closed tasks on intermediate EFL learners' ability in paragraph writing in Iran. There were 100 students in first grade who are learning English as a foreign language in institutes. For homogenizing the subjects, the OPT proficiency test were assigned. This test was divided into 3 parts, grammar and vocabulary, reading comprehension, and writing paragraph. Part one includes questions 1 to 50 for which learners should choose one letter A, B, c, or D on their answer sheet. According to reading passage containing 10 questions, for the first 5 questions, students are supposed to write T (true) or F(false) for each sentence mentioned and for the second 5 questions, students are supposed to choose one letter A, B, or c, which best complete each sentence or answer the questions. In part three, students are asked to write a paragraph.

After the OPT test, 60 students were randomly divided in two group (experimental and control). A pretest, including writing a paragraph was administered to check the subjects' writing ability before treatment. The

closed tasks were given to control group whereas the open ones were delivered to experimental group. After a 5-session treatment for each group, a pretest was administered again as post-test to see the student's progress.

### Statistical Analysis

A descriptive statistics was performed to report the mean scores of the participants on OPT test. In order to answer the research question of the study, and to find out the differences between the students' ability in writing paragraph of the experimental and the control groups, T-test sample was used to compare their post-test scores. Also, Pearson formula was run to investigate whether any significant difference existed between each student pretest and post test score.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As it is noted in the previous chapter, the present research aimed at ameliorating the statues of the effect of closed vs. open tasks on Iranian EFL intermediate Learners' ability in writing paragraph. So this section enjoys two types of formula: T-test independent sample and Pearson's correlation coefficient. T-test independent sample output has been calculated to answer the question of this study whether closed vs. open tasks have any effect on Iranian intermediate EFL students' ability on writing paragraph. Whereas Pearson's formula has been used to illuminate the probable differences of participants' performances in pre-test and post test after the treatments: doing closed or open tasks.

### Data collection Methodology

Before starting the treatment, an OPT Test was employed to establish the homogeneity of the subjects in terms of language proficiency. It consisted of three parts: grammar and vocabulary, reading comprehension, and writing paragraph. Initially, 100 male and female students participated in the study. After administration of OPT tests 60 intermediate students whose scores were at least 47 points through 70 were selected. Then they were randomly classified into two groups, one of them was considered as the control group and the other one as experimental group. Control group was exposed to closed tasks whereas experimental group was undergone open tasks.

A descriptive statistical analysis was run on the collected data of OPT test. The results are shown in the Table (1). It should be noted that no one excluded.

**Table 1. Descriptive statistics for the proficiency test**

N	Mean	SD
100	62	1

### Outputs of T-test independent Sample

In this study, in order to investigate the research hypothesis "closed vs. open tasks does not have any effect on Iranian intermediate EFL learners' ability in paragraph writing", the differences between mean scores of pretest and posttest of control and experimental group were calculated through T-test independent sample.

### Descriptive statistics

**Table 2. Means and Standard deviations of Open vs. Closed Tasks (Accuracy Criterion)**

descriptive Statistics					
	Method	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
ErrorNumber	Close	30	6.7000	2.11969	.38700
	Open	30	14.4000	3.44013	.62808

**Table 3. Means and Standard deviations of Open *vs.* Closed Tasks  
(Fluency Criterion)**

descriptive Statistics					
	Method	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
Word Number	Closed	30	1.7133	.89563	.16352
	Open	30	1.9233	.89382	.16319

Both tables show the number of participants and standard deviation. In addition, table.2 4 points out the means of errors in posttest of both groups showing the accuracy. Accordingly, the lower mean of control group who exposed closed tasks illuminate the higher accuracy of this group. In the table.3 the mean of fluency for both group showing not much difference make it clear that both control and experimental group have not changed in their performance in terms of fluency criterion..

### Inferential statistics

As mentioned before, through inferential statistics, it is possible to answer the hypothesis question. Tables (3- 4) provide the actual results from the independent t-test.

**Table 4. Results for Accuracy in Posttests of Both Groups**

		Word number	
		Equal variances assumed	Equal Variances not assumed
Leven's Test for Equality of Variance	F	.314	
	Sig.	.579	
t-test for Equality of Means	t	2.428	2.428
	df	58	34.886
	Sig.(2taile)	.020	.021
	Mean Differences	.35000	.35000
	Std. Error Differences	.14418	.14418
	95%Confidence Interval Of the Difference		
	Lower	.05813	.05727
	Upper	.64187	.64273

It can be seen that the group means are significantly different because the value in the "**Sig. (2-tailed)**" row is less than 0.05. Looking at the **descriptive Statistics** table, those participants who undertook the closed tasks had upper accuracy level at the end of the programme than those who underwent open tasks.

**Table 5. Results for Frequency in Posttests of Both Groups**

Word Number	
Equal	Equal

		variance s assumed	Variances not assumed
Leven's Test for Equality of Variance	F	.230	
	Sig.	.633	
t-test for Equality Means	t	.909	.909
	of		
	df	58	58
	Sig.(2-tailed)	.367	.367
	Mean Differences	.2100	.2100
	Std. Error Differences	.23102	.23102
	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		
	Lower	.67243	.65273
	Upper	.25243	.28523

Although the group means are not significantly different because the value in the "**Sig. (2-tailed)**" row is more than 0.05. Looking at the **descriptive Statistics** table, there is no difference at frequency level among those participants who undertook the closed tasks level at the end of the programme with those who underwent open tasks.

#### Output of Pearson's formula

The outputs got through Pearson's formula consist of two kinds of statistics: descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics are sets of brief descriptive coefficients that summarize a given data set, which can either be a representation of the entire population or a sample; besides the mean and standard deviation (SD).

Inferential statistics are used to generalize from a sample to a population prone approach. Inferential statistics have two prone approaches. First sampling must be conducted to be representative of the underlying population. Second the procedures must be capable of drawing correct conclusions about the population. It means that the Pearson's formula was used to determine any significant differences after treatment for each individual.

#### Descriptive-Statistics

The descriptive statistical analysis done on the collected data of pre-test and post- test for both group to show the probable differences of individual's accuracy or fluency in writing paragraph. It is shown in table (6-9).

**Table 6. Means and Standard deviations for Accuracy in pretest and posttest of Experimental G.(open tasks)**

Descriptive Statistics			
	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
PreopenA	17.2667	3.44347	30
PosopenA	14.4313	3.60730	30

**Table 7. Means and Standard deviations for Accuracy in pretest and posttest of Control G. (closed tasks)**

#### Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
PreCloseA	17.6333	3.62447	30
PosCloseA	6.7000	2.11962	30

Table 8. Means and Standard deviations for Fluency in pretest and posttest of Control G. (closed tasks)

**Descriptive Statistics**

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
PreClosedF	.9967	.42789	30
PosClosedF	1.7133	.89563	30

Table 9. Means and Standard deviations for Fluency in pretest and posttest Experimental G. (open tasks)

**Descriptive Statistics**

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
PreopenF	1.0133	.48618	30
PosopenF	1.8467	.94010	30

The Descriptive Statistics section gives the mean, standard deviation, and number of observations (N) for each of the variables that specified.

**Inferential Statistics**

As mentioned before Pearson's correlation coefficient shown in inferential statistics table is particularly appropriate when the goal is to discover any differences in each subject's performance through pre-test and post test. In this case the effects of the pretest and/or other relevant variables are partial out, and the resulting adjusted means of the pretest and posttest scores are compared. Tables 10-13 show the output of inferential statistics.

**Table 10. Correlations for Accuracy of pretest and posttest of Control G.**  
(closed tasks)

		PreCloseA	PosCloseA
PreCloseA	Pearson Correlation	1	.885**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	30	30
PosCloseA	Pearson Correlation	.885**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	30	30

Table 11. Correlations for Accuracy of pretest and posttest of Control G.

(closed tasks)

		PreopenA	PosopenA
PreopenA	Pearson Correlation	1	.959**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	30	30
PosopenA	Pearson Correlation	.959**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	30	30

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

According to these tables (4.11-12) shown inferential statistics for Accuracy comparing scores of pre-test and posttest for participants of control group(closed tasks) and experimental group(open tasks), the participants' scores are not significantly different. Regarding means of posttests of both group in descriptive statistics, the participant's of control group (closed tasks) have got upper scores than experimental group(open tasks) at accuracy level.

Table 12. Correlations for Fluency of pretest and posttest of Control G.

(closed tasks)

		PreCloseF	PosCloseF
PreCloseF	Pearson Correlation	1	.919**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	30	30
PosCloseF	Pearson Correlation	.919**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	30	30

Table 13. Correlations for Fluency of pretest and posttest of Experimental G.

(open tasks)

		PreopenF	PosopenF
PreopenF	Pearson Correlation	1	.908**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	30	30
PosopenF	Pearson Correlation	.908**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	30	30

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

According to these tables (4.13-14) shown inferential statistics for Fluency comparing scores of pre-test and posttest for participants of control group(closed tasks) and experimental group(open tasks) , the participants' scores are not significantly different. Regarding means of posttests of both groups, the participant's scores are closely correlated at fluency level.

### Conclusion

The aim of this study was to investigate the effect of closed Vs. open tasks on Iranian EFL Learners' ability in writing paragraph. The researcher tried to find out whether closed vs. open tasks have any effect on Iranian EFL Learners' ability in writing paragraph. Due to descriptive and inferential statistics, and analysis of t-test independent sample to test the hypothesis, it was explored that there is no difference at frequency level among those participants who undertook the closed tasks at the end of the programme from those who underwent open tasks. On the other hand, those participants who undertook the closed tasks had upper accuracy level at the end of the programme than those who underwent open tasks.

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# MORPHOLOGICAL AWARENESS AND VOCABULARY KNOWLEDGE: A CASE OF CORRELATION

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## Abstract

The fact that vocabulary learning and teaching is a central activity in the L2 classroom cannot be taken for granted. Morphological awareness is addressed to be one of the ways in which vocabulary learning can be fostered. The present study intended to investigate the relationship between English morphological awareness and receptive vocabulary knowledge of EFL intermediate female students. To this end, 80 students were selected out of 115 through Pet test used for homogenization. Then, they were given three individual test on separate 3 test days. Nation's (1990) Vocabulary Level Test (VLT) was administrated in order to examine the students' knowledge of words drawn from the 2000, 3000, 5000, and academic vocabularies (120 words in total). On the last day of test administration, Morphological knowledge test, including two parts; Mc Bride Chang's (2005) Morphological Structure test and knowledge of derivational prefixes and suffixes test, were given to the students to assess the students' morphological awareness. Then the results were correlated in order to explore whether morphological awareness is significantly related to vocabulary size of intermediate learners. The result of analysis for the collected data indicated a significant relationship between the students' performance on vocabulary knowledge and morphological awareness. Regarding the major pedagogical implication of the study, morphological awareness can be an effective vocabulary learning strategy for intermediate EFL learners in learning English vocabulary.

**Key words:** Vocabulary learning, Morphological awareness, Morphological Structure Knowledge, Intermediate EFL learner

## 1. Introduction

Vocabulary knowledge is one of the language skills essential for fluent language use (Nation, 1993). Wilkins (1972) asserts, "without grammar, very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed" (p.150). Regarding sounds, grammar, and vocabulary as three principle components of language, word knowledge plays a crucial role in language learning. Within the process of learning a language, words are so pervasive that learners absolutely can't underestimate the power they manifest. In order for the clarification of the role words as the building blocks of language play, Anglin, Miller, and Wakefield (1993) address them as a key to make language production as well as language comprehension possible. Moreover, Coady & Huckin (1997) stated that lexical competence is at the center of communicative competence.

The fact that vocabulary learning and teaching is a central activity in the L2 classroom cannot be taken for granted. Learning strategies is addressed to be one of the ways in which vocabulary learning can be fostered.

The use of morphological awareness is considered to be a potential vocabulary learning strategy to learn novel vocabulary. Carlisle (1995, p.194) believes that "morphological awareness is defined as children's conscious awareness of the morphemic structure of words and their ability to reflect on and manipulate that structure". On the account of the fact that students are able to understand a large number of complex words if they are able to decode them into smaller morphemic units (Ferguson, 2006), morphological knowledge has found its way to be largely investigated. There is now a growing and considerable concern on morphological knowledge as a crucial aspect of vocabulary knowledge and also promoting its size. According to some research conducted by Carlisle (2000); Kuo & Anderson (2006), morphological knowledge is correlated with vocabulary and comprehension. Considering all above, the aim of the present study, is to investigate the correlation between learners' vocabulary knowledge and morphological knowledge.

## 2. Literature review

Throughout the process of language learning, vocabulary size is considered as an indicator of how well the second language (L2) learners can perform language skills such as, reading, listening, and writing (Bear, Invernizzi, Templeton and Johnston, 2008; Treiman & Casar, 1996). According to Zimmerman (2005), vocabularies are the main carriers of meaning, in fact, the bigger individual's vocabulary size, the higher general language proficiency. Learners and teachers can apply various strategies for teaching and learning vocabulary. Vocabulary learning strategy is the process, by which vocabulary is obtained, stored, retrieved, and used (Schmitt & McCarty, 1997).

On the basis of complexity of word knowledge construct, Nation (1990) offered eight aspects of word knowledge: (1) the spoken form of a word, (2) the written form of the word, (3) the grammatical feature of the word, (4) the collocation behavior of the word, (5) the frequency of the word, (6) the stylistic register constraints of the word, (7) the conceptual meaning of the word, and (8) the associations the word has with other related words. Nation (2001) points out, "if more than five percent of the running words are unknown, then it is likely that there is no longer meaning-focused learning because so much attention has to be given to language features" (pp. 388-389). In order to evaluate learners' skill of using the language, the number of vocabularies they know is one of the principle scales. Nation (2001) puts an emphasis on the importance of developing an adequate high-frequency vocabulary which is of great importance especially in the early stages of learning a foreign language. Within this stage, 3,000 word families is considered to be a main threshold.

The fact that Language learners need more vocabulary is quite inevitable, and seeks its main proof in the issue of inadequate vocabulary knowledge. Considering all above, Graves (2004) explains that the development of the needed vocabulary knowledge is largely dependent on learning strategies to unlock word meaning. One considerable issue regarding language teaching is to increase the speed of learning vocabulary of a second or a foreign language provided that learners know how to learn vocabulary more efficiently and effectively. To this end, teachers are advised to teach their students different vocabulary learning strategies (Morin & Goebel, 2001). Studies demonstrate that the explicit teaching of specific vocabulary learning strategies adds and improves students' vocabularies (Tomeson & Aarnoutse, 1998; White et al., 1990).

Having been of great importance, morphological awareness is one of the strategies which Chang et al. (2005) defined as the awareness of and access to the meaning and structure of morpheme in relation to words. Operationally, morphological awareness as "the awareness of and access to the meaning and structure of morphemes in relation to word" (Chang et al., 2005, p. 417). Morphological awareness equips learners with two types of abilities: analytic aspect (morpheme identification awareness), the ability to distinguish different meanings across homophones and break down complex words into smaller meanings, and synthetic aspect (morphological structure awareness), the ability to make use of linguistic knowledge to drive new meanings and reassemble smaller meanings to make up new words on the other (Chang et al., 2005). Morphological awareness is addressed to be the ability to understand and manipulate the smaller meaningful sections that build words such as prefixes, roots, and suffixes. (Kuo & Anderson, 2006).

Basically, "Morphology is the study of the hierarchical and relational aspects of words and the operation on lexical items according to word formation rules to produce other lexical items" (Leong and Parkinson, 1995, p. 237). Morphological awareness implies learners' use of metacognitive strategies of reflecting and manipulating word formation rules to derive the meaning of new words in the absence of communicative context. To put it in a nutshell, the application of morphological strategies to uncover the meaning of new words is crucial for promoting learners' vocabulary knowledge and reading abilities.

Carlisle (1995) believes that morpheme identification can be seen as a problem-solving strategy that can be used to understand a large number of derived words. Carlisle and Stone (2003) emphasized that morphological analysis is a commonly used vocabulary learning strategy by students to comprehend the meaning from words through bases, prefixes and suffixes. Additionally, those not knowledgeable in linguistics are likely to be left behind their peers in the development of vocabulary, word reading and comprehension, and spelling. Different studies have supported beneficiary effect of utilizing morphological information in determining word meaning (Raymond, Matti, Maria (2000), Mountain (2011) and Antonacci and O'Callaghan (2011). That is to say, for instance, they would be able to analyze the word "drinkable" in to drink + -able. Morphological knowledge can also enable them to learn the meanings of affixes, roots (drink= take a liquid into your mouth and swallow, 2 -able= having the ability to do something. Accordingly, it is possible for them to learn the meaning of the morphologically same words.

To sum up, morphemic analysis strategy makes it possible for learners to infer a complex word meaning. Wang et al. (2009) back this notion and believes that affixes and base words carry meaning, which in turn supports the understanding of a morphologically complex word. Likewise, McBride-Chang (2005) defined morphological knowledge as the "knowledge of and access to the meaning and structure of morphemes in relation to word" (p. 417).

Moreover, according to Nunes & Bryant (2006), if learners are willing to know what new words mean and how to write them, they have to be able to apply their morphemic structure. It can't be ignored that morphological knowledge makes the learner more conscious of the writing system (Sandra, 1994). There is now a growing concern on morphological knowledge as a crucial aspect of vocabulary knowledge and also promoting its size. All above have triggered investigating the relationship between morphological awareness and vocabulary knowledge. Singson, Mahony, Mann (2000) focused on morphological knowledge and its relationship to vocabulary size in L2. Carlisle (2000) and Ku & Anderson (2003) found that morphological knowledge is closely correlated with vocabulary and comprehension. Mansour Koosha & Mohsen Salimian (2011) have demonstrated that there is a significant relationship between overall morphological knowledge and vocabulary knowledge in Iranian pre-university students. As shown, the small amount of existing research implies that there is a strong link between morphological knowledge and vocabulary learning.

In some educational context, including Iran, the focus on morphological awareness has been put aside and EFL learners face some serious challenges comprehending large amount of vocabulary. Providing them with different methods which can foster their morphological and consequently their vocabulary knowledge is a great and considerable advance within the issue of language learning. As an EFL teacher, I've always attempted to inform my students of the link between the morphology and word meaning through various tasks. So the present study set out to investigate the relationship between the two crucial aspect of language skill, vocabulary knowledge and morphological awareness. To this end the following research question and null hypothesis were formulated for this study:

RQ: Is there any significant relationship between students' morphological awareness and the vocabulary knowledge?

HO: There is no significant relationship between students' morphological awareness and the vocabulary knowledge.

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1 Participants

The study was conducted on 115 (Iran Language Institute) I.L.I intermediate female students (located in Urmia) aged 18-28. In order to homogenize the participants, Pet test (Preliminary English Test) was administered and 80 learners whose score were 1 SD above and below of the mean score were selected. The study was limited to intermediate female students in order to prevent the effect of gender on the findings of the study. They were Persian speakers studying English as a foreign language. It seemed that morphological awareness could be a sufficient supplement in order to help them overcome the difficulties they would face understanding the meaning of complex words in high levels.

#### 3.2 Instrumentation

Pet test (Preliminary English Test) was administered in order to homogenize the participants. According to the official website of Cambridge ESOL, it is an exam for people who have the ability to use everyday written and

spoken English at an intermediate level. It covers all four language skills, that is, reading, writing, listening and speaking.

### Vocabulary level test

The Nation's (1990) Vocabulary Levels Test (VLT) was applied to determine participants' receptive vocabulary knowledge. It consisted of five frequency levels: the 2,000-word level, the 3,000-word level, the 5,000-word level, the academic word level, and the 10,000-word level. According to Nation (1990), the 2000 and the 3000-word levels contain the high frequency words that all learners need to know in order to function efficiently in English; the 5000-word level is a boundary level between the high and low frequency word levels (Nation, 1983). Words at the Academic level include specialized vocabulary needed for academic studies, and finally the 10,000-word level covers the low frequency words in the language. As a matter of fact, the frequency and the coverage of the words reduces, as the level of the words goes up.

### Morphological knowledge test

It contained two parts and both parts were correlated with knowledge of vocabulary. The first part was McBrideChang's (2005) Morphological Structure test and the second part was knowledge of derivational prefixes and suffixes test. Morphological structure test was administered to make sure whether the participants could show their ability to combine morphemes in order to get new meanings. The second part (Knowledge of Derivational Prefixes and Suffixes Test) including one hundred items was to check the participants' knowledge of the most commonly used prefixes and suffixes available in English lexicon. The questions were in accordance with the level of students' language proficiency.

### 3.3 Procedure

As stated before, in order to homogenize, participants undertook Pet test and 80 (whose scores were 1 SD above and below of the mean score students) were selected out of 115 participants. The next step on the following day was the administration of Nation's (1990) Vocabulary Levels Test (VLT) to determine participants' receptive vocabulary knowledge. With the purpose of providing a suitable atmosphere for evaluation, test administration process was carried out on three separate days not to cause the participants suffering the frequent occurrence of tests. On the last day of test administration, Morphological knowledge test, containing two parts, was applied. The participants were given the first part Mc Bride Chang's (2005) Morphological Structure test and after finishing, the second part namely Knowledge of derivational prefixes and suffixes test was applied on the same day. In order to reveal the participants' attitudes and opinions about the tests, they were given a questionnaire then.

### 3.4 Data analysis

In order to analyze the data gathered, the Pearson correlation coefficient was computed to explore the relationship between participants' vocabulary knowledge and their morphological awareness. These correlations emphasized the relationship between the receptive vocabulary knowledge and the morphological knowledge of the participants.

## 4. Results

In order to test research hypothesis, Pearson correlation coefficient was applied and relationship between the students' performance on Vocabulary Levels Test (VLT) and Morphological knowledge test were analyzed through Pearson correlation coefficient.

**Table 1: Pearson correlation between both the morphological knowledge score and VLT score**

Morphological knowledge	derivational prefixes and suffixes	morphological structure	VLT	
.635(**)	.578(**)	.525(**)	1	Pearson Correlation
				VLT

.000	.000	.000	.	sig.(2-tailed)
80	80	80	80	N

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

As shown in Table 2, there is a strong correlation between participants' vocabulary size and the morphological knowledge ( $r=0.63$ ,  $p < .01$ ). In other words, the two variables are significantly related to each other ( $p < .01$ ). Thus, the research null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between students' morphological awareness and the vocabulary knowledge is rejected. Moreover, according to Table 2, there is a correlation between VLT total score and morphological structure test and knowledge of derivational prefixes and suffixes test. Considering the degree of correlation, the Pearson correlation between the morphological structure scores and VLT total scores demonstrate a weak correlation ( $r=0.52$ ,  $p<.01$ ). However, the correlation between VLT total score and knowledge of derivational prefixes and suffixes test is  $0.57$ , and clarifies a significant relationship between the two variables ( $r=0.57$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Consequently, it can be concluded that in comparison with morphological structure test, knowledge of Derivational prefixes and suffixes test has a higher predictive ability in predicting VLT scores.

**Table 2: Correlation between the Morphological knowledge and both Knowledge of Derivational Prefixes and Suffixes total score and the Morphological structure total score**

Morphological knowledge	derivational suffixes and prefixes	morphological structure	VLT	
1	.953(**)	.609(**)	.635(**)	Pearson
	morphological			correlation
.	.000	.000	.000	knowledge
				Sig.(2-tailed)
80	80	80	80	N

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

Table 3. clarifies that the correlation between morphological structure scores and morphological knowledge total scores is  $0.609$ , whereas the correlation between knowledge of derivational prefixes and suffixes scores and morphological knowledge total scores is  $0.953$  ( $p<.01$ ), which is a good indicator of the notion that in comparison with morphological structure test, knowledge of derivational prefixes and suffixes test has a higher predictive ability regarding the prediction of morphological knowledge scores.

## 5. Discussion

As stated before, according to Zimmerman (2005), vocabularies are the main carriers of meaning, in fact, the bigger individual's vocabulary size, the higher general language proficiency. In order to broaden vocabulary size and consequently general language proficiency, morphological knowledge has been regarded as one of the crucial strategies essential for vocabulary learning.

The present study investigated the potential correlation between the learners' morphological awareness and their knowledge of vocabulary. The results of Pearson correlation coefficient computed to explore the relationship between variables demonstrated a close connection; the greater morphological awareness; the easier the learners foster their vocabulary knowledge. This finding is in agreement with other studies such as Raymond, Matti, Maria (2000), Mountain (2011) and Antonacci and O'Callaghan (2011) which supported beneficiary effect of utilizing morphological information in determining word meaning. The findings of the study are also in line with Mc- Bride Change et al. (2005) who found that knowledge of morphology is a good predictor of vocabulary knowledge. In addition, the studies conducted by Nurhemida, 2007, Singson, Mahony, and Mann (2000), White,

Power and White (1989) supported the positive relationship between morphological knowledge and vocabulary size. In another study, Mansour Koosha & Mohsen Salimian (2011) have demonstrated that there is a significant relationship between overall morphological knowledge and vocabulary knowledge in Iranian pre-university students. On the other hand, the findings are in contrast with Al Farsi's (2008) demonstrating that there is no relationship between mentioned variables. Regarding the application of morphological structure of the words previously met, participants showed a relatively poor performance. Obviously, this finding suggest that there is a crucial need for explicit teaching of morphological knowledge and the teaching of morphological units.

This study added to the vast body of learning strategies for vocabulary learning that had been conducted in foreign language acquisition literature. The findings on vocabulary learning strategies equip English instructors with an effective plan to help their students reach the vocabulary threshold by recommending them to apply different types of vocabulary learning strategies and morphological cues to comprehend the meaning of the words. In addition, the results may encourage instructors to dedicate more time on direct instruction of morphological knowledge as a very helpful tool for promoting vocabulary size of their students. As a matter of fact, the findings can draw a stream to consider the possible benefits of vocabulary instruction focusing on developing morphological knowledge. The findings of this study suggest a number of implications and extensions for students, teachers, syllabus designers and text book designers.

The participants of this study were limited to intermediate female L.L.I language learners, other levels were not included. Thus, the findings cannot be generalized to higher levels.

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# THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN IPA AND CORRECT PRONUNCIATION

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## ABSTRACT

The present study investigated the possible relationship between IPA, stress and pronunciation skill of Iranian EFL learners. Seventy Iranian intermediate EFL students were selected as the main sample based on their performance on Oxford placement test. All participants were given a test of IPA and word stress. There was also a pronunciation test which was performed orally to evaluate their total pronunciation proficiency. Two EFL teachers participated in the scoring procedure. Pearson correlation test was run to the results of different sections of the pronunciation test using SPSS 22 to answer the research questions and to investigate the possible relationship between IPA, stress, and pronunciation skill of Iranian EFL learners. The relationships between Iranian intermediate EFL learners' total pronunciation skill and two components of pronunciation skill of including IPA competence and knowledge of word stress, were examined through running Pearson correlation test. The results indicated that there was a significant correlation between IPA competence and total pronunciation test scores of Iranian EFL students. It was found that there was also significant relationship between students' English pronunciation test scores and their performance in word stress.

**Key words:** Pronunciation, IPA, Suprasegmental Features, Stress, Sound articulation

## INTRODUCTION

Language learning is found on two mediums, the spoken and the written. However, researchers have appreciated to inquire into the significance of speaking in second language learning. Good speech is vital because speaking has a great power which producing the desired effect on human beings in expressing their perceptive views. Romero (2006) claimed there are great differences between the pronunciation of native and non-native speakers of a language. In other words, a foreign accent is the constant occurrence of the phonetic differences from the norms of a language which L1 speakers of that language recognize as unfamiliar to their own language sound system. In fact, learners with a foreign accent may be unintelligible in the sense that they are often misunderstood, or they may be intelligible but understanding them requires more effort.

Therefore, pronunciation is a key element in learning a language without which comprehension would be hindered. In other words, having good pronunciation for EFL learners is critical. A major difficulty which almost any ESL/EFL learner faces, is the achievement of acceptable pronunciation that enables them to be understood by the L1 English speakers. In fact, many of these learners master the elements of language such as syntax, morphology, or even semantics to the level of almost native-like competence but often fail to master correct and acceptable pronunciation. Pronunciation has always been perceived as a difficult area by teachers and learners alike. Pronunciation difficulties may be due to various factors, one of which is the lack of correspondence between English spelling of a word and its pronunciation (Asghari, 1992; Sprenger-Charolles & Siegal, 1997). By contrast, the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) has some symbols used to characterize the set of distinctive sounds, or 'phonemes', of English.

Another difficulty in pronunciation that many EFL Learners have, is the accurate perception and production of word stress. Errors related to primary word stress are a common problem among EFL learners and have a great impact on students' pronunciation intelligibility and their perception skills (Celce-Murcia, Brinton, &



Goodwin, 1996). Because of the importance of pronunciation, the present research is going to find out the possible relationship between IPA, stress, and pronunciation skill of Iranian EFL learners.

In this relation, the research questions have been formulated as follows:

- 1) Is there any significant relationship between Iranian EFL learners' IPA competence and their pronunciation skill?
- 2) Is there any significant relationship between Iranian EFL learners' knowledge of word stress in English language pronunciation and their total pronunciation skill?

## 1. REVIEW of LITERATURE

Pronunciation plays an important role in our personal and social lives because we project our regional, social and ethnic identities through the way we speak and by means of our accent. It is also a major factor in our intelligibility to our listeners. According to Setter and Jenkins (2005), "pronunciation, then, plays a vital role in successful communication both productively and receptively". There have been many differences of opinion over the years about the role of pronunciation in language teaching and about how best to teach it. The grammar translation method and reading-based approaches have viewed pronunciation as irrelevant. In the direct method, pronunciation is very important; however, the methodology is primitive; the teacher is ideally a native or near-native speaker of the target language presenting pronunciation inductively and correcting through modeling. In the audio-lingual approach, pronunciation is likewise very important and there is a great emphasis on the traditional notions of pronunciation, minimal pairs, drills and short conversations (Celce-Murcia & Goodwin, 1991). Situational language teaching, developed in Britain between 1940 and 1960, also reflected the audio-lingual view of the pronunciation class (Richards & Rodgers, 1986).

Since the conventional wisdom of the late 1960's and early 1970's held that native-like pronunciation could not be totally taught anyway, the cognitive code approach de-emphasized pronunciation in favor of grammar and vocabulary. It was during these years that questions were asked about the role of pronunciation in the ESL/EFL curriculum, whether the focus of the programs and the instructional methods were effective or not.

In many language programs, the teaching of pronunciation was eliminated because many studies concluded "that little relationship exists between teaching pronunciation in the classroom and attained proficiency in pronunciation; the strongest factors found to affect pronunciation (i.e. native language and motivation) seem to have little to do with classroom activities" (Sutter, 2012). The Communicative Approach, which persists today with criticism from some quarters, sprung into prominence in the 1980's. This approach holds that oral communication is the primary use of language and therefore should be central to the mode of instruction. Though pronunciation is not an explicit feature in this mode of instruction, the prominence of pronunciation has been stressed by it (Carey, 2002).

Students can be expected to do well in the pronunciation of English if the pronunciation class is taken out of isolation and becomes an integral part of the oral communication class (Morley, 1991). Moreover, the goal of pronunciation has changed from the attainment of 'perfect' pronunciation to the more realistic goals of developing functional intelligibility, communicability, increased self-confidence, the development of speech monitoring abilities and speech modification strategies for use beyond the classroom (Morley, 1991). The overall aim of these goals is for the learner to develop spoken English that is easy to understand, serves the learner's individual needs, and allows a positive image of himself as a speaker of a foreign language.

According to Horner (2010) the components which constitute the pronunciation skill are as follows:

- The sound-units (phonemes) of the language and their realization in particular contexts (allophones);
- The phonetic features which distinguish phonemes (distinctive features, e.g. voicing, rounding, nasality and ...);
- The phonetic composition of words (syllable structure, the sequence of phonemes, word stress, word tones);
- Sentence phonetics (prosody) sentence stress and rhythm;
- Intonation;
- Features of linking: phonetic reduction, vowel reduction, strong and weak forms, assimilation, elision".

Based on Horner's idea, the importance of speech sounds as the basic component of pronunciation skill will be cleared. According to Horner's framework, it can be concluded that the distinctive features of phonemes – the production of speech sounds – and word stress are considered as essential ingredients of pronunciation skill.

This paper is going to find whether the use of IPA will improve the pronunciation skill. Moreover the relationship between stress and pronunciation skill is investigated.

*1.1 Pronunciation skill, IPA and Stress:* Pronunciation deals with the phonological process that refers to the principles that determine how sounds vary and pattern in a language. There are two features of pronunciation; phonemes (segmental) and suprasegmental features. A speaker who constantly mispronounces a range of phonemes can be extremely difficult for a speaker from another language community to understand (Gerard, 2000). Rivers (1968) contended the difficulty of non-native speakers is barely due to their lack of vocabulary and grammar, but primarily because of the sounds they produce are incorrect, the stress and the intonation seem strange. Celce-Murcia (1987) also commented that if a non-native speaker's pronunciation is under performed, he or she will not be able to communicate orally even though the mastery of vocabulary and grammar is good. Pronunciation is one of the most noticeable features of a person's speech, often it is not explicitly taught. According to Hammer (2001), almost all English language teachers get students to study grammar and vocabulary, yet some of these teachers make little attempt to teach pronunciation in any overt way and give attention to it in passing. Most teachers do not provide instruction at all and those few that do generally adopt a hit or miss approach, relying on materials that lack grounding and desired results (Fraser, 2002). Many of English language learners confront difficulties in learning English pronunciation (Gilakjani, 2011) and Iranian English learners are no exception. Despite the importance of pronunciation, the reality is that in many Iranian English language classrooms, little attention is paid to teaching pronunciation (ibid). Gilbert (2008) argues that teachers often find that they don't have enough time in the classes to give proper attention to this aspect of English instruction. Gilbert further states that, presentation and practice of a series of boring and seemingly unrelated topics, like drilling sounds over and over again (e.g. minimal pair work) often lead to discouraging results, and discouraged students and teachers end up wanting to avoid pronunciation altogether (ibid). The researcher also believes that the Iranian EFL teachers are not provided with suitable course books and materials that help them improve their pronunciation teaching, whereas according to Fraser (2000) teachers need to be provided with materials to help them improve their effectiveness in teaching pronunciation. In addition, many Iranian EFL teachers do not consider the role of IPA in learning correct pronunciation. Only 5 percent of the teachers who participated in Dahmardeh's research (2009), regarded teaching phonetic symbols and pronunciation as the main purpose and emphasized on specific text books of pronunciation. Having considered all mentioned points, the importance of pronunciation skill in second or foreign language learning will be clarified. Accordingly, the present study investigates the relationship between IPA and pronunciation.

This alphabet has been used to represent the English language since 1476 when William Caxton opened his printing press in London, England. The problem was that the Latin alphabet has only 26 symbols. English as spoken language has been developing since 450 AD and commonly uses 40 sounds. The Latin alphabet has never accurately represented the English spoken language. In 1886, an international group developed an enormous bank of symbols to represent every sound in human speech. It was a great idea, and it was called International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA). The International Phonetic Alphabet was created soon after International Phonetic Association was established in the late 19th century. It was intended as an international system of phonetic transcription for oral language, originally for pedagogical purpose. The association was established in Paris in 1886 by French and British language teachers led by Paul Passy.

However, the first issue the English language has with IPA is that is based on French language. The use of phonetic transcription in the teaching of English as a second or foreign language (using the IPA symbols) is a suitable method for improving pronunciation. English is the most widely taught language in the world, and the IPA is the most widely used alphabet for phonetic transcription. Phonetic transcription is nothing more than a written record of the sounds of spoken language.

The relationship between phonetic transcription and spoken language is very similar to that between a printed musical score and a musical performance. Transcription separates pronunciation from actual audio recording. In reality it has many advantages for teaching spoken language and pronunciation. There are two kinds of transcriptions: 1. Phonemic or broad, and 2. Narrow or phonetic transcription. In broad transcription the phonemes are represented; however, in narrow transcription, finer points of pronunciation are shown. The

alphabet has undergone a number of revisions during its history. Five versions of the IPA are in current use: 'revised to 1951', 'revised to 1979', 'revised to 1989', 'revised to 1993' and 'revised to 1996'. However, there are few differences between them in terminology.

Fortunately, the IPA is easy to learn, despite the daunting appearance it might have at first, because there is an exact one to one correspondence between written symbols and spoken sounds. According to Horner (2010) speaking with an accurate pronunciation is the most important aspect of language communication ability and it is possible for students to learn and acquire the sound correctly but still be unable to use and communicate the words and sound correctly. By the study of Nakashima (2006) teaching of the IPA symbols is the most important aim of language teaching. In teaching pronunciation, it is useful to list and define the sounds and morphemes of the target language by writing them down with phonetic representation help EFL learners to gain or get correct and standard accent in English. The learners having accurate pronunciation are expected to be sensitive at least about two concepts, i.e. the sounds of language or phonology and stress, etc. (ibid).

The prime purpose of the alphabet is to handle the notion of phonemes in the 3000 or so languages which exist in the world. In addition, however, the alphabet has also developed a range of diacritics which allow it to be used for allophonic as well as phonemic transcription. But even without diacritics it can still handle many allophonic variants. This is because phonemes in one language may well be simply allophones in another. For example, the /m/ in symphony is often given a labio-dental articulation because of the influence of the following sound. That is bottom lip, instead of touching the upper lip, touches the upper teeth. This allophone is symbolized as [m]. Students sometimes think the IPA had the capacity to symbolize any human speech sound. It's important to recognize that it doesn't. The fact that the symbols (with or without diacritics) can also be used for an allophonic transcription is a valuable extra.

In this research, one important suprasegmental feature affecting on the correct and proper pronunciation, "stress" is also studied. In linguistics, stress is the relative emphasis that may be given to certain syllables in a word, or to certain words in a phrase or sentence. Stress is typically signaled by such properties as increased loudness and vowel length, full articulation of the vowel, and changes in pitch. The stress placed on syllables within words is called word stress or lexical stress. Some languages have fixed stress, meaning that the stress on virtually any multi-syllable word falls on a particular syllable, such as the first or the penultimate. Other languages, like English, have variable stress, where the position of stress in a word is not predictable in that way. Sometimes more than one level of stress, such as primary stress and secondary stress, may be identified. Accordingly, the present study investigates the relationship between IPA, stress and pronunciation skill.

## 2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

### 2.1. Subjects

This study was conducted with randomly- selected English translation students from Islamic Azad University (Rasht Branch). One hundred fifty- five English translation students, with the age range of 18-43, took part in the first phase of the study. Seventy Iranian intermediate English translation students (50 females and 20 males) were selected as the main sample based on their performance on Oxford placement test.

### 2.2. Instruments

Four tests were used in the present study: Oxford Placement Test (OPT), IPA test, stress test and pronunciation test. The first test was used to measure the participants' language proficiency; the second and the third ones were used to assess the students' knowledge of IPA and stress, and the last one was used to evaluate their total pronunciation proficiency. OPT test comprised three sections and the participants took the structure, vocabulary, and reading comprehension segments of the test with a maximum possible score of 50 points. It was developed in order to measure students' proficiency level (Appendix A). This test includes 40 multiple-choice tests that consists of grammar and vocabulary questions. In addition, it includes a reading text with 10 comprehension questions. The last part of this test contains an optional writing activity, however, nobody answered it. Seventy students whose score fell within the range of +1SD from the mean score were selected as the main sample for the present study. IPA test contained 20 questions, 10 multiple choice tests and 10 transcription of words which taken from "Mastering the international phonetic alphabet" book. Stress test involved 20 words which their stress should be

determined. The book of "Pronounce it perfectly in English" was used (Appendix B). Based on Farhady et al (1999) pronunciation tests attempt to assess the examinees' ability to recognize and produce the sounds, stress patterns, and the tunes of the language in a phonemically acceptable way. Therefore the best way to test one's ability in pronunciation skill is testing production of segmental and supra-segmental phonemes. Two EFL teachers participated in the scoring procedure of pronunciation test.

### 2.3. Procedure

The OPT of the current study administered for measuring the proficiency level of participants. Administering the OPT was about an hour. The IPA test was the transcription of words. In the stress test the participants should determine the stress of words. The time for the IPA and stress tests was an hour. In pronunciation test, the examinees are asked to retell a story, they are given to read prior to being tested. The reading texts were taken from the "Oral Reproduction" book. Evaluation was mainly focused on the testees' pronunciation of speech sounds and stress. The maximum possible score for the OPT was 50 points. The criterion for scoring all the IPA, stress, and pronunciation tests was the maximum of 20.

### 3. DATA ANALYSIS

The data obtained from hypothesis testing of the study was analyzed via applying Pearson correlation test and SPSS 22 to the results of different tests of the study, in order to answer the research questions and to investigate the possible relationship between IPA, stress, and pronunciation skill of the participants. Moreover, the reliability of the instruments namely pronunciation test and OPT test was established through running Cronbach's Alpha to the results of the tests in a pilot study.

### 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 4.1. Pilot Study

##### 4.1.1. Reliability Analyses of the OPT test and Pronunciation Test

The reliability of the pronunciation test and

OPT test were estimated through running Cronbach's Alpha to the results of the tests in a pilot study on (15) English translation students. The results are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1. Reliability Statistics for the Pronunciation Test and OPT test**

	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
pronunciation test	.820	30
OPT test	.761	20

The values of reliability were explained according to the reliability standards suggested by Barker, Pistrang, and Elliott (1994). The values of Cronbach's Alpha for the pronunciation test and OPT test were (.820), and (.761), respectively that were both acceptable indicating that the instruments could be considered as reliable tools for the main study (table 2).

**Table 2. Suggested Standards for the Reliability Index (Adopted From Barker, Pistrang, and Elliott, 1994)**

Interpretation	Reliability indices
Good	.80
Acceptable	.70
Marginal	.60
Poor	.50

#### 4.1.2. Inter- Rater Reliability Analysis of the Pronunciation Test scores

In assessing each participant's pronunciation performance, two different scorers who were experienced foreign language teachers took part in the scoring procedure. The consistency of the two scorers' evaluations was checked using correlation analysis that denoted a relatively high level of inter-rater reliability index for the pronunciation test scores in the pilot study. The established reliability index for the two raters was ( $r1=.805$ ):

**Table 3. Correlations between the Two Raters' Scores (Inter- Rater Reliability Analysis)**

		Rater B
Rater A	Pearson Correlation	.805**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	15

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

Table 3 depicted the results of the Pearson product moment correlation for the two raters' scores of the pronunciation test. The value of correaltion coeficienct reported amounted to (.805) offering that there was an acceptable correlation between the two raters who took part in scoring procedure of the pronunciation test (  $P \leq .01$ ).

#### 4.2. Main Study

##### 4.2.1.General Foreign Language Proficiency Test (Oxford Placement Test)

To pick out the main sample and to make certify that the subjects were approximately at the same level of general foreign language proficiency at the beginning of the study, Oxford placement test (OPT) was administered to 155 of English translation students. The test comprised three sections and the participants took the structure, vocabulary, reading comprehension, and writing segments of the test with a maximum possible score of 50 points. Seventy students whose score fell within the range of + 1SD from the mean score were selected as the main sample for the present study. The results of the OPT test for 155 students are presented in the following table:

**Table 4. Group Statistics for the Results of the OPT Test**

OPT		
N	Valid	155
	Missing	0
Mean		31.5290
Std. Error of Mean		.43816
Median		32.0000
Mode		35.00
Std. Deviation		5.45502
Variance		29.757
Skewness		-.459
Std. Error of Skewness		.195
Kurtosis		-.921
Std. Error of Kurtosis		.387
Range		19.00
Minimum		20.00
Maximum		39.00
Sum		4887.00

Table (4) revealed the results of group statistics and numerical information for the OPT test scores which were directed for choosing uniform sample of English translation students. Measures of central tendency comprising the mean ( 31.52), the median( 32), the mode (35) and measures of scattering particularly the range(19), the variance(29.75), and the standard deviation (5.45) together with measures of distribution such as Skewness (-.459) and Kurtosis (-.921) were displayed for the OPT test. The above descriptive statistics was reported for the 155 participants. For the present study, the main sample including 70 homogeneous participants were selected from among those whose score fell within the range of + 1 SD from the mean score (31.5290 + 5.45502, 31.5290-5.45502). Therefore, a cut-point of (26.7) to (36.97) was set and 70 learners were selected.

#### 4.2.2. Assessing Normality

The main statistical techniques employed in this study namely Pearson correlation test assumed that the distribution of scores was 'normal'. Normal is used to describe a symmetrical, bell-shaped curve, which has the greatest frequency of scores in the middle with smaller frequencies towards the extremes (Gravetter & Wallnau, 2004, p.48). Consequently, Normality was estimated by betting Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, Skewness and kurtosis values and using the Explore procedure. In so doing, the normality of the distribution of scores for the students' Total pronunciation score, IPA, and word stress were assessed. The results are presented in table (5):

**Table 5. Descriptive Statistics for Total Pronunciation Score, IPA, and Word Stress**

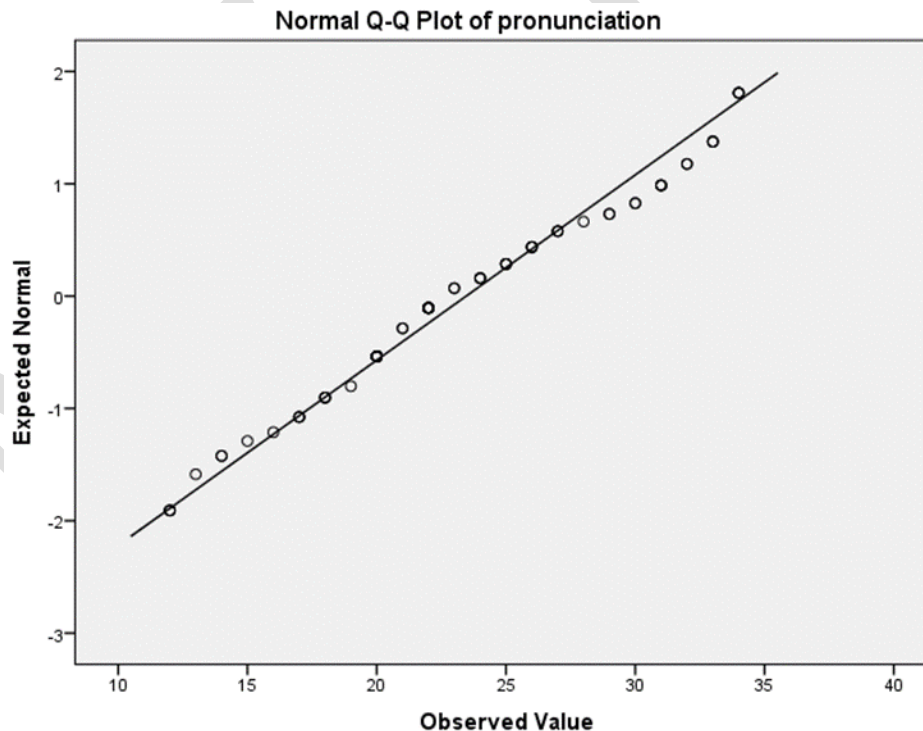
				Statistic	Std. Error
Total pronunciation score	Mean			23.4571	.72480
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Lower Bound	22.0112	
			Upper Bound	24.9031	
	5% Trimmed Mean			23.5000	
	Variance			36.773	
	Std. Deviation			6.06412	
	Skewness			.081	.287
	Kurtosis			-.769	.566
IPA	Mean			12.3929	.52316
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Lower Bound	11.3492	
			Upper Bound	13.4365	
	5% Trimmed Mean			12.4524	
	Variance			19.159	
	Std. Deviation			4.37706	
	Skewness			-.029	.287
	Kurtosis			-.736	.566
Stress	Mean			7.2500	.38700
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Lower Bound	6.4780	
			Upper Bound	8.0220	
	5% Trimmed Mean			7.1865	
	Variance			10.484	
	Std. Deviation			3.23785	
	Skewness			.139	.287
	Kurtosis			-.134	.566

In table 5, descriptive statistics and other information concerning the variables were provided. To obtain the 5% Trimmed Mean, the top and bottom 5 percent of the cases were removed and a new mean value was computed. The original means and the new trimmed means were compared for all the tests and it was found that extreme scores were not having a strong impact on the means. This means that, since the trimmed mean and means values were not very different and the two mean values were very similar for the tests, the values were not too different from the remaining distribution and thus these cases were kept in the data file. In addition, Skewness and kurtosis values were also provided as part of this output that were within the range of + 2 and confirmed the normal distribution of scores in all tests (table 5).

**Table 6. Kolmogorov- Smirnov for Test of Normality**

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov		
	Statistic	df	Sig.
Total pronunciation score	.109	70	.078
IPA	.096	70	.178
Stress	.063	70	.200

In table (6), the results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov statistic were given. This assessed the normality of the distribution of scores for the tests. The non-significant results (Sig.  $\geq .05$ ) indicated normality of distributions (table 6). The actual shapes of the distribution for the tests were also displayed and supported by the normal probability plots (labeled Normal Q-Q Plot). In these plots, the observed value for each score was plotted against the expected value from the normal distribution. The reasonably straight lines suggested normal distributions. The Normal Q-Q Plots were obtained by plotting the actual deviation of the scores from the straight line.



**Figure 1. Normal Q-Q Plot for Total Pronunciation Test Scores**

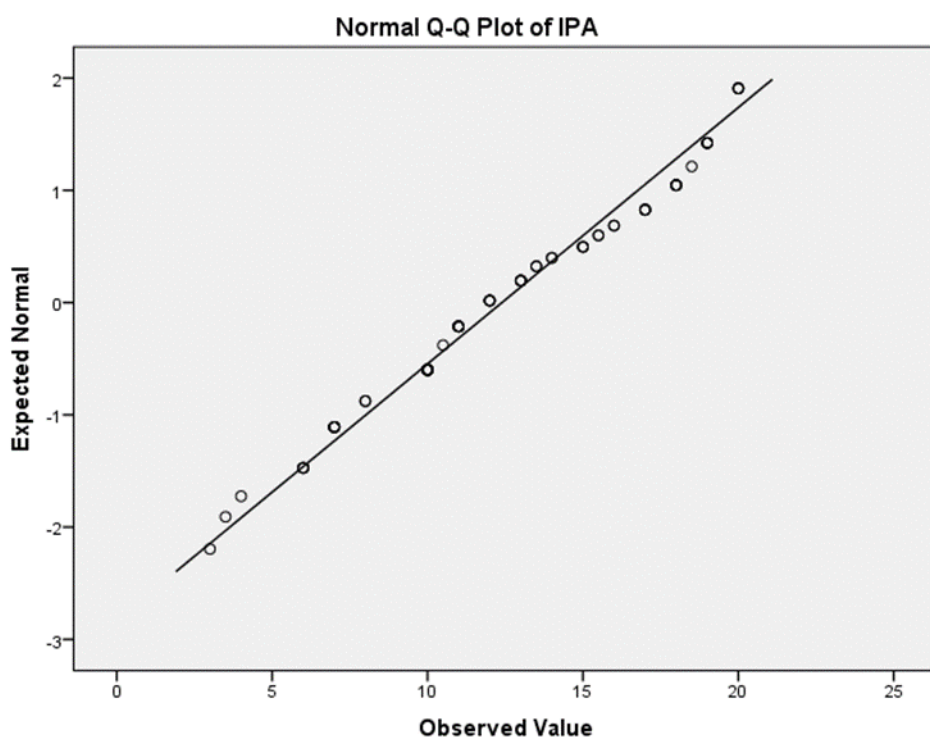


Figure 2. Normal Q-Q Plot for IPA Scores

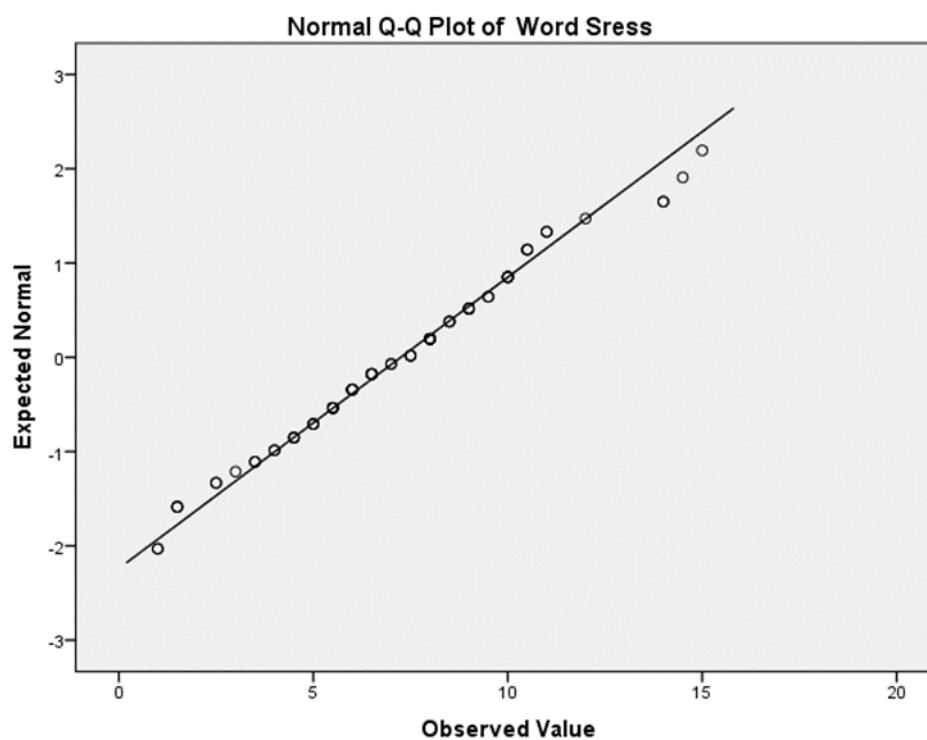


Figure 3. Normal Q-Q Plot for Total Word Stress Test Scores

#### 4.2.3. The First Research Question

**RQ1:** Is there any significant relationship between Iranian English learners' IPA competence and their pronunciation skill?



The following null hypothesis was formulated:

**H01:** There is no significant relationship between Iranian English learners' IPA competence and their pronunciation skill. To provide answer for the first research question, Pearson Correlation Test was run to the mean scores of the IPA section and total pronunciation test scores obtained for the individuals. The output generated from this procedure is presented in table (7) below:

**Table 7.**

		IPA
Pronunciation	Pearson Correlation	.556**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	70

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

SPSS output supplied a table giving the correlation coefficient between IPA section and total pronunciation test scores of Iranian English translation students, the significance level and the number of cases. The Pearson correlation coefficient value ( $r = +.556$ ) was positive, indicating a positive correlation between IPA section and total pronunciation test scores of Iranian EFL students. This value indicated the strength of the relationship between the two variables. The higher the participants performed in IPA section, the better their total pronunciation scores were.

The result of Pearson correlation test was interpreted based on Cohen's (1988) classification. Cohen (1988, pp. 79-81) recommended the following guidelines for interpreting the results of the correlation coefficient:

**Table 8. Cohen's Guidelines for Interpreting the Results of the Correlation Coefficient**

Interpretation	Correlation value
Small correlation	.10 to .29
Medium correlation	.30 to .49
Large correlation	.50 to 1.0

The above guidelines were applied to interpret the(r) value found in the present study. There was a "large" correlation between the two variables ( $r = .556$ ).

#### 4.2.4. Calculating the Coefficient of Determination for the Relationship between IPA and Total Pronunciation Test Scores

To get an idea of how much variance the two variables shared, the coefficient of determination was calculated.

The (r) value was squared and then converted to 'percentage of variance'; 100 then multiplied it. In this study, the participants' performance on IPA section and their total pronunciation test scores correlated ( $r = .556$ ) shared (30.91%) of their variance. Thus, there was an acceptable overlap between the two variables. This meant that the participants' performance on IPA test helped to explain nearly (30.91%) of the variance in their foreign language pronunciation test scores. Therefore, a large, positive correlation was found between the two variables, ( $\rho = +.556$ ,  $n = 70$ ,  $p \leq .01$ ). This rejected the first null hypothesis suggesting that there was a significant correlation between IPA competence and total pronunciation test scores of Iranian English translation students. The following figure further depicts the correlation between EFL learners' IPA and their total pronunciation test scores:

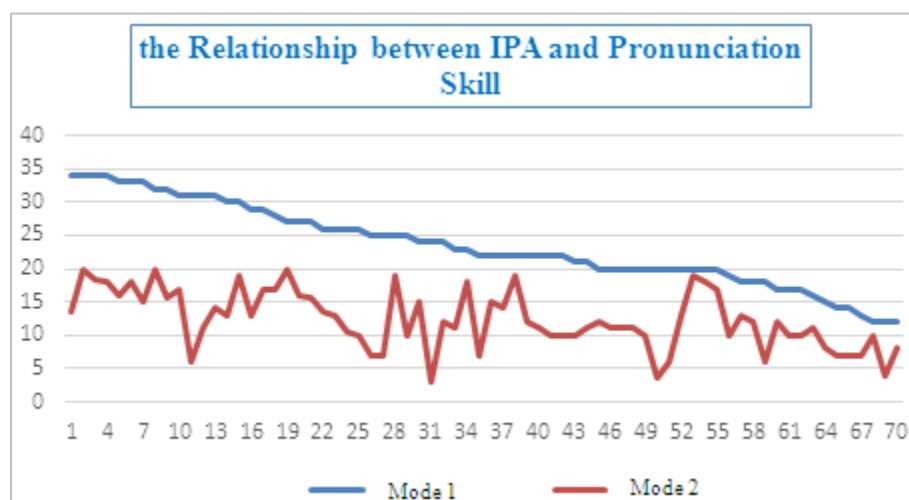


Figure 5. The Correlation between IPA and English language Pronunciation Skill of Iranian EFL Students

As it is illustrated in the above figure, the higher the participants performed on IPA test, the better their total pronunciation test scores were and vice versa.

#### 4.2.5. The Second Research Question

**RQ2:** Is there any significant relationship between Iranian English learners' knowledge of word stress in English language pronunciation and their total pronunciation skill?

The following null hypothesis was formulated:

**H02:** There is no significant relationship between Iranian English learners' knowledge of word stress in English language pronunciation and their total pronunciation skill.

To provide answer for the second research question, Pearson Correlation Test was run to the mean scores of the word stress section and total pronunciation test scores obtained for the individuals. The output generated from this procedure is presented below.

Table 9. Correlation between Knowledge of Word Stress and Total Pronunciation Skill

	Word Stress	
	Pearson Correlation	.505**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	70

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

Pearson correlation test provided a table giving the correlation coefficient between the pair of variables (word stress and total pronunciation test scores), the significance level, and the number of cases. The direction of the relationship between the variables was also considered. There was a positive correlation between the two variables (i.e. the participants' high scores on word stress section were associated with high scores on their performance in pronunciation test). In table 9, the Pearson correlation coefficient (+.505) indicated a positive correlation between the two variables. The size of the value of the correlation coefficient was also measured. Regarding the interpretation of the findings of Pearson correlation, Cohen's classification (1988, pp. 79–81) was employed (table 8). These guidelines were applied to interpret the findings. In this study, there was a large correlation between the two variables suggesting quite a strong relationship for students' total pronunciation scores and their performance in word stress test.

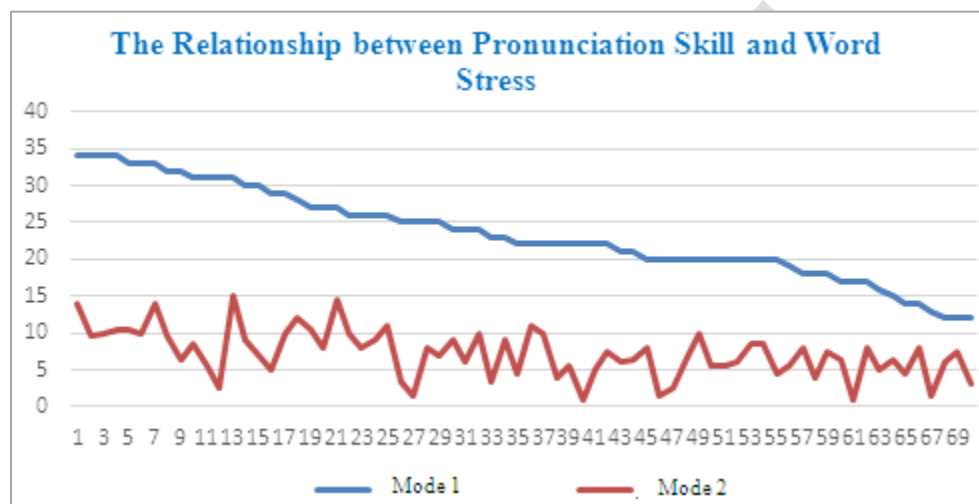
#### 4.2.6. Calculating the Coefficient of Determination for the Relationship between Word Stress test and total Pronunciation Test Scores

To get an idea of how much variance the two variables shared, the coefficient of determination was calculated.

The  $r$ -value was squared and in order to convert this to 'percentage of variance', it was multiplied by 100.

The two variables correlated ( $r=.505$ ) shared  $.505 \times .505 = .2550 \times 100 = 25.50$  percent of their variance.

There was an acceptable overlap between the two variables. The students' word stress scores helped to explain nearly (25.50) percent of their performance in pronunciation. The relationship between students' English total pronunciation scores and their performance in word stress test was investigated. The Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was used. Preliminary analyses were performed to ensure no violation of the assumptions of normality (section 4.2.2). There was a large, positive correlation between the two variables,  $r = +.505$ ,  $n = 70$ ,  $p < .01$ , with high English pronunciation scores associated with higher performance in word stress test. Thus, the second null hypothesis was rejected, implying that there was significant relationship between students' English pronunciation test scores and their performance in word stress.



**Figure 6. The Correlation between Word Stress and Pronunciation Skill of Iranian English Translation Students**

The relationships between Iranian intermediate English learners' total pronunciation skill and two components of pronunciation skill of including IPA competence and knowledge of word stress were examined through running Pearson correlation test. It was found that the highest degree of correlations were between "IPA competence", "word stress" and total pronunciation skill.

## 5. CONCLUSION

To master a language, one has to learn which sounds occur in the language and how they pattern according to the rules of that language. Perfect or near perfect mastery of the foreign language sound system i.e., phonetically acceptable, is a desirable goal. The findings of the present study revealed that using IPA in teaching and learning of pronunciation skill could result in a better performance of language learners. Therefore it confirms Hancock's research result that the IPA appears to help learners learn and remember the pronunciation of new words. Moreover, it is more useful and effective than repetition of sound segments. This research discusses the use of phonetic transcription in the teaching of English as a second or foreign language (ESL/EFL), using the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA). It should be mentioned that despite its crucial role in teaching correct pronunciation to a great extent, ignored in EFL classrooms in Iran. This may be resulted from the fact that in teaching pronunciation, there is not a lesson in English textbooks that would be only focused on pronunciation practice and teaching the IPA symbols since pronunciation is taken as an additional practice in all course books. Therefore devoted time

to teaching the pronunciation skill and the IPA is so limited that many Iranian English learners are not familiar with the IPA symbols even at advanced level. Moreover, the most frequent strategy in teaching the pronunciation skill is drills which may lead to discouraged students and teachers who both want to avoid learning and teaching pronunciation. Furthermore, the results of this study indicated that there is a significant relation between the stress knowledge and the acceptable pronunciation. However, stress patterns are neglected by most of the Iranian English learners, unfortunately. The possible differences between the stress pattern of Persian and English have a great potential to affect the production of English by Persian speakers. Inadequate stress can significantly alter meaning and the ability to communicate in a language. The language learner who

does not learn appropriate stress can experience constant misunderstandings and may even at times appear abrupt or rude.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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#### APPENDIX A

##### Oxford Placement Test

Section A: Choose the best word or phrase (a, b, c or d) to fill each blank.

(1) Roberta \_\_\_\_\_ from The United States.

- a) are
- b) is
- c) am
- d) be

(2) What's \_\_\_\_\_ name?

- a) -
- b) his
- c) him
- d) he

(3) My friend \_\_\_\_\_ in London.

- a) living
- b) live
- c) lives
- d) is live

4) Where \_\_\_\_\_?

- a) works Tom
- b) Tom works
- c) Tom does work
- d) does Tom work

(5) I \_\_\_\_\_ coffee.

- a) *no like*
- b) *not like*
- c) *like don't*
- d) *don't like*

(6) ' \_\_\_\_\_ to Australia, Ginny?' 'Yes, two years ago.'

- a) *Did you ever go*
- b) *Do you ever go*
- c) *Have you ever been*
- d) *Are you ever going*

(7) Tokyo is \_\_\_\_\_ city I've ever lived in.

- a) *the most big*
- b) *the bigger*
- c) *the biggest*
- d) *the more big*

(8) A vegetarian is someone \_\_\_\_\_ doesn't eat meat.

- a) *who*
- b) *what*
- c) *which*
- d) *whose*

(9) \_\_\_\_\_ these days.

- a) *I never a newspaper buy*
- b) *I never buy a newspaper*
- c) *I buy never a newspaper*
- d) *Never I buy a newspaper*

(10) I \_\_\_\_\_ watch TV tonight.

- a) *am*
- b) *go to*
- c) *going to*
- d) *am going to*

(11) I wish I \_\_\_\_\_ more money!

- a) *have*
- b) *had*
- c) *would have*
- d) *was having*

(12) \_\_\_\_\_ be famous one day?

- a) *Would you like*
- b) *Would you like to*
- c) *Do you like*
- d) *Do you like to*

(13) *It's my birthday \_\_\_\_\_ Friday.*

- a) *on*
- b) *in*
- c) *at*
- d) *by*

(14) *I \_\_\_\_\_ eighteen years old.*

- a) *am*
- b) *have*
- c) *have got*
- d) *-*

(15) *I \_\_\_\_\_ a headache.*

- a) *am*
- b) *do*
- c) *have*
- d) *got*

(16) *Do you \_\_\_\_\_ a uniform at your school?*

- a) *carry*
- b) *wear*
- c) *use*

d) *hold*

(17) *'What time is it?' 'I have no \_\_\_\_\_.'*

- a) *idea*
- b) *opinion*
- c) *answer*
- d) *time*

(18) *The meal was very expensive. Look at the \_\_\_\_\_!*

- a) *ticket*
- b) *receipt*
- c) *invoice*
- d) *bill*

(19) *How many \_\_\_\_\_ of trousers have you got?*

- a) *items*
- b) *pairs*
- c) *sets*

d) *times*

(20) *Joel came back from his holiday in Brazil looking really \_\_\_\_.*

- a) *tanned*
- b) *sunned*
- c) *coloured*
- d) *darkened*

(21) *He has a ..... experience in marketing in Europe.*

- a) *grand*
- b) *wide*
- c) *large*
- d) *great*

(22) *He never takes risks. He's a very ..... man.*

- a) *mindful*
- b) *anxious*
- c) *attentive*
- d) *cautious*

(23) *I ..... the Prime Minister's speech very carefully.*

- a) *heard to*
- b) *overheard*
- c) *hear*
- d) *listened to*

(24) *I'd like to put ..... a suggestion, if I may.*

- a) *forward*
- b) *over*
- c) *across*
- d) *through*

(25) *He used to live ..... London.*

- a) *on*
- b) *in*
- c) *to*
- d) *at*

(26) *If I were you, I would give ..... the job.*

- a) *up*
- b) *on*
- c) *off*
- d) *away*

(26) *May your dreams come .....*

- a) *real*
- b) *right*
- c) *pure*
- d) *true*

(27) *What is the meaning of maximum?*



- a) *least*
- b) *expensive*
- c) *cheap*
- d) *greatest*

(28) *The elevator was ..... order so we had to use the stairs.*

- a) *out of*
- b) *in*
- c) *off*
- d) *at*

(29) *You should cut ..... smoking if you want to avoid serious problems.*

- a) *in*
- b) *out*
- c) *down on*
- d) *away*

(30) *Sue didn't know the answer. She didn't have a .....*

- a) *sense*
- b) *clue*
- c) *idea*
- d) *bracket*

(31) *I really think your shoes don't ..... your trousers.*

- a) *match*
- b) *fit*
- c) *suit*
- d) *dress*

(32) *I don't like ..... music.*

- a) *contradictory*
- b) *comprehensive*
- c) *contemporary*
- d) *content*

(33) *My website ..... a lot of English tests.*

*a) consists*

*b) contains*

*c) insists*

*d) has*

*(34) Tony is a big ..... so you'd better be nice to him.*

*a) shot*

*b) eye*

*c) fish*

*d) man*

*(35) Which one is the synonym of the vital?*

*a) weak*

*b) stiff*

*c) necessary*

*d) unimportant*

*(36) She is a little shy and ..... every time she has to speak in front of many people.*

*a) frown*

*b) blink*

*c) blush*

*d) turn a blind eye*

*(37) Tom got a ..... new car for birthday.*

*a) brand*

*b) fully*

*c) totally*

*d) awfully*

*(38) Which one is the nearest meaning of inevitable?*

*a) unavoidable*

*b) dangerous*

*c) spiteful*

*d) doubtful*

*(39) All my books are very important to me, but this one is just .....*

- a) *worthless*
- b) *worthwhile*
- c) *priceless*
- d) *valueless*

(40) Which one is NOT the meaning of *Vague*?

- a) *unclear*
- b) *ambiguous*
- c) *obvious*
- d) *misty*

**Section B. Read the following passage and answer the questions.**

### **Meteorite Impact and Dinosaur Extinction**

There is increasing evidence that the impacts of meteorites have had important effects on Earth, particularly in the field of biological evolution. Such impacts continue to pose a natural hazard to life on Earth. Twice in the twentieth century, large meteorite objects are known to have collided with Earth. If an impact is large enough, it can disturb the environment of the entire Earth and cause an ecological catastrophe. The best-documented such impact took place 65 million years ago at the end of the Cretaceous period of geological history. This break in Earth's

history is marked by a mass extinction, when as many as half the species on the planet became extinct. While there are a dozen or more mass extinctions in the geological record, the Cretaceous mass extinction has always intrigued paleontologists because it marks the end of the age of the dinosaurs. For tens of millions of years, those great creatures had flourished. Then, suddenly, they disappeared.

The body that impacted Earth at the end of the Cretaceous period was a meteorite with a mass of more than a trillion tons and a diameter of at least 10 kilometers. Scientists first identified this impact in 1980 from the worldwide layer of sediment deposited from the dust cloud that enveloped the planet after the impact. This sediment layer is enriched in

the rare metal iridium and other elements that are relatively abundant in a meteorite but very rare in the crust of Earth. Even diluted by the terrestrial material excavated from the crater, this component of meteorites is easily identified. By 1990 geologists had located the impact site itself in the Yucatán region of Mexico.

The crater, now deeply buried in, was originally about 200 kilometers in diameter.

This impact released an enormous amount of energy, excavating a crater about twice as large as the lunar crater Tycho. The explosion lifted about 100 trillion tons of dust into the atmosphere, as can be determined by measuring the thickness of the sediment layer formed when this dust settled to the surface. Such a quantity of material would have blocked the sunlight completely from reaching the surface, plunging Earth into a period of cold and darkness that lasted at least several months. The explosion is also calculated to have produced vast quantities of nitric acid and melted rock that sprayed out over much of Earth, starting widespread fires that must have consumed most terrestrial forests and grassland. Presumably, those environmental disasters could have been responsible for the mass extinction, including the death of the dinosaurs.

Several other mass extinctions in the geological record have been tentatively identified with large impacts, but none is so dramatic as the Cretaceous event. But even without such specific documentation, it is clear that impacts of this size do occur and that their results can be catastrophic. What is a catastrophe for one group of living things, however, may create opportunities for another group. Following each mass extinction, there is a sudden evolutionary burst as new species develop to fill the ecological niches opened by the event.

Impacts by meteorites represent one mechanism that could cause global catastrophes and

seriously influence the evolution of life all over the planet. According to some estimates, the majority of all extinctions of species may be due to such impacts. Such a perspective fundamentally changes our view of biological evolution. The standard criterion for the survival of a species is its success in competing with other species and adapting to slowly changing environments. Yet an equally important criterion is the ability of a species to survive random global ecological catastrophes due to impacts. Earth is a target in a cosmic shooting gallery, subject to random violent events that were unsuspected a few decades ago. In 1991 the United States Congress asked NASA to investigate the hazard posed today by large impacts on Earth. The group conducting the study concluded from a detailed analysis that impacts from meteorites can indeed be hazardous. Although there is always some risk that a large impact could occur, careful study shows that this risk is quite small.

41. The word “pose” on line 2 is closest in meaning to

- a. claim
- b. model
- c. assume
- d. present

42. In paragraph 2, why does the author include the information that dinosaurs had flourished for tens of millions of years and then suddenly disappeared?

- a. To support the claim that the mass extinction at the end of the Cretaceous is the best-documented of the dozen or so mass extinctions in the geological record
- b. To explain why as many as half of the species on Earth at the time are believed to have become extinct at the end of the Cretaceous
- c. To explain why paleontologists have always been intrigued by the mass extinction at the end of the Cretaceous
- d. To provide evidence that an impact can be large enough to disturb the environment of the entire planet and cause an ecological disaster

43. Which of the following can be inferred from paragraph 3 about the location of the meteorite impact in Mexico?

- a. The location of the impact site in Mexico was kept secret by geologists from 1980 to 1990.
- b. It was a well-known fact that the impact had occurred in the Yucatán region.
- c. Geologists knew that there had been an impact before they knew where it had occurred.
- d. The Yucatán region was chosen by geologists as the most probable impact site because of its climate.

44. According to paragraph 3, how did scientists determine that a large meteorite had impacted Earth?

- a. They discovered a large crater in the Yucatán region of Mexico.
- b. They found a unique layer of sediment worldwide.
- c. They were alerted by archaeologists who had been excavating in the Yucatán region.
- d. They located a meteorite with a mass of over a trillion tons.

45. The word “excavating” on line 25 is closest in meaning to

- a. digging out
- b. extending
- c. destroying
- d. covering up

46. The word “consumed” on line 32 is closest in meaning to

- a. changed
- b. exposed
- c. destroyed
- d. covered

47. According to paragraph 4, all of the following statements are true of the impact at the end of the Cretaceous period EXCEPT:

- a. A large amount of dust blocked sunlight from Earth.
- b. Earth became cold and dark for several months.
- c. New elements were formed in Earth's crust.
- d. Large quantities of nitric acid were produced.

48. The phrase "tentatively identified" on line 36 is closest in meaning to

- a. identified after careful study
- b. identified without certainty
- c. occasionally identified
- d. easily identified

49. The word "perspective" on line 46 is closest in meaning to

- a. sense of values
- b. point of view
- c. calculation
- d. complication

50. Paragraph 6 supports which of the following statements about the factors that are essential for the survival of a species?

- a. The most important factor for the survival of a species is its ability to compete and adapt to gradual changes in its environment.
- b. The ability of a species to compete and adapt to a gradually changing environment is not the only ability that is essential for survival.
- c. Since most extinctions of species are due to major meteorite impacts, the ability to survive such impacts is the most important factor for the survival of a species.
- d. The factors that are most important for the survive

## APPENDIX B

### IPA & Stress Test

#### PART A: IPA

##### I. Choose the best transcribe:

- |            |                 |                |                |                |
|------------|-----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| 1. brother | a) /bro:θə (r)/ | b) /br^ðə (r)/ | c) /broθə (r)/ | d) /br^θə (r)/ |
| 2. child   | a) /tʃaɪld/     | b) /tʃeɪld/    | c) /ʃaɪld/     | d) /ʃaɪld/     |
| 3. Jump    | a) /dʒɑ:mp/     | b) /ʒɑmp/      | c) /ʒ^mp/      | d) /dʒ^mp/     |
| 4. write   | a) /wraɪt/      | b) /raɪt/      | c) /wraɪt/     | d) /raɪt/      |
| 5. home    | a) /huðm/       | b) /h^ :m/     | c) /hðum/      | d) /h3:m/      |
| 6. week    | a) /wik/        | b) /wi:k/      | c) /wɪk/       | d) /wɔk/       |
| 7. yes     | a) /jəɪs/       | b) /use/       | c) /jes/       | d) /uðs/       |
| 8. least   | a) /li:st/      | b) /lɪst/      | c) /leɪst/     | d) /lɪðst/     |
| 9. house   | a) /huðs/       | b) /hðus/      | c) /huas/      | d) /haus/      |
| 10. noise  | a) /nuɪz/       | b) /noɪz/      | c) /nɪɔz/      | d) /neɪz/      |

**II. Transcribe these words into the conventional alphabet.**

- |                   |                  |
|-------------------|------------------|
| 11. myself .....  | 12. flower ..... |
| 13. around .....  | 14. rather ..... |
| 15. wish .....    | 16. bird .....   |
| 17. picture ..... | 18. school ..... |
| 19. allow .....   | 20. there .....  |

**PART B : STRESS****III. Signify the stress:**

- |                    |                |
|--------------------|----------------|
| 21. chocolate      | 31. apartment  |
| 22. emergency      | 32. photograph |
| 23. television     | 33. umbrella   |
| 24. engineer       | 34. microscope |
| 25. handsome       | 35. Japanese   |
| 26. carefully      | 36. original   |
| 27. professionally | 37. alphabet   |
| 28. apologize      | 38. afternoon  |
| 29. advertisement  | 39. Important  |
| 30. Pioneer        | 40. holiday    |

# INVESTIGATING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SELF ESTEEM AND READING PERFORMANCE OF IRANIAN EFL LEARNERS

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## Abstract

The present study was implemented to investigate the possible relationship between self-esteem and the reading performance of intermediate Iranian EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners. Instruments for this study included English placement test, Rosenberg's questionnaire and test of reading task. A total of 64 Intermediate female learners studying at Nourelahi Language Institute in Tabriz, participated in the current study. The subjects were asked to fill the, Rosenberg's questionnaires to be categorized as either high or low self-esteem. To test the research hypothesis set forth in the present study, Pearson Correlation Coefficient was run as the main statistical analysis. The results indicated that, there was a significant relationship between self-esteem and the reading performance of learners. The scores of reading ability had a positive relationship with the high self-esteem of subjects, that is, the higher self-esteem the subjects, the better their performance on reading.

**Keywords:** Self-esteem, Reading Comprehension, Task, Proficiency, Acquisition, Language Learning.

## 1. Introduction

Reading is an important skill for most students and teachers of English throughout the world, especially in countries where foreign language learners do not have the opportunity to interact with native speakers but have access to the written form of that language (Rivers, 1968). In the past, reading was considered as a language learning process in which the teacher used reading materials to teach vocabulary and grammar, but nowadays it is considered as a communicative process in which reading for meaning, is the core objective. Reading can be considered as a source of information, as a pleasurable activity, and as a means of extending one's knowledge of the language (Rivers, 1968).

In order to provide effective sensitive instruction, teachers of second or foreign languages need to learn to identify and understand their students' significant individual differences (Ehrman & Oxford, 1995b; Ehrman, 1993). Among personality factors, self-esteem is also potentially important factor in the learning of a second language.

On the other hand, a number of studies have suggested that learning, in general, cannot be achieved without careful consideration to psychological factors (Carter & Nunan, 2001; Derville, 1966). In all educational environments, students get different grades. Some believe that they get either higher or lower grades than expected to. Most of these problems are closely related to psychological factors out of which self-esteem is an overwhelming issue that has determining effects on language learning, specifically reading comprehension. What all this points to is that the importance of self-esteem as a crucial factor affecting motivation should not be underestimated. It could be claimed that no activity will be carried out successfully without self-esteem (Huitt, 2004; see also Brown, 1994; Heyde, 1979; Khodadad, 2003; Powers & Sanchez, 1982).

Few studies have been carried out on the effects of self-esteem on language learning in general terms (Kamarzarrin, 1994; Demo & Parker, 1987; Khodadad, 2003, among others). These studies reveal that the role of self-esteem as a psychological independent variable in language learning has been

underestimated.

Demo and Parker (1987) believe that in real situations both self-esteem and language learning are interacting variables, in the sense that language learning can affect the degree of self-esteem and vice versa; that is to say, by strengthening one, the other factor will be strengthened. In the light of the above considerations, the present study is an attempt to verify the relationship between self-esteem and reading comprehension of Iranian EFL learners

## 2. Literature Review

There are few researchers attempted to investigate the relationship between self-esteem and English achievement in terms of different skills or sub-skills. Also, as same as the context of this study, some researchers examined this topic in different contexts and on EFL learners' achievements. Some of these studies are mentioned below:

Talebinezhad and Banihashemi (2013) examined the relationship between emotional intelligence and self-efficacy of 83 EFL students of an English institute based on Bandure's (1986) contention. At the end of the study, they concluded "there was a significant relationship between EFL learners' EI and their self-efficacy beliefs, and this positive correlation is not affected by gender differences" (p. 1966).

Gahungu (2007) conducted his PhD dissertation on investigating the relationship between self-esteem and language ability of 37 university students studying French. The data of the participants' self-efficacy were gathered through a questionnaire with 40 questions to measure their level of confidence, and a cloze test to measure their level of proficiency in French, and also some interviews and observation. In the end, he reached the positive effects of self-efficacy on language learning.

Hetthong and Teo (2013) searched the relationship between writing self-efficacy and writing performance and explored whether students' overall writing self-efficacy predicts their overall writing performance. The participants were 51 third-year students of a Thai university, and a questionnaire and a paragraph writing test were used. The results showed "there is a significant positive relationship between writing self-efficacy and writing performance both at the section level and the sub-skill level. Furthermore, the overall writing self-efficacy predicts the overall writing performance" (p. 157).

Raoofi, Tan and Chan (2012) examined the role of self-esteem on second or foreign language learning contexts. They reviewed the related empirical literature and at last found "several factors enhance the level of students' self-efficacy, and self-efficacy is a strong predictor of performance in a different language skills and tasks" (p. 60).

Hosseini Fatemi and Vahidnia (2013) examined the relationship between self-efficacy and motivation of 93 Iranian B. A. and M. A. university students. Also, some positive relation between their self-efficacy and intrinsic motivation were found, "Moreover, a motivation, among the subscales of motivation, was found to be negatively related to students' self-efficacy (p. 79).

Ghonsooly and Elahi (2010) studied the effect of self-efficacy of learners in their reading. The participants of this study were 150 sophomore Iranian university students majoring in English literature. The instrument used in the study to meet this goal was an author-designed scale on EFL learners' self-efficacy in reading comprehension. The results showed "high self-efficacious participants achieved higher scores in reading comprehension course than low self-efficacious participants" (p. 45).

Kalanzadeh, et. al. (2013) examined the impact of Iranian EFL students' self-esteem on their speaking skill. The participants of this study were selected by using a questionnaire in order to diagnose the high and low self-esteem ones. After that, a standard oral proficiency test was used in order to measure five sub-skills related to speaking: vocabulary, structure, pronunciation, fluency, and comprehensibility. After analyzing the data, the results showed a statistically significant correlation between the participants' self-esteem and speaking ability.

Rahimi and Abedini (2009) in a study examined the relationship between self-efficacy and listening comprehension of Iranian EFL learners based on their listening comprehension test performance. The results showed a statistically significant correlation between high and low self-efficacious students and their rate of listening comprehension. Furthermore, self-efficacy in listening was significantly related to listening proficiency.

Therefore, the purpose of the present study was to find the relationship between personality type and reading performance of EFL learners in Iran.



### Research Question and Hypothesis

The research question and hypothesis posed in this study are as the following:

**Research Question:** Is there any significant relationship between the self-esteem and the reading performance of Iranian EFL learners?

**Null hypothesis:** There is no significant relationship between the self-esteem and the reading performance of Iranian EFL learners.

### 3. Methodology:

#### 3.1 Design of the study

In order to find appropriate answers to the posed questions, the researchers followed certain procedures and made use of certain instruments, which are reported

#### 3.2 Participants

The participants of the current study were initially 100 female Iranian intermediate learners of English, studying in Nourelahi Language Institute, Tabriz. In order to be included in the final subject pool, participants who included the age range of 18-24, were requested to attend all phases of the study. However, 36 participants were not qualified enough to be included in the analysis and were consequently eliminated from the total sample. Accordingly, out of the original pool of 100 participants, merely 64 were found qualified to be included in the final analysis of data.

#### 3.3 Materials

To tap the required data, Rosenberg's questionnaire was administered to learners as the chief data collection instrument, which was aimed at determining which participants were high self-esteem and which ones were low self-esteem. One TOEFL reading comprehension test was also used to determine the subjects' reading performance. And a language placement test to measure the learner's proficiency level. The following section is devoted to the provision of an ample description of language placement test, Rosenberg's questionnaire (RQ), and a TOEFL reading comprehension test used in this study.

##### 3.3.1 Oxford Placement Test by Allen (1985)

This test consists of 50 short items, each with three alternative choices from which the testees have to choose the correct response. The first 20 items are meaning-wise independent of one another, the remaining 30 items, however, are sequential.

##### 3.3.2 Rosenberg's Self-esteem Questionnaire

Rosenberg's standardized questionnaire of self-esteem was used to evaluate individual self-esteem, thus it was investigated through using item response theory. The Rosenberg self-esteem scale consisted of 10 questions and each question contained 4 choices, all of which were presented in Persian language to avoid any confusion for the Iranian learners.

##### 3.3.3 Test of Reading Comprehension

Three reading tasks of general topics, including Transcription (questions 1-12), Nursing (questions 13-24), Skyscrapers (questions 25-36), were selected from TOEFL test (Barrons's, 2007).

### 3.4 Procedures

First of all placement test was administered to the 100 subjects in order to come up with a group of EFL learners at approximately the same level of language proficiency. Then, those whose score fell in one standard deviation above and below the mean of the sample were selected. The outcome was a homogenized group of 64 female learners. The given time was 40 minutes.

Then to determine self-esteem of the learners the Rosenberg's self-esteem questionnaire was given to the participants in order to measure their degree of self-esteem. All participants were required to complete Rosenberg's Questionnaire of Self-esteem (QSE). The QSE consisted of 10 items and each item had five points Likert scales. The total grade that each student received was considered as her self-esteem score. Total self-esteem scores thus could be ranged from 0 to 30. Higher scores indicated higher self-esteem. Scores below 15 showed low self-esteem. Correlation coefficients between self-esteem and English language reading scores of the EFL learners were conducted by the use of SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences). After determining the self-esteem of the learners, the test of reading tasks was administered. The test contained 36 items in three parts which was administered in one different session in 30 minutes.

After administering the tests and gathering the data, the Descriptive Statistics were estimated then Correlation coefficients between self-esteem and English language reading scores of the EFL learners were conducted by the use of SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences). The level of significance for the statistical analysis was set at 0.05

### 4. Results

In this study, descriptive statistical is used for both Self-esteem and English Reading Performance Test. Data analysis used based on the correlations between self-esteem and English Reading Performance, in addition, Quantitative analysis is used to answer the research question.

The descriptive statistics for Self-esteem Questionnaire (SEQ) and English Reading Performance Test (ERPT) are reported in Table 1.

**Table-1.** The Mean and Standard Deviation of self-esteem questionnaire (SEQ) and English reading performance test (ERPT) based on descriptive statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. deviation
SEQ	64	8	27	18.36	4.94
ERPT	64	11	22	16.39	2.42
Valid N	64				

The table 1 showed mean score obtained from SEQ test is 18.36 and its standard deviation is 4.94 whereas the mean of ERPT is 16.39 and its standard deviation is 2.42.

According to Pearson Correlation, in table 2, the correlation between self-esteem scores and reading performance scores of EFL learners is .685. The result of the computed correlation coefficient showed that the positive relationship between the self-esteem questionnaire (SEQ) and English reading performance test (ERPT) was statistically significant.

**Table-2.** The Correlation between self-esteem questionnaire (SEQ) and English reading performance test (ERPT)

	SEQ	ERPT
Pearson Correlation	1	.685
Sig.(2-tailed)		.031
N	80	64
Pearson Correlation	.685	1
Sig.(2-tailed)	.031	

According to Pearson Correlation, in table 2, the correlation between self-esteem scores and reading performance scores of EFL learners is .795 with the level of significance being .031. The result of the computed correlation coefficient showed that the positive relationship between the self-esteem questionnaire (SEQ) and English reading performance test (ERPT) was statistically significant.

## 5. DISCUSSION

In this paper, the relationship between self-esteem and reading performance of Iranian female learners was analyzed. The statistical analysis of the collected data revealed that there is significant relationship between self-esteem and reading performance. It can be said that there was a significant positive relationship between the two factors. When the learners' self-esteem was increased, their achievement in English reading. As the study shows, Learners with higher levels of self-esteem had higher reading, but learners of low self-esteem had lower reading achievement scores.

Based on the relationship between self-esteem and reading performance, it should be said if teachers are given more guidance regarding their own behaviors and attitudes to boost students' self-esteem that of course at the same time is a motivate for developing their reading ability. The more they feel secured in class the more they are encouraged to participate in reading activities. Furthermore, teachers are required to develop great willingness to appreciate students' efforts in the process of reading, because it helps, if they show any kind of progress in the course of their reading, and brings them a high level of self-esteem, as well. Programs can be arranged to enhance teachers' abilities to positively interact with students to individualize and utilize a wide variety of teaching methods; to invite collaborative assistance which can positively impact on students' achievement from the first day of their reading course. Based on these findings, EFL reading instructors are encouraged to teach students how to reflect upon their own leaning as well as to improve their strategic knowledge in EFL reading. Comments from teachers of reading often include suggestions; the way a student feels about himself affect, and is affected by, how he or she reads. Therefore, as it is found in this research and concerning the mutual relationship of self-esteem and reading we can also add this fact that teachers by providing students with regular reading instructions and students' everyday practice on reading, which starts from a short story to a long essay can expect their self-esteem and self-value; their belief in their capabilities will astonishingly flourish and turn them into students that now with support of their self-esteem are able to read very well.

## 6. Conclusion

The main aim of this study was to investigate the relationship between self-esteem and reading performance of Iranian EFL Learners. In order to obtain evident confirmation for this relationship, the collected data were analyzed through Pearson Correlation Coefficient test. The results showed that self-esteem has important role in Iranian EFL learners' readings. It can be used as one of the educational factors in order to help students in promoting their knowledge in learning target language.

To run this study researchers faced some limitations. One can be the fact that most the respondents to the self-efficacy questionnaire are tended to show themselves socially a desirable one by showing a good picture of themselves by their responses, so the validity of their responses is always questionable (Hancock & Flowers, 2001; Rosenfeld, Booth-Kewley, Edwards & Thomas, 1996). Further research can take this limitation into account in order to have a comprehensive role of different measures of self-efficacy, self-concept, and self-esteem on learners' improvement.

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# THE EFFECT OF APPLYING BACK TRANSLATION TASK (BTT) ON IRANIAN EFL LEARNERS' GENERAL TRANSLATION ABILITY

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## Abstract

This study examined the effect of back translation techniques on Iranian EFL learners' translation knowledge. During the first session in this study, one hundred subjects sat for a placement test. The purpose of this test was to determine their proficiency level. This test is compulsory for all new students who participated in the study. According to the result of this test, sixty upper intermediate learners were randomly selected to either the experimental group, control group. All two groups took a pretest. It is ten sentences for translation. The results of the pretests showed that both groups were weak in translation. The experimental group received treatment including using back translation techniques during eight sessions and control group received traditional translation teaching method which did not use back translation techniques. After eight sessions, all participants took a posttest the same as pretest. Results of the independent t-test and correlation coefficient showed that the scores of experimental group improved significantly overtime. The results also rejected the hypothesis of this research and indicated that back translation techniques have positive effect on learners' translation knowledge.

## Key Words

Back Translation, Translation, Translation Procedure, Translation Studies, Intralingual translation

## INTRODUCTION

Back-translation is the process of translating a document that was translated from one language to another back to the original language. Back-translation is a mechanism that ensures that consent forms, surveys and other clinical trial documents are clear and accurate in the translated form. Introducing Translation Studies is among the few very best textbooks on translation studies that brings together translation theory and practice. In the book, Munday has done a superb job in presenting the myriad of up-to-date translation theories in a concise, lucid, and interesting manner. Its translation studies made easy, hence good for translation students, teachers, professional translators, or simply anyone who wants an introduction to the subject (Defeng Li, SOAS, UK).

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Up until the second half of the twentieth century, western translation theory seemed locked in what George Steiner (1998: 319) calls a 'sterile' debate over the 'triad' of 'literal', 'free' and 'faithful' translation. The distinction between 'word-for-word' (i.e. 'literal') and 'sense-for-sense' (i.e. 'free') translation goes back to Cicero (first century BCE) and St Jerome (late fourth century CE) and forms the basis of key writings on translation in centuries nearer to our own.

The 'theoretical' branch is divided into general and partial theories. By 'general', Holmes is referring to those writings that seek to describe or account for every type of translation and to make generalizations that will be relevant for translation as a whole. 'Partial' theoretical studies are restricted according to the parameters discussed below.

The other branch of 'pure' research in Holmes's map is descriptive. Descriptive translation studies (DTS) has three possible foci: examination of (1) the product, (2) the function and (3) the process:

- (1) Product-oriented DTS examines existing translations. This can involve the description or analysis of a single ST-TT pair or a comparative analysis of several TTs of the same ST (into one or more TLs). These smaller-scale

studies can build up into a larger body of translation analysis looking at a specific period, language or text/discourse type. Larger-scale studies can be either diachronic (following development over time) or synchronic (at a single point or period in time) and, as Holmes (p. 185) foresees, 'one of the eventual goals of product-oriented DTS might possibly be a general history of translations – however ambitious such a goal might sound at this time'.

- (2) By function-oriented DTS, Holmes means the description of the 'function [of translations] in the recipient sociocultural situation: it is a study of contexts rather than texts'. Issues that may be researched include which books were translated when and where, and what influences they exerted. This area, which Holmes terms 'socio-translation studies' – but which would nowadays probably be called cultural-studies-oriented translation – was less researched at the time of Holmes's paper but is more popular in current work on translation studies.
- 3) Process-oriented DT Sin Holmes's framework is concerned with the psychology of translation, i.e. it is concerned with trying to find out what happens in the mind of a translator. Despite later work from a cognitive perspective including think-aloud protocols (where recordings are made of translators' verbalization of the translation process as they translate), this is an area of research which is only now being systematically analyzed. The results of DTS research can be fed into the theoretical branch to evolve either a general theory of translation or, more likely, partial theories of translation 'restricted' according to the subdivisions.

## REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In 1978, in a brief appendix to the collected papers of the 1976 Louvain Colloquium on Literature and translation, Andre Lefevere (1978) proposed that the name Translation Studies Should be adopted for the discipline that the itself with "the problems raised by the Production and discipline of translation". The present book is an attempt to outline the Scope of that discipline, to give some indication of the kind of work that has been done So far and to suggest directions in which further research is needed. Most importantly, It is an attempt to demonstrate that translation studies is indeed a discipline in its own Right: not merely a minor branch of comparative literary study, nor yet a specific area of linguistics, but a vastly complex field with many far-reaching ramifications.

Dagut's distinction between 'translation' and 'reproduction' like Catford's (1965/2000) distinction 'literal' and 'free' translation does not take into account the view that sees translation as semantic transformation. In his definition of translation equivalence, Popovic (1970) distinguishes four types:

- (1) Linguistic equivalence, where there is homogeneity on the linguistic level of both SL and TL texts, i.e. word for word translation.
- (2) Paradigmatic equivalence, where there is equivalence of 'the elements of a paradigmatic expressive axis', i.e. elements of grammar, which Popovic (1970) sees as being a higher category than lexical equivalence.
- (3) Stylistic (translational) equivalence, where there is 'functional equivalence of elements in both original and translation aiming at an expressive identify with an invariant of identical meaning'.
- (4) Textual (syntagmatic) equivalence, where there is equivalence of the syntagmatic structuring of a text, i.e. equivalence of form and shape.

Translation involves far more than replacement of lexical and grammatical items between languages and, as can be seen in the translation of idioms and metaphors, the process may involve discarding the basic linguistic elements of the SL texts so as to achieve Popovic's goal of 'expressive identify between the SL and TL texts. But once the translator moves away from close linguistic equivalence, the problems of determining the exact nature of the level of equivalence aimed for begin to emerge.

Nida distinguishes two types of equivalence, formal and dynamic, where formal equivalence 'focuses attention on the message itself, in both form and content. In such a translation one is concerned with such correspondences as poetry to poetry, sentence to sentence, and concept to concept.' Nida calls this type of translation a 'gloss translation', which aims to allow the reader to understand as much of the SL context as possible. Dynamic equivalence is based on the principle of equivalent effect, i.e. that the relationship between receiver and the SL message. As an example of this type of equivalence, he quotes J.B. Phillips rendering of Romans, where the idea of 'greeting with a holy kiss' is translated as 'give one another a hearty handshake all round'. With the example of what seems to be a piece of inadequate translation in poor taste, the weakness of Nida's (1964) loosely defined types can clearly be seen. The principle of equivalent effect which has enjoyed great popularity in certain cultures at certain times, involves us in areas of speculation and at times can lead to very dubious conclusions. So Rieu's deliberate decision to translate Homer into English prose because the

significance of the epic form in Ancient Greece could be considered equivalent to the significance of prose in modern Europe, is a case of dynamic equivalence applied to the formal properties of a text which shows that Nida's categories can actually be in conflict with each other.

### STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Translation has been perceived as a secondary activity, as a 'mechanical' rather than a 'creative' process, within the competence of anyone with a basic grounding in a language other than their own; in short, as a low status occupation. Discussion of translation products has all too often tended to be on a low level too; studies purporting to discuss translation 'scientifically' are often little more than idiosyncratic value judgments of randomly selected translations of the work of major writers such as Homer, Rilke, Baudelaire or Shakespeare. What is analyzed in such studies is the product only, the end result of the translation process and not the process itself.

According to Sabzalipour&Rahimy (2012), in Iran there were many language institutes in which English was being taught as a foreign language. In these institutes, advanced students face with a lot of problems in translation i.e. finding the exact equivalent for words and phrases as they were used in first language. There are approaches of assessing learners translation ability (integrative testing and communicative testing) (Buck, 2001) both for the linguistic forms and comprehension. Many learners can easily find the meaning of the words and phrases from the dictionaries and recognize the linguistic form, but they cannot have a correct comprehension of the text. In order to promote comprehension on one hand, and autonomy and self-assessment in the classroom on the other, students are usually asked to compile and use different types of corpora. Students compile a corpus, i.e. a collection of Internet documents created ad hoc as a response to a specific text to be translated (Zanettin, 2002, p. 242).

Further, the problem which is the main focus of this study is the problem of translation that has led to the reluctance of the translation trainees, after graduation, to be attracted toward practical translation. Rahimy (2009), quoting from many scholars, discusses Iranian undergraduate and graduate translation trainees' problems in translation, and believed that the main reason of such a problem was the deficiencies in the curriculum for translation program at undergraduate and graduate levels in Iran (ibid: Sabzalipour & Rahimy, 2012).

### RESEARCH QUESTION

This study aims to seek answer to the following question:

RQ: Does applying BTT affect Iranian high school learners' general translation ability?

### HYPOTHESES

Based on the above- mentioned research question, the hypotheses of the study is as follow:

H: Applying BBT has no effect on Iranian EFL learners' general translation ability.

### METHODOLOGY

#### Participants

The participants of this study were 60 upper-intermediate high school students. All participants were female between 19-20 years of age and they were randomly selected from among 100 students via administering a proficiency test of OPT. At beginning of the study, one hundred students participated in this study from Shahid shakori in Tonekabon-Iran. These students came from Tonekabon. The students sat for a placement test and according to the results of the placement test, forty homogeneous students were selected. Scores on the placement test were based as consistent criterion for assigning the participants into the proficiency levels. Those receiving scores one below the standard deviation were categorized as low-proficiency students and those obtaining scores one above the standard deviation as high-proficiency students, and both of groups were removed from the study because this study focused on intermediate students so forty students whose score between one below and above the standard deviation were selected for this study. This study was carried out at the public high school.

### Material and Procedure

Three types of instruments were used in this study. The first included TOFEL test (placement test) which was used to ensure the learners were at the same level of proficiency and to make them homogeneous. TOFEL test (placement test) examined four skills (reading, speaking, writing, and listening). Sixty students were selected out of one hundred. All of them were at the same level of proficiency.

The second type was used as a pretest consisted of ten sentences for translating. This ten sentences were selected from the high school's text book. Each sentence selected from a lesson of the students' text book. The students learned these lessons. In this test, student should be translate the sentences in half an hour. Both groups sat for the same pretest. The data of this test registered.

The third type of instrument included a posttest which is the same as pretest. Both experimental and control group participated in this test. The result of this test also registered. At the end of the study, data of the tests will be analyzed through the SPSS (17.0).

During the first session in this study, all of the participants sat for a placement test. The purpose of this test was to determine their proficiency level. This test was compulsory for all new students who participated in the study. They are at the upper-intermediate level. This exam consisted of four parts: reading speaking, listening and writing.

### 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 (4.1) shows the descriptive analysis of the experimental and the control group of the study:

Table 4.1. Descriptive analysis of the data of the experimental group of the study  
(PR= Pretest; PO= Posttest)

Back translation	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	Mean
Translation ability +Back Translation	30	16.4000	1.03724	0.18937	
-Back Translation	30	12.0667	2.31834	0.42327	

As is indicated in table (4.1), the number of participants has been 30 in each experiment ( $N_{PRE} = 30$ ;  $N_{POE} = 30$ ), which means that all selected participants participated in the experiments of the study. The mean for the +Back Translation scores was shown to be 16.4000 ( $\bar{X}_{BTT} = 16.4000$ ) as compared to the mean for the -back translation scores which was 12.0667 ( $\bar{X}_{_BTT} = 12.0667$ ). As for the standard deviations obtained for the experimental and the control group, there seems to be more variability among the +back translation scores than the scores in the \_back translation. This may give an image of the participants' posttest scores being more homogenous after conducting the treatment of the study.

### INFERENTIAL ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

This section focuses of the inferential analysis of the obtained data of this study. Such analysis was done using the SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Science) from which the 'Compare Means', 'Independent Samples Test' for calculating the t value, also, 'Significance.

Table 4.2. T-Test Table for the experimental and the control group of the study

T-Test Results	Observed t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Between the Posttest Scores of the Experimental and the Control Groups of the Study (Equal variances not assumed)	9.345	40.163	0.000

The t-test is probably the most widely used statistical test for comparison of two means because it can be used with small sample size. According to this table Sig is 0.00 ( $p < .05$ ), so we should use the second line in the



table which refers to equal variances not assumed. As indicated in table in table (4.4), the number of participants has been 30 in experimental and control group and t-value of the study was calculated between the posttests in the experimental and control groups. An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare the mean scores of both control and experimental groups' post test. As is indicated in table (4.2.), the t-value of the study was calculated between the posttests of translation ability the participant in the experimental and the control groups. The observed t value was calculated as to be 9.345 ( $t_{obs} = 9.345$ ) and the degree of freedom was 40.163 ( $df = 40.163$ ). The reason why the degree of freedom here was not calculated based on the common formula of  $df = N - 1$  was that the SPSS calculated the degree of freedom. The observed t value calculated by the SPSS was 9.345 ( $t_{obs} = 9.345$ ) while the critical value of t determined on the basis of considering the 2-tailed significance level of 0.00 ( $P = 0.00$ ) was 2.000 ( $t_{crit} = 2.000$ ). Thus, the observed t was higher than the critical t and high enough to reject the null hypothesis of this study. Finally, the level of significance was calculated as to be 0.00 ( $p = 0.00$ ) which has been used in interpreting the data for the rejection or support of the hypothesis of the study in the next section.

The next inferential analysis of the data of this study was related to the degree of the relationship between the pretest and the posttest of translation ability in each group of the study. This was indicated by calculating the Pearson Correlation Coefficient. The results of the Pearson correlation coefficient between the pretest and posttest scores of the experimental group of the study have been illustrated in table (4.5) below:

Table 4.3. The Pearson correlation for the pretest and the posttest of the experimental group and control groups of the study

Matrix	Between the Pretest and the Posttest of the Experimental Group	Between the Pretest and the Posttest of the Control Group
Correlation (Pearson)	.018	.842

The correlation coefficient, which is symbolized by letter r, can be defined as the mean cross product of the Z scores. According to table (4.3) Pearson correlation coefficient of experimental group was .18, indicating a positive correlation between back translation and translation ability. The correlation coefficient was used to calculate the effect of independent variable (back translation) on dependent variable (translation studies). Table (4.3) indicates that the correlation coefficient between the pretest and the posttest scores of the experimental group of the study is .018 ( $R_{PREPOE} = .018$ ) as compared with the correlation coefficient between the pretest and the posttest of the control group to be .842 ( $R_{PRCPOC} = .842$ ). The  $R_{PREPOC}$  is much more different in value than the  $R_{PRCPOC}$  and thus, is representative of the low relationship as well as significant distance between the scores of the pretest and posttest translation ability in the experimental group. On the other hand, the higher value of  $R_{PRCPOC}$  indicates that the scores in the pretest and posttest of listening in the control group of the study are closer to each other than the scores in the experimental group. It can be inferred from such closeness that there has been no significant progress in the pretest scores of translation in the control group after being compared with the scores in the posttest.

## DISCUSSION

As for the research question, the one about effect of back translation on translation ability, the answer is affirmative. In the current study back translation techniques was utilized and increasing and improving translation knowledge was quite salient to the learner. Therefore, it had effect translation learning positively.

The obtained findings revealed that the experimental group significantly outperformed control group when it comes to question development. Based on the results of the study one may also conclude that back translation seems to play a more important role in translation learning. The findings reveal a stronger effect of back translation on increasing translation knowledge. The findings of this study are important for researchers, university teaching staff, and the students themselves. It is hoped that increasing and extensive knowledge about back translation will guide foreign language educators and researchers. Thus, these people will be in a better position to help reduce translation learning problems in the English classroom that will better benefit the students' English language learning. EFL learners suffer from translation learning problems which is caused subsequent problems in writing, speaking and listening.

The methods most recently applied by EFL researchers have typically been either "retrospective" or "introspective". The "retrospective" method is exemplified by the use of multiple-choice questions, true/false statements, sentence completion exercises, and written recalls of the reading passage (Carrell, 1984; 1991; Carrell and Connor, 1984; et alia). The "introspective" method includes the use of "think-aloud" protocols (i.e. the telling of what was going on inside the reader's mind while reading and after it) (Block, 1986; 1992). The insights gained about the reading process as a result of employing the set techniques have without doubt influenced our understanding of the nature of the reading process. However, the impact of such insights on classroom procedures is open to debate. Not only that, but the adoption of the aforementioned techniques by researchers has led to their recurrent use (e.g. multiple-choice, true/false statements, etc...) in the EFL reading class to such an extent that they have dominated all EFL instructors' practices for checking reading comprehension. This approach has mistakenly led student readers to perceive reading as a receptive, and static process, rather than an active, participatory one involving the dynamic contributions of a reader (Zamel, 1992). Even worse, EFL reading instructors (e.g. Arab EFL reading instructors) have come to consider these retrospective techniques as optimal in their methods of teaching reading. One is tempted to state that the classroom procedures typical of EFL reading instruction including many Arab EFL reading classes are inadequate when judged on the basis of a sound theory of reading namely as a process of interaction in which the reader brings his world knowledge to bear on the text in order to reconstruct meaning.

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# IRANIAN PARENTS' PERSPECTIVES AND MOTIVATIONAL BELIEFS TOWARDS THEIR CHILDREN'S ENGLISH LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

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## Abstract

The critical role of parents in developing self-determination and internal motivation of children is well known. This study aimed at identifying parents' perspectives and motivational beliefs towards their children's English as a foreign Language learning. This qualitative study used convenience and snowball sampling method to recruit parents of preschool to third grade school children who were enrolled in EFL courses. Study participants were recruited from five English language institutions in the cities of Jolfa and Hadishahr, East Azerbaijan, Iran. Data were derived from semi-structured interviews with parents. Results showed that overall parents had positive attitudes towards English learning of their children. They viewed ability of their children to speak English as a gate for their success in the future, and skill that could help their children stand out. Yet, the parents had little information about the content and quality of the educational programs. Parents need to be actively involved in English learning of their children to be able to encourage and support their children's learning.

**Key words:** motivational beliefs, parents, children, EFL

## Introduction

Interest in and support for second language learning has been strengthened by the growing recognition that proficiency in more than one language benefits both individual learners and the society. Research has found a positive link between second language proficiency and cognitive, school and academic ability (Marcos & Peyton 2000). Numerous research studies on English as a foreign Language (EFL) have explored facilitators and barriers to second language learning as well as strategies to overcome the barriers (Grolnick, Friendly, & Bellas 2009; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler 1997). Some factors that can affect an individual's ability and success in acquisition of an additional language include aptitude, sociolinguistic background, and motivation (Gardner, 1979). Motivation is considered as one of the paramount factors that highly influence the success of a foreign language learner (Dörnyei 1998). Motivation has been referred in the literature as a psychological feature, desire, need, and driving force that arouses a person to act towards a desired goal (Gardner, 1985). The internal structure of language motivation has been greatly debated and widely studied in the field of English as a foreign language. Gardner and Lambert (1972) distinguished two types of motivation in language learning, **instrumental motivation** and **integrative motivation**. Learners with an instrumental motivation learn a second language mainly because of a practical reason or associated benefits, while interactively motivated learners study an additional language to fulfill their pragmatic aspiration; for example, to be able to join a second language group and become involved in their social activities. Different models of motivation have been identified mainly building on the Gardnerian social psychological model (1982). In his socio-educational model, Gardner (1982) highlighted the significant role of motivation in second language acquisition. He defined motivation as "the learner's orientation with regard to the goal of learning a second language". Later, Manolopoulou-Sergi's study (2004) confirmed the important role of motivation in additional language learning, and found that motivation can predict the success of a second or an additional language learner. Findings of this study suggested that

motivation orientations (instrumental and integrative) are related to a number of psycho- linguistically relevant cognitive activities, particularly information processing.

Generally, it is believed that each person is motivated in a different way, and the emphasis is on the social context and individuals' personal choices (Brown 2007). This is in line with Lambert's social psychological model, which highlights the role of cognitive factors, such as language aptitudes, intelligence and affective factors, such as attitudes and motivation, as individual factors in second language learning.

In addition to the individual factors, several studies have explored how social and cultural context can have a bearing on students' motivations or aspirations to learn a second language (Garn, Matthews; Jolly 2010). To this end, research has long documented a strong relationship between the student's achievement and their family background, such as income, ethnicity and parents' educational levels, although the intervening processes are still unclear (Griffith 1996). Accordingly, Garn et al. (2010) distinguished two types of social environments, creating environments and controlling environments, affecting a child's capacity to learn. Creating environments help the young learner develop autonomy through learning strategies that enhance the child's sense of control and ownership over their learning as well as increasing their curiosity, persistence, problem solving and self-determination. Whilst controlling environments emphasize on obedience, problem solving, rewards, punishment techniques, and overlook the child's views. These environments discourage the growth of intrinsic motivation in young learners. Motivation and attitudes, especially intrinsic motivation, is the key to successful learning, leading to high self-actualization rates. These factors are not subject to inheritance, as they are internalized predispositions, driven from the learner's own experiences (Baker 1988).

Thus, when parents support autonomy, they build a creative environment, where children are more likely to be intrinsically motivated and actively engaged in their learning. In these environments, children will have greater capacity and opportunities to self-regulate their learning and develop competence, curiosity and positive attitudes towards learning (Garn, Matthews, & Jolly, 2010). Parents' support and encouragement have been strongly linked to increased self-efficacy and intrinsic motivation in children, contributing their success (Garn et al. 2010). Without intrinsic motivation even the gifted children become lose their interest to learn, indicating that academic motivation is independent from academic ability (Garn et al. 2010). A cognitively stimulating home environment is a more important determinant of the child's academic motivation than their socioeconomic status (Gottfried, Fleming & Gottfried 1998).

Parents' roles in children's learning, such as supporting and encouraging learning, their attitudes, and role construction, vary based on their cultural background, economical status, development level, self-efficacy, the context, and their individual values (Grolnick, Friendly, & Bellas 2009). Therefore, this may explain why children of different cultural groups engage in school in a different way (Grolnick et al. 2009). Yet, it has been found that status variables cannot fully explain parents' decisions to become involved in their child's learning experiences (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler 1995, 1997), and parental beliefs, attitudes, experiences, expressions and actions are also important in reinforcing children's learning. These factors affect parents' implicit and explicit choices in respect to the type of their involvement (Dweck 2010).

Giving the important role of parents' in the child's learning, educators should not disregard parents' viewpoints on their children's second language learning. Parents are often those who make early educational choices for children based on their particular attitudes and motivations, igniting an enthusiasm for a life-long learning. These attitudes, consciously and subconsciously, are conveyed to their children, influencing children's values, choices, and actions (Goodnow 1988). Thus, it is important to understand factors that affect parents' decision to enroll their children in EFL courses.

The function of English as an international language has led to its introduction as a main subject in all Iranian formal education systems. All children learn English from secondary school up to diploma. Nevertheless, the demand for English language learning in private educational institutions is increasingly growing, mainly due to ongoing economic, educational, vocational, or political issues that force people to migrate to other countries, particularly English speaking countries. It is not known yet, what factors, other than immigration, motivates parents to enroll their children in English courses. This study aimed to explore parents' perspectives and motivation on English language learning of their children

#### Method

This qualitative study employed in-depth face to face individual interviews to explore parents' motivational beliefs and attitudes towards English language learning of their children. Participants were 40 parents (aged 25-40) of preschool to third- grade children who had enrolled their Children at an English language course at the

time of the interviews. Data were collected from four English language institutions in the cities of Jolfa and Hadishahr, East Azerbaijan, Iran from April 2014 to February-2015. The study received the approval of the participating institutions, participants were provided with information about the study, and gave consent to the study. Participants were recruited mainly through convenience sampling. The English language institutions facilitated participant recruitment and provided the researchers with contact information of parents. In some instances, snowball sampling also came into play as some parents contacted other parents they knew and encouraged them to participate in the study. The participants who volunteered for the study seemed to be more involved in their children's education than other parents who did not agree to participate in the study. Overall, 5 parents rejected the interviews, and their main reason was lack of time. Overall, 40 parents were interviewed for this study.

The interviews were conducted in Azeri language, as it is the first and the preferred language of the participants. Interviews lasted between 30- 40 minutes, were tape-recorded with the consent of the participants, and transcribed verbatim. The transcriptions also notes on hesitations, pauses, and interviewees' emotional reactions, such as laughter, intonation, and stresses. The transcripts were analyzed using the constant comparative method (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994; Rubin & Rubin 1995). Data were coded using content analysis which allowed the identification of patterns and themes relating to and the research questions. Constant comparison of participants' responses allowed the researchers to establish categories reflecting the motivational beliefs and perspectives of parents about English learning of their children. Apart from the interviews, one of the researchers was teaching in two of the four participating institutions. She could observe the interactions of parents with each other, their children, and teachers at drop off and pick up time. Observing these behaviors in its natural setting allowed the researcher to develop a deeper understanding of the context under investigation and helped with the analysis of the interview data.

#### Findings

This study investigated the motivational beliefs and perspectives of parents who had enrolled their children in an English language institution. Both parents and their children were bilingual, spoke Azeri as their first language and Persian as the formal language of the country. Their children were studying English in a private English institution as an additional language.

The analysis of the interview data revealed 2 main themes and 5 sub-themes. These themes and the associated sub-themes are explained in the following.

#### Parents' motivational beliefs

##### Learning English for job

Learning English as a foreign language was perceived by parents as a powerful tool for academic and vocational rehabilitation of their children in future. Most parents explicitly mentioned that they had chosen the program simply because they wanted their children to be able to find a job in future and be pleased with their choices and life. Compared to younger parents, older parents were more likely to relate English language acquisition to superior employment status of their children in future. A mother stated:

"The biggest nightmare I have is that they (my children), may not find a job. So, I think these English courses will increase their chance of finding a proper job in future".

##### English language broadens children's intellectual horizons

Some parents believed in English as a bridge language used in everyday life, such as trade, technology, song lyrics and movies. There seemed to be relationship between parents' age and the belief that English language can help broaden children's intellectual horizons. In that, relatively younger parents were more likely to believe that learning a foreign language could result in increased knowledge and skills to improve their career opportunities. None of parents had a desire for their children to study or live abroad at some point in their lives.

##### Parents lived their own dreams through their children

Parents made statements indicating that they tried consciously or unconsciously to fulfill their own unmet dreams through their children. Parents believed that learning English can help advance their children's socioeconomic vision by opening the gates to international opportunities and collaborations. A parent who was a tailor stated:

"I have always wished my child to be a top international tailor and get connected to famous designers from all over the world."

Parents' involvement in children's English learning experiences

Parents wished to support their children's English learning

While all parents believed that they had responsibilities in their children's education, not many parents were actively involved in the learning experiences of their children, mainly because they did not know how they could help their children. Some parents lacked the ability to assist their child due to their poor educational background. One of the parents stated:

"I can't help my child at all because I have no idea what I should

do...Teachers do not tell us what to do and how to support our children's learning."

Some parents stated that they supported their children's learning by scheduling a regular study time at home. Parents' involvement in children's learning mainly included overseeing them to ensure that children were completing their homework. A mother said:

"We are responsible particularly when they (children) are too young. Children don't do much for their own will. We want to inspire their interests and encourage them to learn more effectively while not overwhelming them".

Parents sometimes forced their children to participate in English classes regardless of the child's lack of interest. A mother of a first grader shared the following:

"I want to help her (her child) at home, but my child hates it and keeps saying you are pushing me too much".

Parents wished a better learning experience for their children

Some parents expressed their lack of satisfaction with the way English institutions were run. There was a sense of distrust and room for improvement from parents' perspectives. Parents stated that they had never been given an opportunity to share their thoughts and raise their concerns with the English teachers or managers of the institutions, or they would have expected some form of mistreatment of their child by the institution. Many parents, especially older ones, described their role in children's learning as just obeying the rules of the institutions and accepting their authority without questioning their credentials. Some parents liked the emphasis to be placed on English literacy rather communication skills. They considered communicative skills as "hobby" and not a serious method of teaching English. There was a belief that English institutions should put emphasis on teaching grammatical rules, literacy, and tests. A parent said:

"I want my son to be able to read English texts and books. Whenever gained literacy in our first language (Azeri language) and just learned to speak it. This has profoundly affected the way we see the world."

Refereeing to their own unpleasant learning experience, some parents expressed a desire for the use of an alternative form of education for their children. They were not satisfied with content and educational methods that had been adopted by their own schools. The parents believed that their own English teachers were not well knowledgeable and therefore parents attributed their negative attitudes to dislike for traditional language teaching method applied during their own school years. A mother talked about her own educational experience:

"Teachers were boring and reading only a regular course book which often was so boring. They were not able to incorporate fun and inspiration into teaching and always dictated my choices and never taught in an engaging way which could help raise our curiosity".

Some parents, especially older ones, did not have a particular idea or comment about teaching methods adopted by the English institutions and had totally left this to the institutions.

Discussion

Closing achievement gaps among various students has become a focus of education's accountability. Authorities are required to raise awareness and greater concern of contextual incompatibility, such as sociocultural and socioeconomic contexts of learners, factors that can influence students' success, narrowing achievement gaps. Parents' motivations and concerns have marked influence on their decision to enroll their children in an English language institution, underscoring the complex relationship that takes place between parents and institutes. In order to have an effective partnership between language institutions and parents, it is worth exploring parents' perspectives in regards to these programs and the role they play in influencing their children's English learning. The analysis of the findings served to answer the study research questions.

#### Parents' motivational beliefs

Regardless of parents' educational background and socioeconomic class, they seemed to have mainly instrumental motivations for enrolling their children in English language courses. Unemployment rate in Iran continues to rise and is a major challenge for the government. Thus, parents over worry **about their children's** career futures and hold career aspiration for their children. Yet, some parents had more ambitious educational expectations for their children and they perceived a solid early educational foundation as a stepping-stone towards a successful life and achieving goals.

Very few participants had a desire for their children to study or live abroad. This was due to their' resistance to children's exposure to the manifestations of the incompatible aspects of the western culture, and possible adoption of western lifestyle. One possible response to the cultural concerns of the Iranian parents is exclusion of the incompatible aspects of the western culture from the ELT curriculum meant for the Iranian students.

#### Parents' attitudes about current teaching strategies

Räty (2002) attributed parents' own education and learning experiences as important factors influencing their thoughts and attitudes towards teaching and learning of their children. To better understand parents' decision-makings and involvement in children's learning, Walker et al. (2005) revised the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's model (1995, 1997) and included parents' personal educational history and their learning experiences factors affecting their involvement in their children's learning. Informed by this model, we asked parents about their own school experience during the interviews to better understand their beliefs and perspectives towards their children learning experience. Parents were mainly satisfied with the teaching strategies adopted by English institutions, as they were using the same traditional teaching methods which were familiar to parents. Nevertheless, parents who did not have a positive learning experience themselves wished a different experience for their children. In the interviews it became apparent that parents' desire for an alternative program was strongly guided by their personal educational experience and attitudes about school (Walker et al., 2005).

Overall, parents were not aware of the responsibilities of the language institutions and the standard of teaching, although some believed that English institutions should adopt an interesting curriculum and provide a pleasant learning environment for children while also adhering to nationally accepted standards. Just a few parents believed that learning English should be made enjoyable and stimulating, creating an opportunity for children's curiosity to flourish, while others mainly believed that English institutions ought to be strict in education and place more emphasis on correct grammar and spelling. This is consistent with parents' motivational belief that Children learn English for finding a job in future, and not for studying or living in an English language country.

Research has indicated that many traditional language-teaching techniques are being used in language pedagogy in Iranian schools (Boshtrabadi 2014). EFL teaching in Iran is restricted to traditional areas of explicit teaching grammar rules and vocabulary lists which do not give students the ability to use the second language with accuracy and fluency. In particular, most textbooks at schools follow the same traditional pattern and include the same major functions, grammar and vocabulary. Although private English institutions usually choose a textbook that is truly communicative and but learning activities fall apart completely in real classroom usage, especially in small cities. Generally, present and practice more structured and controlled activities before freer, more open ones is dominated method in teaching English especially in small towns where English teachers themselves do have opportunities to learn about new and evidence based teaching strategies.

#### Parents' involvement in children's English learning experiences

Numerous participants in this study seemed very reflective of their conducts as parents. They were self-conscious about demanding a lot from their children and some even forcing children to study English on top of their normal schooling. Parents expressed willingness to be more effectively involved in their children's learning. They particularly wanted to be informed if there was any area in their children's learning that needed improvement and in what way parents could assist children to get through it. It is a given that parents are

important stakeholders in their children's education and indispensable partners for education programs in particular. An effective collaboration of parents and teachers can lead to a better understanding of children's learning needs and how they can be met.

#### Conclusion

Also, considering the increasing number of EFL institutions these institutions cannot survive without parental involvement, their support and patronage, and the enthusiasm they bring. That is to say, parents can contribute greatly to the program as they want their children to get an excellent education, because their children are everything and they worry about their future life.

Raising the awareness of parents about educational systems on the part of institution or institution-initiated contact highlighted which, it will provide strong positive effects on motivational outcomes of the children. Most of parents of the study are unsure and some of them question the educational system running in the institutes. The head of the institute approved that "there is no institute-initiated contact with parents concerning student's educational issues and problems". It is also interesting to mention that the head, in conversation with the students, attributed increasing number of unmotivated students to parents' stress that convey it to their children. Further research is needed to shed more light on this occurrence.

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# ELABORATIVE DISCOURSE MARKERS IN COMPUTER ESP BOOKS DEVELOPED BY IRANIAN AND BRITISH AUTHORS

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## ABSTRACT

Discourse markers (DMs) as connective words play an important role in communication. They guide interlocutors to the proper comprehension of discourses. It is believed that EFL teachers and ESP material developers should pay more attention to discourse markers' functions. This paper chose 'elaborative' discourse markers as the focus of the research because they are more common in written language interactions. Therefore, this study tried to evaluate contrastively and descriptively their implementation in ESP books of computer science developed by non-native (Iranian) and native (British) authors. To do so, a corpus of two academic ESP books which are used by ESP teachers in Iranian universities was chosen and all elaborative discourse markers in the first reading parts of the books (totally 32 texts, each book 16 readings) were counted and classified based on Fraser's (2006) taxonomy. Then results were analyzed by SPSS software using chi-square formula. As far as this research was concerned, the results indicated that the employment of elaborative discourse markers is significantly different in compared texts. Moreover, results showed that 'and' followed by 'also' are more common elaborative discourse markers in native-developed texts. While in non-native texts 'for example' and 'also' are frequent, respectively. Also, elaborative discourse markers were more frequent in native-authored texts than their non-native counterparts. It is hoped that further studies on larger corpora shed more light on the importance of discourse markers and help EFL learners, teachers, and material developers in language learning process.

**KEYWORDS:** Discourse markers; ESP; coherence; cohesion; discourse analysis

## 1. Introduction

Nowadays, English plays the role of a lingua franca in worldwide relations (Bahrami, 2012; Eslami-Rasekh, Eslami-Rasekh & Simin, 2012). This role is played in all aspects of interactions from academic to personal, commercial, political affairs, etc. One of the important interchanges/interactions is transmitting academic and technical information. That is the way which ESP has got to pave. As internet and technology develop, more need is felt for proficient written and spoken communication in ESP fields. To meet the need, all aspects of language learning should be taken into account.

Discourse, as "any instance of language-in-use or any stretch of spoken or written language" (Gee, 1999, p. 205), acts the part of a communicative tool in interactions. A discourse to be meaningful should be coherent and cohesive simultaneously (Widdowson, 2007, pp. 49-51).

Discourse markers as connective words help to make discourses cohesive and coherent. Feng (2010, p. 300) writes, "discourse markers play an important role in a text's cohesion and coherence". He concludes that although discourse markers are not the only key to English writing, "we can't deny they have a great effect on the cohesion and coherence of writing" (p. 303).

It goes without saying that discourse markers are connectors of meaning. If they are not used appropriately or adequately the communication may fail (Lahuerta Martínez, 2004, p. 64; Rezvani Kalajahi et al., 2012, p. 1661).

As far as this research is concerned, although some studies have been done on the role of discourse markers, it seems that the part of these cohesive devices are not paid enough attention in learning language skills (listening, reading, speaking, and writing) in Iran specially in ESP fields. Therefore, the study explored discourse markers' use in computer ESP books developed by native (British) and non-native (Iranian) authors available in Iranian book markets. To control the scope of the study, just elaborative discourse markers were paid upon. Fraser (1996, pp. 187-188) defines elaborative discourse markers as those markers which signal that the upcoming utterance "constitutes a refinement of some sort on the preceding discourse". Another reason to focus on elaborative discourse markers is the frequent use of them in native and non-native texts (Lahuerta Martínez, 2004; Jalilifar, 2008; Rahimi, 2011; Talebinejad & Namdar, 2011; Rezvani Kalajahi, Bt Abdullah & Baki, 2012; Alghamdi, 2014). So, the purpose of the present study is to explore the differences and similarities of elaborative discourse markers' employment in two aforementioned ESP books.

In the same line, Feng (2010) quoting Schiffrin (1987) writes, "because the functions of [discourse] markers are so broad, any and all analyses of markers – even those focusing on only a relatively narrow aspect of their meaning or a small portion of their uses – can teach us something about their role in discourse" (p. 303).

### 1.1. Literature review and theoretical background

In this section a brief review of theoretical background and literature related to the topic of the present study will be provided:

#### 1.1.1 Discourse markers

Since the 1980s or so discourse markers have got increasing status in literature. Many aspects of them (their role, function, meaning, identity, etc.) have been investigated so far (Fraser, 1999; Waring, 2003; Lahuerta Martínez, 2004; Rezvani Kalajahi, Bt Abdullah & Baki, 2012).

Discourse markers are variously named by different scholars. Fraser (1999, pp. 931-932, 937) lists some of them: discourse markers, discourse connectives, discourse operators, pragmatic connectives, sentence connectives, discourse particles, discourse signaling devices, phatic connectives, pragmatic expressions, pragmatic formatives, pragmatic markers, relational phrases, semantic conjuncts, and cue phrases. To him, these discourse elements are "a class of lexical expressions drawn primarily from the syntactic classes of conjunctions, adverbs, and prepositional phrases".

Schiffrin (2001, p. 65) states that defining discourse markers has always been problematic. She calls the problem "a discussion of definitional issues". Schiffrin referring to her previous work (1987) calls, "discourse markers as sequentially dependent elements that bracket units of talk ... i.e. nonobligatory utterance-initial items that function in relation to ongoing talk and text" (p. 57). She goes on, "discourse markers tell us not only about the linguistic properties (e.g. semantic and pragmatic meanings, source, functions) of a set of frequently used expressions, and the organization of social interactions and situations in which they are used, but also about the cognitive, expressive, social, and textual competence of those who use them" (p. 67).

Trujillo Saez (2003) proposes, "the speaker [uses discourse] markers to reduce the cognitive effort required from the hearer to interpret the utterance, by signaling which inference reflects more accurately the speaker's meaning" (Definition of Discourse Markers section). Lahuerta Martínez (2004, p. 65), also, states that speakers use discourse markers in order to direct their audiences to appropriate interpretation of the discourse communicated. In other words, discourse markers are one of the linguistic devices which help hearer to comprehend the message correctly.

Lahuerta Martínez (2004, p. 65) citing Blakemore (1993) continues that discourse markers are those clues which narrow down the relevant context to help hearer/reader interpret the intended meaning. He argues, "since DMs [discourse markers] facilitate communication, it is logical to suppose that the lack of DMs in an L2, or their inappropriate use could, to a certain degree, hinder successful communication or lead to misunderstanding".

Fraser (2006) categorizes discourse marker under 'pragmatic markers'. He defines discourse markers as those "which signal a relation between the discourse segment which hosts them, and the prior discourse segment" (Introduction section). He mentioned that discourse markers do not "create a relationship between" two segments, rather the relationship exists beforehand. They just help the receiver interpreting the relationship accurately (Definition section).

Fraser (2006) explicitly eliminates “non-verbal gestures, syntactic structures, and aspects of prosody such as intonation or stress” form discourse markers (Definition section). On the contrary, Schiffrin (1987), quoted by Fraser, includes non-verbal gestures in discourse markers. She (2001, pp. 57, 59) names interjections like *oh, ah, aha, ouch, yuk* and lexical phrases like *y’know* and *I mean* as discourse markers. Similarly, Waring (2003, p. 416) as well as Green (2006) cited by Buyukkarci and Genc (2009, p. 42) incorporate these interjections into discourse markers.

#### 1.1.1.1 Fraser’s Model

As these markers are named differently in the literature (e.g., linking words, connectives, discourse operators, and discourse connectors), there are also distinct models for comparing and contrasting them. For instance, Rezvani Kalajahi, Abdullah, Mukunda, and Tannacito (2012) mentioned some famous ones: Halliday and Hasan, 1976; Schiffrin, 1987; Fraser, 1999; Biber et al., 1999; Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman, 1999.

Fraser (1999, p. 938) defines discourse markers as connectors which “impose a relationship between some aspects of the discourse segment they are a part of, call it S2 [segment 2], and some aspect of a prior discourse segment, call it S1 [segment 1]. In other words, they function like a two-place relation, one argument lying in the segment they introduce the other lying in the prior discourse”. He divides discourse markers into two major groups:

1. **Discourse markers which relate messages** (involves DMs which relate some aspect of the messages conveyed by the segments S2 and S1) which are classified into four subclasses:
  - 1.1 **Contrastive discourse markers** (the DM signals that the explicit interpretation of S2 contrasts with an interpretation of S1),
  - 1.2 **Collateral/Elaborative discourse markers** (the DM signals a quasi-parallel relationship between S2 and S1),
  - 1.3 **Inferential discourse markers** (the DM signals that S2 is to be taken as a conclusion based on S1),
  - 1.4 **Fourth subclass or Reasoning discourse markers** (this group specifies that S2 provides a reason for the content presented in S1).

2. **Discourse markers which relate topics or topic relating discourse markers** (involves an aspect of discourse management and this level only).

The second group has no subclasses but it mostly deals with spoken context ('to return to my point', 'while I think of it', 'with regards to', 'back to my original point', 'before I forget', 'by the way', 'incidentally', 'just to update you', 'on a different note', 'speaking of X', 'that reminds me', 'to change to' are discourse markers related to this group).

Fraser (2006) presents a new elaborated classification in which the second group has been omitted. Although several outstanding scholars presented different discourse markers classifications, this study limited itself to Fraser’s (2006) taxonomy which was chosen among different models. As far as the study was concerned, Fraser’s model was more up to date and practical than other classifications modeled by outstanding scholars. Moreover, it is dedicated to written discourse rather than that of spoken.

Fraser’s (2006) model is presented in table 1:

**Table 1.** Fraser’s model (2006)

Classification	Discourse markers
a. Contrastive Discourse Markers	but, alternatively, although, contrariwise, contrary to expectations, conversely, despite (this/that), even so, however, in spite of (this/that), in comparison (with this/that), in contrast (to this/that), instead (of this/that), nevertheless, nonetheless, (this/that point), notwithstanding, on the other hand, on the contrary, rather (than this/that), regardless (of this/that), still, though, whereas, yet

b. Elaborative Discourse Markers	and, above all, also, alternatively, analogously, besides, by the same token, correspondingly, equally, for example, for instance, further(more), in addition, in other words, in particular, likewise, more accurately, more importantly, more precisely, more to the point, moreover, on that basis, on top of it all, or, otherwise, rather, similarly, that is (to say)
c. Inferential Discourse Markers	so, after all, all things considered, as a conclusion, as a consequence (of this/that), as a result (of this/that), because (of this/that), consequently, for this/that reason, hence, it follows that, accordingly, in this/that/any case, on this/that condition, on these/those grounds, then, therefore, thus
d. Temporal Discourse Markers	then, after, as soon as, before, eventually, finally, first, immediately afterwards, meantime, meanwhile, originally, second, subsequently, when

To control the scope of the research, this study focuses on elaborative discourse markers. Kaveifard and Allami (2011, p. 1787) put, "elaborative markers signal that the current utterance constitutes an elaboration of an earlier one".

#### 1.1.2 English for Specific Purposes (ESP)

Hutchinson and Waters (1987, p. 19) put, "ESP must be seen as an approach not as a product. It is not a particular kind of language... [Rather] it is an approach to language learning, which is based on learner need... ESP, then, is an approach to language teaching in which all decisions as to content and method are based on the learner's reason for learning".

Mohammadi and Mousavi (2013, p. 1014) maintain, "ESP deals with preparing the learners to be able to use English in academic (students of different fields), professional (people of different professions such as doctors, engineers, and nurses), or workplace (technicians for example) settings".

#### 1.1.3 ESP and discourse analysis

Dudley-Evans and St John (1998, p. 87) note that "any study of language or, more specifically, text at a level above that of the sentence is discourse study".

As the rhetorical/discoursal structure of particular scientific field differs from that of the others (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987, p. 12), discourse analysis (text analysis) plays a main role in ESP (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987; Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998).

Hutchinson and Waters (1987) comment there are some uses of discourse analysis in ESP:

Firstly, by discourse analysis different stages or phases of a communication in a certain field will be revealed.

Secondly, the study of relative positions of the sentences will show how meaning is represented in a text (pp. 34-35).

Stevens (1988), quoted by Dudley-Evans and St John (1998, p. 3), also explaining the definition of ESP, believes that ESP involves language which is "...centered on language appropriate to those activities in syntax, lexis, discourse, semantics and so on, and analysis of the discourse".

Dudley-Evans and St John (1998, p. 1) name "practical outcomes" as the main focus of ESP. They believe that the fundamental interests for ESP have been always "needs analysis, text analysis", and to prepare learners to communicate.

#### 1.1.4 The Importance of discourse analysis

McCarthy (1991, p. 12) to explain the significance of discourse analysis, writes "with a more accurate picture of natural discourse, we are in a better position to evaluate the descriptions upon which we based our teaching, the teaching materials, what goes on in the classroom, and the end products of our teaching, whether in the form of spoken or written output".

Olshtain and Celce-Murcia (2001) argue that the goal of language teaching is learning how to communicate in target language (communicative approach). To achieve the assumed goal, learners should be encountered with real and practical instances of communication or discourse. One way, they propose, is to use discourse analysis. They put:

It would be ill-advised to teach language via the communicative approach without relying heavily on discourse analysis. In fact discourse analysis should provide the main frame of reference for decision-making in language teaching and learning. Creating suitable contexts for interaction, illustrating speaker/hearer and reader/writer exchanges, and providing learners with opportunities to process language within a variety of situations are all necessary for developing learning environments where language acquisition and language development can take place within a communicative perspective. (707)

Trujillo Saez (2003) citing Connor (1996) puts that different languages have different style of writing. These rhetorical distinctions are based on three principles: 1) "Language and writing are cultural phenomena", 2) "Each language has rhetorical conventions unique to it", and 3) "The linguistic and rhetorical conventions of the first language interfere with writing in the second language". Therefore, a contrastive strategy should be taken into consideration "to understand ... and ... propose teaching methodologies appropriate to tackle these differences" (Description of the research).

#### 1.1.5 Pragmatics

Yule (1996) emphasizing the role of context and the way it modifies what is said, elucidates pragmatics as "the study of contextual meaning". He states that the interpretation of what is said shows that everything is not expressed in a communication, rather some hidden messages is conveyed by the sender and interpreted by the receiver. Yule puts, "pragmatics [as well] is the study of how more gets communicated than is said". He, again, exploring other aspects of pragmatics refers to the quantity of what should be said and what should not be said based on the shared knowledge between speaker and listener. To him the closeness or relationship of interlocutors no matter physical, social, or conceptual controls the level of common experience between sender and receiver. Therefore, pragmatics is described by him as "the study of the expression of relative distance [closeness/relationship]" (p. 3).

M. Bloor and Bloor (2007) write, "pragmatics is a branch of study related to, but separate from, linguistics," because it clarifies discourse features which cannot be justified by linguistics (p. 19). They enumerate those discourse features as reference, communicative function, presupposition, and implicature:

1. Reference: plays a crucial role in the cohesion of discourses. The way we replace words, phrases, and clauses by pronouns and other parts of speech may influence our intended meaning (p. 20).
2. Communicative function: "is closely related to the notion of speech act, which encapsulates the idea that when we are talking to each other we are 'doing things' with our words" (p. 20).
3. Presupposition: while communicating there are some assumptions presumed by interactants. The interpretation of these assumptions relies on the context (p. 22). Johnstone (2008, p. 275), in other words, expounds presupposition as "what is assumed in using or interpreting a sentence, as opposed to what is asserted. To give a famous example, someone who says 'The king of France is bold' presupposes that there is a king of France".
4. Implicature: "what is suggested or hinted at but not explicitly stated" (M. Bloor & Bloor, 2007, p. 174). At the end, they (p. 176) briefly concluded that pragmatics is "the study of meaning in a context."

#### 1.1.6 Pragmatics and discourse analysis

According to Yule (1985, p. 139) listeners/readers to appreciate the given message need to analyze the text. That is, to comprehend what is intended we should examine what is meant rather than what is said based on the lexical and physical context, what is a set of coherent sentences rather than scrambled ones, and what is the correct interpretation of the text. This examination, to him, is called discourse analysis.

Yule (1985, p. 140) outlines cohesion and coherence as some information on which we rely to interpret and consequently come to pragmatic meaning of discourse.

Yule (1996, p. 84) argues that pragmatics plays an important role in discourse analysis. To him pragmatics "tends to focus specifically on aspects of what is unsaid or unwritten (yet communicated) within the discourse being analyzed". To put pragmatics into action in a discourse, he comments that we should pay "attention to

psychological concepts such as background knowledge, beliefs, and expectations” rather than forms, structures, and social concerns. He goes on to say, “in the pragmatics of discourse, we inevitably explore what the speaker or writer has in mind”.

#### 1.1.7 Review of some contrastive analyses of discourse markers` use

Very briefly the results of some contrastive analyses on discourse markers' implementation are reviewed:

Rashidi and Ghaffarpour (2010, pp. 87-105) surveyed the use of discourse markers in teaching and linguistic research article abstracts written in Persian and English. They quoting Moreno (1997) argue that although genre analysis shows some united boundaries for writing, cultural deviations also proved to be influential in employing discourse markers by different communities. They cumulated the outcomes to state that cultural factor may have a significant effect on discourse differences. Moreover, specific genres, the research concludes, have their own way to employ discourse markers which would be helpful in teaching English for Specific Purposes.

Kaveifard and Allami (2011, pp. 1786-1791) made an inquiry into the inferential discourse markers use in discussion section of psychological articles written by English native speakers, Persian non-native English speakers, and Persian native speakers. They used Fraser's (1999) and Halliday and Hassan's (1976) taxonomies to examine the frequency of inferential discourse markers in the selected corpora. Based on findings, 'therefore' followed by 'thus' are more frequent discourse markers used. Moreover, a significant difference exists among English native, non-native, and Persian native speakers from inferential discourse markers point of view.

Talebinejad and Namdar (2011, pp. 1590-1602) inspected the frequency of discourse markers occurrence in Iranian high school course books and different Native books taught in private institutes in Iran. Based on Fraser's (1999) classification the results demonstrated that the use of discourse markers in Iranian books 1, 2, and 3 is not adequately sufficient in contrast with native books, while their frequency in Iranian book 4 is acceptable. Another conclusion represented that the use of 'contrastive markers' are more frequent in Iranian books 1, 2, and 3, while 'elaborative markers' are more common than the others in book 4.

Allami and Iranzad (2012) surveyed the employment of discourse markers in oral communication between native English and Iranian EFL speakers. They recorded a non-native speakers' corpus and compared it with a native one. The result made them to believe that non-native EFL speakers used discourse markers more frequently than native speakers (Abstract).

Alghamdi (2014, pp. 294-305) studied the use of discourse markers in narrative and argumentative papers of undergraduate native and non-native (Arab, Chinese, Korean, and Georgian) students at Midwest University. The researcher using Fraser' (1999) category explored the corpus of written texts. The results showed that no significant difference exist between Ns and NNs both in narrative and argumentative papers. Detailed enquiry proved that Ns and NNs used 'elaborative markers' more than the others, again in both narrative and argumentative texts.

Alavi-Nia and Mozaffari (2014, pp. 161-170) had an interesting point of view toward discourse markers. They compared the use of discourse markers in three EFL and three PFL (Persian as Foreign Language) course-books to see whether the employment of markers (they call them discourse particles) are the same and if Iranian curriculum designers keep the pace with their international counterparts. Moreover, they compared the dialogues in course-books to evaluate the extent to which EFL and PFL course-books mirror natural use of language in English and Persian communities. To do so, they used the conversations in some American and Iranian TV series. The results proved that discourse markers are more frequent in American books than Iranian ones. In addition, PFL book designers need to try hard to keep pace with English designers on the one hand, and utilize more natural sources to enrich the PFL materials on the other hand.

Peyman (2014, p. 229) quoted Khaghani (1996) contrastive analysis of discourse markers between Persian and English. In this study Khaghani compared two English books with their Farsi translations. It was hypothesized that there are some differences in the use of discourse markers of Persian and English corpora. At the end, the researcher accumulated all evidences to claim that English texts employ more discourse markers than Persian ones.

To sum up, it is believed that discourse markers play an important role in cohesion and coherence, and consequently, communicating the intended meaning of speaker/writer. They are bridges which fill the gaps of communication and guide the addressees to decode the flow of received information. To the extent the literature reviewed shows, there are significant differences and similarities between frequency and use of discourse

markers applied by native and non-native EFL learners. This phenomenon should be paid upon in classroom situations by language teachers to help learners to come up with a more native like English language competence and performance. This aim is also concluded by Buyukkarci and Genc (2009, p. 49) in their study of discourse markers use by Turkish EFL learners. The present study aimed to explore the same idea to see whether it is the case in computer ESP texts developed by native (British) and Iranian authors or not.

### 1.2 Research questions

Based on the topic of this study and Fraser's (2006) classification of discourse markers the following questions were proposed:

**Q. 1:** Are elaborative discourse markers statistically different in texts developed by native (British) and non-native (Iranian) authors?

**Q. 2:** Are elaborative discourse markers descriptively different in texts developed by native (British) and non-native (Iranian) authors?

#### 1.2.1 Null hypotheses

According to aforementioned questions, the following null hypotheses were formulated to meet the research ends:

**Ho. 1:** Elaborative discourse markers are not statistically different in texts developed by native (British) and non-native (Iranian) authors.

**Ho. 2:** Elaborative discourse markers are not descriptively different in texts developed by native (British) and non-native (Iranian) authors.

## 2. Method

The objective of this study is to compare and describe the use of elaborative discourse markers in two academic computer science books of ESP courses developed by native (British) and non-native (Iranian) authors. Therefore, to shed light on the steps taken, these parts are to be discussed here: source materials, procedure, and design.

### 2.1 Source materials

In this study the following materials were analyzed:

1. A native ESP textbook for computer science developed by native authors (British) which is named:

Brown, P. C. & Mullen, N. D. (1987). *English for Computer Science* (New ed., Rev. and updated). Oxford: Oxford University press.

2. The second textbook is a non-native ESP book for computer science developed by a non-native author (Iranian) which is named:

Haghani, M. (2013). *Special English for the Students of Computer*. Iran: SAMT Publication.

As counted, the corpus had 21385 words (8365 words in native book and 13020 words in non-native one).

To control the scope of the study, this paper focused just on elaborative discourse markers of the very first "Reading Section" of the two aforementioned native and non-native texts. The other parts within each unit of the books were excluded. Moreover, as non-native material has sixteen units, the first sixteen readings from native book were chosen to be analyzed and compared (the corpus includes 32 texts).

### 2.2 Procedures

Based on Fraser's taxonomy (2006), the differences and similarities of elaborative discourse markers have been discovered using the native and non-native ESP books. To do so, these steps were taken into consideration:

1. To gain the exact extent of the corpus, all 32 units' words (from native and non-native sources) were counted.
2. To minimize personal errors, two raters (the researcher and another MA student majoring in English) counted the number of elaborative discourse markers in native and non-native texts independently.

3. Based on Fraser's (2006) classification, elaborative discourse markers were ordered by this study into a table to make it more practical and easy to review.
4. Raters were asked to count elaborative discourse markers and write the numbers in the table separately for each book and unit.
5. After counting, there have been some differences (of course not significant) between two raters' statistics based on personal errors or different understandings of some markers. Therefore, both raters discussed differences one by one and settled them. The agreed statistics were summed up and filled in a final table. The final table's statistics were the basis for comparative/contrastive, and descriptive analysis of elaborative discourse markers.
6. SPSS software version (21.0) analyzed the statistics and using Fraser's (2006) model the differences and similarities were examined and compared to see to what extent two texts are different and similar in their use of elaborative discourse markers. The results are shown in tables and graphs to represent the findings clearly.

### 2.3 Data analysis

To achieve the objectives of the research, the design of the study was Descriptive and Comparative in order to compare frequency counts and compute Chi-square of elaborative discourse markers in the analysis of native and non-native ESP books. According to the design of the study and the model of discourse markers pointed out by Fraser (2006), the Chi-square frequency of elaborative markers was calculated for both texts. Then, their differences and similarities were statistically computed and the results, thus, were shown in tables and graphs in section 3 (Results).

## 3. Results and discussion

The purpose of this study was to compare and describe the frequency and use of elaborative discourse markers in ESP texts of computer science developed by native (British) and non-native (Iranian) authors. In order to meet the above-mentioned objectives of the study, each hypothesis is dealt with one by one:

### 3.1 Testing the first research hypothesis

The first research hypothesis of the present study predicted that elaborative discourse markers are not statistically different in texts developed by native (British) and non-native (Iranian) authors. In order to test this hypothesis, the analysis of crosstabs (two-way Chi-square) was conducted. Before discussing the results of Chi-square, the frequencies, percentages and standardized residuals (Std. Residual) for the elaborative discourse markers employed in texts developed by native and non-native authors were computed and presented in Table 2. If Std. Residuals go beyond  $\pm 1.96$  (Field, 2009), it is indicated that the utilization of elaborative discourse markers is significantly beyond expectations. If not, their use is not considered important.

**Table 2.** Frequencies, percentages and Std. Residuals for utilization of elaborative discourse markers in native and non-native Texts (continued)

			Elaborative discourse markers				
			Also	And	Equally	For example	In addition
Language	Native	Count	10	23	1	8	3
		% within	16.7%	38.3%	1.7%	13.3%	5.0%
		Std. Residual	-.9	2.4	1.0	-2.3	1.1
	Non-Native	Count	23	12	0	37	1
		% within	25.3%	13.2%	0.0%	40.7%	1.1%
		Std. Residual	.7	-2.0	-.8	2.0	-.9
Total	Count	33	35	1	45	4	
	% within	21.9%	23.2%	0.7%	29.8%	2.6%	

*Continued:*



			Elaborative discourse markers				
			For instance	In other words	Or	Otherwis e	Similarly
Language	Native	Count	2	1	2	0	1
		% within	3.3%	1.7%	3.3%	0.0%	1.7%
		Std. Residual	.7	.2	.0	-.6	1.0
	Non-Native	Count	1	1	3	1	0
		% within	1.1%	1.1%	3.3%	1.1%	0.0%
		Std. Residual	-.6	-.2	.0	.5	-.8
Total	Count	3	2	5	1	1	
	% within	2.0%	1.3%	3.3%	0.7%	0.7%	

Continued:

Continued.

			Elaborative discourse markers			Total
			More precisely	Moreover	That is	
Language	Native	Count	1	4	4	60
		% within	1.7%	6.7%	6.7%	100.0%
		Std. Residual	1.0	1.4	-.8	
	Non-Native	Count	0	1	11	91
		% within	0.0%	1.1%	12.1%	100.0%
		Std. Residual	-.8	-1.2	.7	
Total	Count	1	5	15	151	
	% within	0.7%	3.3%	9.9%	100.0%	

Examining Std. Residuals (see Table 1.2 above) shows that two of the above mentioned statistics are selected significantly beyond expectations, i.e. Std. Residuals are beyond  $\pm 1.96$ . It means that elaborative discourse markers are considerably different in two types of texts. In fact, the application of 'and' in native texts (38.3%, Std. Residual = 2.4 > 1.96) is significantly above expectations while its use in non-native (13.2%, Std. Residual = -2.0 > 1.96) is significantly below expectations.

Also, the implementation of 'for example' in native texts (13.3%, Std. Residual = -2.3 < -1.96) is significantly below expectations, but its application in non-native texts (40.7%, Std. Residual = 2.0 > 1.96) is significantly above expectations.

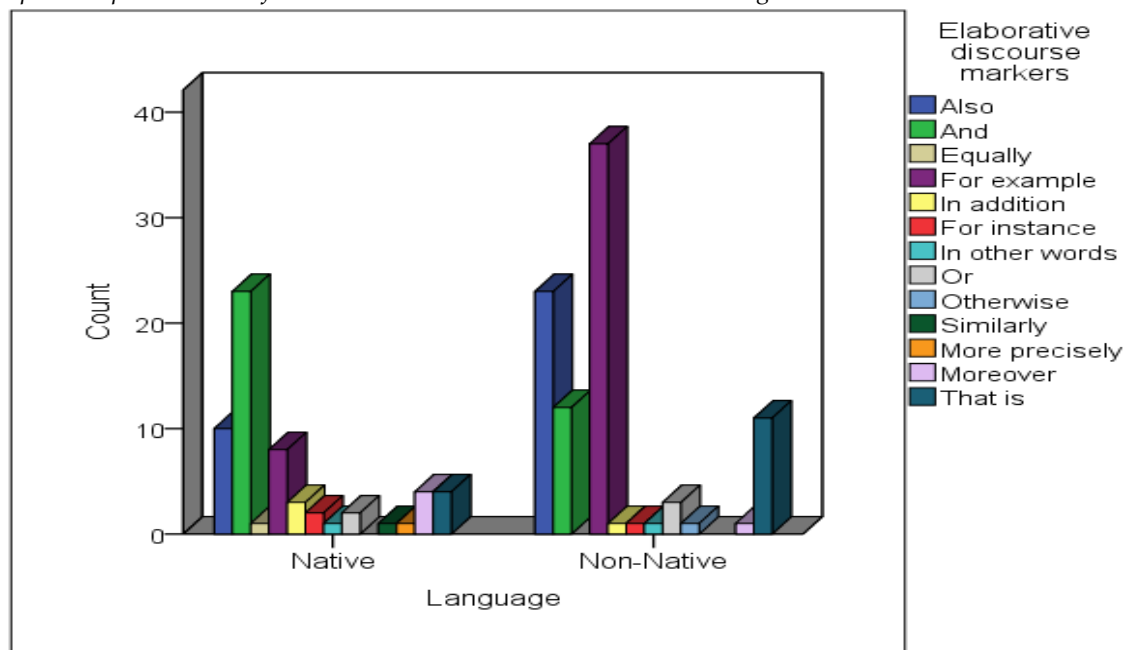
The results of chi-square in Table 3 (below) suggest that the differences observed in Table 2 are statistically significant ( $\chi^2 (12) = 32.88$ ,  $n = 151$ ,  $p = .001$ ,  $p < .05$ ) in which the  $p$  value (.001) is lower than the selected significant level for this study (.05); therefore the first null hypothesis of the current study as "Elaborative discourse markers are not statistically different in texts developed by native (British) and non-native (Iranian) authors" is **rejected**. So it can be claimed that elaborative discourse markers are statistically different in texts developed by native (British) and non-native (Iranian) authors. It should be mentioned that  $p$  values bigger than 0.05 are not considered important, while those lower than 0.05 are judged statistically significant.

**Table 3.** Chi-Square Test for application of elaborative discourse markers in native and non-native texts

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	32.889	12	.001
Likelihood Ratio	35.089	12	.000

Linear-by-Linear Association	.129	1	.720
N of Valid Cases	151		

The graphical representation of the results in Table 1.2 is demonstrated in Figure 1.



**Figure 1.** Use of elaborative discourse markers in native and non-native texts

### 3.2 Testing the second research hypothesis

The second research hypothesis of the current study proposed that elaborative discourse markers are not descriptively different in texts developed by native (British) and non-native (Iranian) authors. The frequencies, percentages and standardized residuals (Std. Residual) for them were computed and laid out in Table 1.2 above. As the results indicate the use of two of the elaborative discourse markers is beyond expectation, i.e. Std. Residuals exceeds  $\pm 1.96$ . Table 1.3 (above) also showed that the p value (0.001) is lower than the significant level of this study (0.05). Therefore, the second null hypothesis of the current study which claims "Elaborative discourse markers are not descriptively different in texts developed by native (British) and non-native (Iranian) authors" is rejected.

Results also showed that 'and' followed by 'also' are more frequent elaborative discourse markers in native-developed texts. While, in non-native book 'for example' traced by 'also' are more common. Rahimi (2011) in his study of discourse markers in argumentative and expository writing of Iranian EFL learners found that 'and' happened more frequently as an elaborative marker. Talebinejad and Namdar (2011) also in their paper on 'Discourse Markers in High School English Textbooks in Iran' reported 'and' as the most used elaborative discourse marker in Iranian high school English materials.

In addition, results indicated that % 0.71 of words was elaborative discourse markers in British-authored texts (60 words out of 8365). In Iranian- developed material, on the other hand, % 0.69 of words was elaborative ones (91 out of 13020).

One reason leading to the rejection of the hypotheses of the study may be incorrect selection of texts by Iranian ESP material developers. Another may be insufficient attention paid to discourse markers roles, in this case elaborative ones.

As far as this paper is concerned, the significance of the results is that they reveal the inconsistency of non-native book with native texts, i.e. the authenticity of Iranian computer science ESP material is called into question. Of course, larger corpora are needed to investigate and prove/reject the findings of the present study.

#### 4. Conclusions

Elaborative discourse markers as a group of discourse markers help to convey the meaning of discourses more appropriately. They “indicate a relationship in which the message of S2 [segment 2] parallels and possibly augments or refines the message of S1 [segment 1]” (Fraser, 1999, p. 948).

Although many studies on the role and use of discourse markers have been done, little attention was paid to their application in ESP contexts. This study, therefore, was to discover and describe the differences and similarities between elaborative discourse markers use in computer science ESP books developed by native (British) and non-native (Iranian) authors.

To the extent this study was concerned, findings confirmed that there are significant differences statistically and descriptively between the employment of elaborative discourse markers in native (British) and non-native (Iranian) computer science ESP texts (used in Iranian universities).

In addition, results proved that elaborative discourse markers are more frequent in native (British) ESP book of computer science (% 0.71) than the non-native (Iranian) one (%0.69). As a result, it may be inferred that Iranian computer science ESP course book designers and practitioners should be aware more of the role elaborative discourse markers play in communication. Along the same line, Alavi-Nia and Mozaffari (2014, p. 170) in their study of the role of discourse markers in EFL and PFL (Persian as a Foreign language) course books concluded that “it seems that they [curriculum designers and book developers] need to take more consideration of learners’ communicative needs and find richer sources to enrich the pragmatic aspect of the course-books they design”.

Another issue considered is that computer ESP course books use in Iranian universities are out of date, a problem which can be topics for some new researches in the field of ESP or discourse markers, separately.

#### 4.1 Implications

1. The results can be useful for computer science ESP curriculum designers and book developers who would deduce that elaborative discourse markers (or discourse markers as a whole) merit more attention in teaching process; hence, perform an exact need analysis in order to provide the most native-like materials for language learners.
2. In addition, computer science ESP students may concentrate more closely on the role discourse markers have in language learning and negotiating meaning both in written and spoken communication.
3. Finally, this study would be applicable for all language syllabus designers, EFL instructors and learners of general English to care more for elaborative discourse markers (or discourse markers as a whole).

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# THE USE OF SECOND LIFE IN EDUCATIONAL FORUMS

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## Abstract

Since its release in 2003, the numerous industries that have integrated the use of *Second Life* (SL) by Linden Lab has made it a very popular web-based, multi-user, virtual reality tool used by educators all over the world to support opportunities for interaction, a sense of community, and self-building capabilities amongst their students, creating a venue for examination regarding the actual benefits realized through use of 3D MMOGs (Buckless, Krawczyk, & Showalter, 2012; Zhang, 2007). In educational forums, aspects such as retention of information and improved comprehension depend on attributes relative to tacit and explicit knowledge in order for benefits to be realized when using SL as an educational tool (Foster, 2008). The research methodology employed used a 24 question survey that used a combination of multiple choice, 'Yes/No,' and Likert scale questions ranging from 'Strongly Agree, Somewhat Agree, No Opinion, Somewhat Disagree, and Strongly Disagree' for the response choices. The survey results showed that tacit and explicit knowledge both influenced the retention and comprehension of the information and SL improved student outcomes in education over traditional classroom or online methods.

## What is 'Second Life'?

Virtual worlds (VWs) have existed in some capacity since the early 1980s, but the information age has propelled the creation of three-dimensional (3D) virtual societies in which users can log on and create avatars or virtual representations of themselves (Baker, Wentz, & Woods, 2009). Virtual reality technologies and the fabricated environments are defined as computer-generated interfaces that compel the user to experience the sensation that they are present in and can interact with a reality other than the one they are actually in (Liao, 2008).

These immersive 3D environments, also known as Multi User Virtual Environments (MUVE) or Massively Multiplayer Online Games (MMOGs), allow large numbers of users from diverse backgrounds and locales to interact via the Internet (Ducheneaut, Wen, Yee, & Wadley, 2009; Mennecke, et al., 2008). The VW provides an experience similar to an online Role Play Game (RPG) with a Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) tool that allows users to use synchronous communication for collaborations in multi-user gaming worlds such as *Never Winter Nights* and *World of Warcraft*, which are based on the Dungeons and Dragons style role-playing game (Han, 2011; Warburton, 2009). Irrespective of their diverging formats, VWs share a number of identifying features, including:

- a shared space for simultaneous multiple user participation
- virtual embodiment of users as 3-D representations or avatars
- interactions between users and 3-D objects in the environment
- actions and interactions occur in real time
- graphics and actions resemble the real world including topography, movement, and physics that provide the illusion of being there (Warburton, 2009)

These 3D environments are no longer used only for gaming, but have now become part of learning environments for professional and educational forums (Han, 2011). Since its release in 2003, *Second Life* (SL) by Linden Lab has become a very popular web-based, multi-user, virtual reality tool used by educators all over the world to support opportunities for interaction, a sense of community, and self-building capabilities amongst their students (Zhang, 2007). Major universities in America, such as Harvard, Northern Illinois University, Stanford, and Yale, as well as prominent institutions abroad, including Canada's York University, Bilgi University in Istanbul, Metropolitan University in London, Australia's University of Canberra, and the

University of Southern Denmark have all purchased property and established virtual campuses in *Second Life* (Han, 2011).

The *SL* platform is commonly thought of as a dating website or a virtual world people go to be someone they cannot be in the real world and explore places they do not ordinarily have access to (Buckless, Krawczyk, & Showalter, 2012). In the virtual world of *SL*, each person is represented by an animated human or non-human avatar that can talk, walk, teleport, and fly to the different environments where users can meet, work, and socialize with the other 18 million users and incorporate feeds from real-world events (Kirriemuir, 2008).

Business organizations have recognized extensive applications for *Second Life* since the majority of activities that companies conduct in real life can be conducted in *SL* (Boulos, Hetherington, & Wheeler, 2007). The W Hotels uses *SL* as a tool to gather consumer information regarding proposed hotel design changes and the IBM Corporation communicates with customers regarding new topics and collaborative experiences (Buckless, Krawczyk, & Showalter, 2012). In the financial industry, the Maryland Association of CPAs conducts online CPE sessions using *SL* (Buckless, Krawczyk, & Showalter, 2012).

For many inhabitants of *SL*, it is not just an online 3D game, but another world with its own economy and millions of residents who own property, make friends, and even get married (Boulos, Hetherington, & Wheeler, 2007). Examples of other virtual worlds (VWs) include Forterra's *OLIVE*, Proton Media's *Protosphere*, Sun Microsystems's *Project Wonderland*, and *The Croquet Consortium*, all of which have become conduits for education, socialization, collaboration, entertainment, social networking, and business development (Mennecke, et al., 2008; Wiecha, Heyden, Sternthal, & Merialdi, 2010).

The diversity of applications for the VW of *Second Life* stems from the option for users to build additional structures within the virtual world that are used to teach courses and conduct research for the more than 300 colleges and universities using *SL* (Wiecha, Heyden, Sternthal, & Merialdi, 2010). Along with the numerous museums, government agencies, and educational groups that host events, seminars, and workshops in *SL*, other organizations such as NASA (National Aeronautics and Space Administration), National Public Radio, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association, and National Institutes of Health Jet Propulsion Laboratory also use the 3D VW for training programs (Wiecha, Heyden, Sternthal, & Merialdi, 2010).

The numerous industries that have integrated the use of *SL* have created a venue for examination regarding the actual benefits realized through use of 3D MMOGs (Buckless, Krawczyk, & Showalter, 2012). In educational forums, aspects such as retention of information, improved communication, ability to capture and hold the attention of the student, and adaptability of the platform to the contents of the lesson are factors for consideration when assessing any benefits realized through use of *SL* as an educational tool (Foster, 2008).

### Research Questions and Hypotheses

The growing use of *SL* and other similar MMOG 3D platforms is representative of the increase in expectations of teachers based on not just technological innovations, but also an improved understanding of learning styles, multiple intelligences, diverse backgrounds, and individual experiences (Wilks & Jacka, 2013). The prevalence of *SL* use in educational settings provokes the need for examination of the degree to which the virtual setting improves the scholastic experience. This research will be guided by the following questions:

**RQ 1.** Does the use of *Second Life* improve the comprehension and retention of information presented in educational forums?

**RQ 2.** Does the use of *Second Life* improve the tacit and explicit comprehension of information presented in educational forums?

**RQ 3.** Are courses taught in *Second Life* easier to follow and understand than classes taught using traditional methods despite having the same curricular material?

In exploring the dynamics of the responses to these research questions, this study will attempt to prove or disprove the following hypotheses:

**Null Hypothesis 1.** The use of *Second Life* does not change the educational experience to improve or detract from the comprehension and retention of the material and there was no difference in the tacit or explicit knowledge.

**H1.** The use of *Second Life* in educational forums improves comprehension and retention to the extent that students taking courses they have failed or are failing excel in the course when administered using the *SL* platform due to improvements in tacit and explicit knowledge.

**H2.** The use of Second Life in educational forums does not improve comprehension or retention to the extent that students taking courses they have failed or are failing excel in the course when administered using the SL platform due to improvements in tacit and explicit knowledge.

The exploration of *SL* use in education will help illuminate the validity of each hypothesis and help answer the research questions.

### Objectives

The principle objective of this research is to determine the extent by which the use of *SL* benefits students in an educational setting when the curriculum is made interactive. It is the objective of this research is to illustrate how the retention of information is affected through the use of *Second Life*. Since *SL* is a virtual platform, it provides a better location for accumulating data through consultations and reviews in a computer-generated environment.

The remainder of this paper will present a

Literature Review that discusses the pros and cons of using *SL* in education as well as the educational experience in Second Life vs. Real Life. The next section will discuss the Research Method including the Investigational Framework followed by the research Results, a Discussion of the results, and the Conclusion.

### Literature Review

Research terms identify the literature review as an assemblage of published information and data pertinent to a specific topic that refers to scholastic findings relevant to the investigation and reveals what the examiner is trying to determine (Dunne, 2011). The literature review serves as a condensed repository of the most pertinent facts regarding all the most recent developments concerning the use of *SL* in educational forums and can also provide a historical background detailing the growth of such use (Houde, 2009). This literature review will provide an analysis of the documented use of *SL* in educational settings with specific emphasis on the pros and cons. The literature review will also contrast how users interact with the curriculum in real life versus *SL* when used for teaching purposes.

### Pros of *SL* for Education

The success of the *SL* platform can be harnessed and exploited by other activities that unite and incorporated the virtual society empire (Liao, 2008). Advantages such as the 3-D graphic animation in *SL* are superbly beneficial in aiding business and scholastic programs to achieve their objectives using computer-generated virtual models. The dynamic applications allow educators to appeal to each student's multiple intelligences, including logical-mathematical, linguistic, spatial-visual, musical, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, and intrapersonal (Gardner, 1993).

The characteristics of the *SL* community enhances opportunities for learning by facilitating the expression of authentic and collaborative approaches to learning, willingness to help and demonstrate appreciation of others' achievements, participation across diverse communicative domains, and the creation of a supportive atmosphere (Aydin, 2013). The VW of *SL* provides two primary methods for both text and voice-based communication using local chat and Instant Messaging (IM) in the animated 3-D environments to provide synchronous graphical communication where students and instructors can visually share files during a virtual class in real-time (Han, 2011).

Additionally, when creating avatars, users can assign qualities they do not have in reality, such as wealth or physical appeal and the confidence gained can translate to their the real world persona, often without the user being aware (Dell, 2008). Assuming the persona of an avatar provides users with an impression of semi-anonymity that helps some students feel comfortable enough to interact with the instructor and their classmates, which engenders a strong sense of engagement with the class (Baker, Wentz, & Woods, 2009).

Using *SL*, higher education institutions can broaden student learning by focusing on methods that better prepare students to successfully compete in the global economy and serve international communities (Foster, 2008). The expansion of virtual capabilities through the inclusion of voice over internet protocols (VOIP) technologies that permit the transmission of vocal communication enables new ways of collaboration and coordination by internet in three dimensional environments (Gajendra, Sun, & Ye, 2010).



The increasingly competitive nature of professional environments has placed additional pressure on educators to constantly challenge students with practical classroom experiences that mimic actual environments they may encounter in the real world (Goral, 2008). The VW allows educators to simulate stimulating field trip experiences that include traveling to architectural sites, visiting art galleries and science museums, and attending musical performances (Baker, Wentz, & Woods, 2009).

Hundreds of colleges and universities around the globe have taken advantage of the potential offered through *Second Life* to increase their international exposure and create service learning opportunities to further engage students in business simulations that require problem solving activities in real-time (Gajendra, Sun, & Ye, 2010). Universities attempting to attract those in the 'Millennial' or 'Generation Y' demographic cohort have used *Second Life* since this generation is known to have a preference for high-performing experiential activities that include innovative uses of technology (Buckless, Krawczyk, & Showalter, 2012).

Students graduating from universities that provide classroom, recruiting, and developmental experiences through *SL* are considered as excellent candidates for positions within numerous diverse firms and corporations due to this preparation (Savin-Baden, 2010). The emerging trend for employers to target technological and youth-oriented graduates in their recruiting as globalization perpetuates increased online business operations necessitates programs that prepare students to succeed in a highly competitive, rapidly changing international environment (Reinsmith-Jones, Kibbe, Crayton, & Campbell, 2015).

### ***Cons of SL for Education***

As an online platform, the use of *Second Life* in educational forums presents potential drawbacks that can be counterproductive to the facilitation of collaborative communication. Universities that have students in close proximity to each other should not require frequent interactions within *SL* since it is just as easy to have face-to-face meetings (Foster, 2008). The use of *SL* is beneficial when participants are dispersed geographically or when 3-D visual representations are needed to enhance communication that improves understanding among students (Warburton, 2009). The complexity of the assigned activities within the educational forum influences the learners' capacity to complete the task, requiring specific directions from the instructor according to the degree of difficulty in the lesson (Aydin, 2013).

Additional hindrances includes representations of violence and gender stereotypes; the length of time it takes to learn how to navigate, build, interact, and use the avatar; the unprofessional dress and shapes that individuals use for avatars; and the increased technology and update requirements needed to use the *SL* system (Aydin, 2013). Excessive development costs constitutes another problem in using *SL* in addition to complications related to internet connection speed and reliability; time lag constraints; learning curve for new users to become familiar with building in the VW; requirements of roles such as ordinary resident, learner, educator, and developer/builder; space for exploration within the virtual environment; and the virtual setting may have a deleterious influence on the learner experience (Aydin, 2013).

Many educators have the impression that *Second Life* is a waste of time due to excessive technical problems and the abundance of social users that use the VW for sexual experimentation since two-way audio and visual cues that closely resemble person-to-person interactions is possible (Foster, 2008). Since the *SL* platform is also used for socialization, obstacles to healthy use include Internet addiction, online gambling, simulation of violence, access to pornography, misuse of trust, identity and privacy issues, copyright infringement, posting of misleading health information, online vandalism, and the requisite to master new skills relative to the VW user role (Boulos, Hetherington, & Wheeler, 2007). Students engaging in the *SL* VW must be conscientious about the probability for dissemination of false information by others just like when using the regular Internet (Boulos, Hetherington, & Wheeler, 2007).

### ***Second Life vs. Real Life***

The use of virtual worlds such as *Second Life* in the classroom and in business settings is intensifying. From a business perspective, more than 1,400 organizations are using *Second Life* for online collaboration and as a virtual events platform (Suomi, Mäntymäki, & Söderlund, 2014). In educational contexts, *Second Life* is being used to encourage students to engage in collaborative team situations, to extend courses to distance and blended learning environments, to immerse students in creative settings that foster innovative thinking, and to facilitate cultural exchanges (Vanni, 2013).

As many as 13 million people have logged on to *Second Life* at least one time and about 450,000 subscribers from more than 50 countries are online in any given week, ranging in age from 18-72, with 27% being female (Hayes, n.d.). Users in VWs like *Second Life* can build customizable 3-D avatars as a “tangible embodiment of their identity” through personalization with clothing and purchase virtual real estate to develop by creating buildings (Ducheneaut, Wen, Yee, & Wadley, 2009, p. 1151). Avatars root their users within the virtual space the same way our corporeal bodies enmesh us in physical space and the MUVes facilitate immersive experiences (Taylor, 2002). The avatars enable users to discover an assortment of virtual businesses and sites that are perpetually changing since anyone can fabricate all sorts of items on their virtual property (Hayes, n.d.).

Researchers have begun to conduct studies to analyze the way self-perception formed through interactions in VWs affects behaviors in the real world (Dell, 2008). The choices users make when creating and customizing their avatar will have repercussions on their interactions with other users, which can cause users to create online personas that are sometimes the complete opposite of who they are in real life (Ducheneaut, Wen, Yee, & Wadley, 2009).

Users can infuse their avatars with “aspects of their ideal selves”, and engage in gender or ethnicity swapping, which can have positive connotations for those that have low self-esteem (Ducheneaut, Wen, Yee, & Wadley, 2009). The ability to “...do, create or become just about anything you can imagine” in the VW can result in people adapting qualities that spill over and change their demeanor in the real world (Dell, 2008; Hayes, n.d.).

This reaction frequently occurs without the person being aware of the shift and research has determined that as little as 90 seconds spent interacting with avatars online is sufficient to bring forth behavioral changes offline due to augmentation to the individual’s self-perception and self-confidence (Dell, 2008). These experiences have positive outcomes for the user in real life because they internalize these virtual experiences and their responses to them with effects that transcend into reality (Carey, 2010). For millions of people, belonging to a virtual community is liberating, equitable and empowering, allowing them to be the person and do the things they wish they could in the real world (Bakardjieva, 2011).

Opponents of VWs insist that *SL* is not a ‘real’ community, stating that the immediacy and locality of human relationships resists technological mediation is absent from these virtual spaces, which disqualifies them from being ‘communities’ (Bakardjieva, 2011). Users disagree, maintaining that the virtual environment and the connections their avatars form with others is quite real since they can convey opinions or feelings, play, greet others, signal group affiliation, and create closeness with their digital bodies (Taylor, 2002).

The *SL* platform was designed to enable users to pursue economic, social, fantasy, and real activities including the buying and selling of virtual products and services within its own economy using Linden dollars (L\$), which is the currency of *Second Life* (Mennecke, et al., 2008). Users can buy or rent building space, furniture, art, and other virtual products for their avatars or buildings in addition to consulting, advertising, and other services that may be linked with real-world goods and services (Mennecke, et al., 2008).

A virtual ‘bank’ in *SL* where residents deposited L\$ changed its guidelines to limit withdrawals and ultimately disappeared from the virtual world, mimicking the real-world bank failures (Mennecke, et al., 2008). This resulted in affected *Second Life* users being ‘scammed’ out of a considerable sum of L\$, producing cumulative losses of about \$700,000 in real money (Mennecke, et al., 2008). Since Linden currency is considered an element of the service provided by Linden Research, the legal consequences of this unfortunate incident remain uncertain since this same scenario occurring in real life would be subject to class action legal recovery of damages (Mennecke, et al., 2008).

### Research Method

The vast network of registered *SL* users portrayed by their avatars makes it easy to conduct research through this platform because there is a diverse pool of potential participants often willing to help researchers by giving interviews (Mennecke, et al., 2008). This is beneficial because the *SL* environment is ideal for conducting a formal interview anonymously and assists the researcher in administering surveys (Mennecke, et al., 2008).

The research methodology employed exploited the accessibility of potential subjects by posting a 24 question survey within the VW of *SL* so that subject selection was completely randomized. The survey uses a combination of multiple choice, ‘Yes/No,’ and Likert scale questions ranging from ‘Strongly Agree, Somewhat Agree, No Opinion, Somewhat Disagree, and Strongly Disagree’ for the response choices.

The instructions for the survey specifically sought the opinions of college students age 18 or over that had taken a course through traditional classroom or online methods and got a low or failing grade, so retook the course when offered using the SL platform. Approximately 321 responses to the survey was received, but only 250 (n=250) were fully completed and returned in time to be included in the research.

The survey is designed to aid the research in presenting an explanatory design with the specific intention of answering questions clouded in ambiguity related to how SL influences the educational experience in colleges and universities (Graziano & Raulin, 2009). Using the explanatory research design provides an opportunity to articulate a hypothesis concerning potential opportunities and problems found in the decision situation (Jackson, 2014).

The explanatory research design primarily focuses on identifying the specific challenges or opportunities of the situation in which the circumstances of interest expect to reside, and distinguish the noticeable variables or factors that might be present and of significance to the research (Creswell, 2009). Additionally, the explanatory research design also determines the reasons behind the discovered facts (Flick, 2011).

### ***Investigational Framework***

The investigational framework for this research is based on the diverse paradigms of student engagement. The quality or degree of student engagement and interactions within any scholastic program is commonly a reflection of the pedagogical knowledge, educational background, and skill levels of the faculty, which has an enormous impact on the performance and level of achievement of the students within the program (Shipman, Queen, & Peel, 2007). Knowledge of the importance of this criterion has encouraged school reformers to insist on the establishment of effective performance standards designed to measure the success of school leaders and strengthen educational leadership as a whole. The main research is based on how well the study questions will be answered applying an explanatory design to establish how comprehension and retention are improved through the tacit and explicit experiences provided through the use of SL in educational settings.

### **Comprehension and Retention of Information**

Comprehension indicates the degree in which the student understands the material being taught, which determines whether the individual will be able to implement the concepts into practice (Grundstein, 2012). The level of comprehension is also part of what constructs the students' foundation of fundamental knowledge that may be used to build on in later experiences, which enhances the perceived competency of the individual.

Strong comprehension of the subject matter being taught can enable your students to maximize the learning experience and ensure retention of the lesson. Retention indicates the extent in which the student recollects the details of the material taught in addition to their comprehension of the lesson (Nonaka, 2007). The presentation of each lesson is reiterated through example using the inductive instructional method that incorporates examples and repetition of patterns so that maximum retention is anticipated (Nassaji & Fotos, 2011).

While comprehension may be a permanent condition, retention of information is temporally limited and understanding the typical time patterns of recollection is critical to optimizing the reinforcement of details so that some of the knowledge gained persists for at least three months or more (Bell, et al., 2008). Studying the original lessons or practicing recollection are two common methods for improving retention of materials learned (Bell, et al., 2008). Self-efficacy and the extent that the student establishes learner associations are additional factors that can influence retention (Bell, et al., 2008).

### **Tacit and Explicit Knowledge**

Tacit knowledge is defined as personal information concerning a precise situation and entails the recognition of the unstated expertise of others, which can include community or contextual details, organization-specific understandings, and past experiences (Kanapeckiene, Kaklauskas, Zavadskas, & Seniut, 2010). Stemming from individual experiences, tacit knowledge is unique to each person because it is based on the party's application, aims, perspective, and understanding of the situation (Foos, Schum, & Rothenburg, 2006). The origins of tacit knowledge make it difficult to prove, verbalize, or specify because it stems from peoples' personal conceptualization of actual events that may be unknown to others (Lam, 2000).

Explicit knowledge stems from details provided through establishment of regulations and legislation; formal evaluations such as interviews and surveys; current magazines; the Internet; research literature; and other publications (Smedlund, 2009). Explicit knowledge is attained indirectly and studied to decode information regarding systematic or formal details using individual mental models of each person that can be classified as

explicit (Kanapeckiene, Kaklauskas, Zavadskas, & Seniut, 2010). Although explicit knowledge refers to details people can record and simply transfer to others, tacit knowledge results from experience, and consequently, is more challenging to convey (Stenmark, 2001).

Explicit and tacit learning are epistemological types of knowledge and Table 2 illustrates a framework that identifies several forms of tacit and explicit knowledge (Grundstein, 2012).

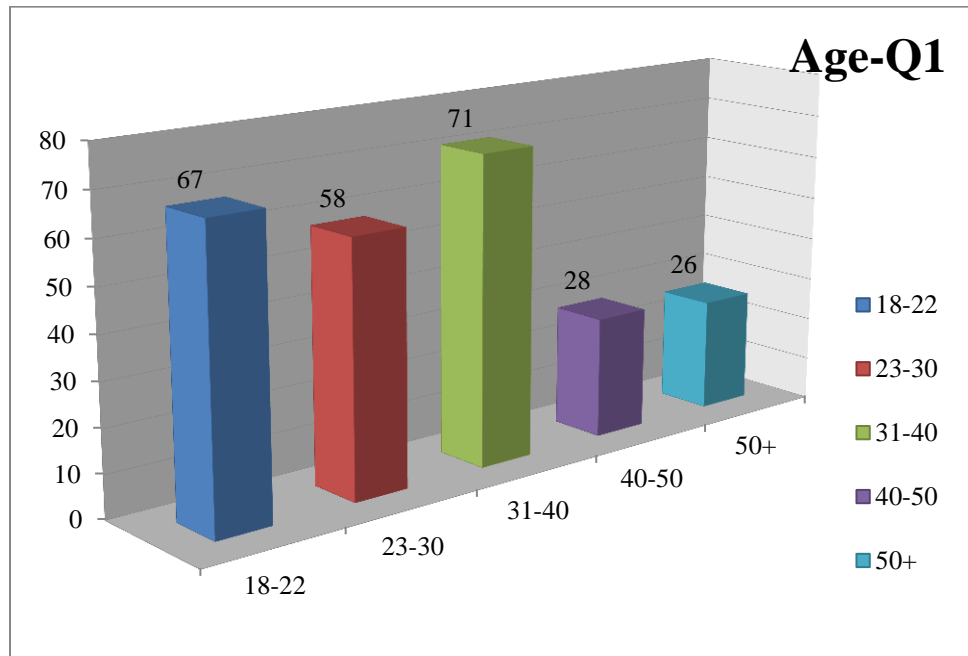
Defining Tacit & Explicit Knowledge		
Tacit Knowledge		Explicit Knowledge
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drawn from experience and is the most powerful form of knowledge</li> <li>• Difficult to articulate formally</li> <li>• Difficult to communicate and share</li> <li>• Includes privately held insights, feelings, culture and values</li> <li>• Hard to steal or copy</li> <li>• Shared only when individuals are willing to engage in social interaction</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can become obsolete quickly</li> <li>• Formal articulation possible, and can be processed and stored by automated means, or other media</li> <li>• Easily communicated and shared</li> <li>• Formally articulated and public</li> <li>• Can be copied and imitated easily</li> <li>• Can be transmitted</li> </ul>
	<b>individual</b>	<b>collective</b>
<b>Tacit</b>	Intuitiveness.. something To do learning, usually do with combine the knowledge and the experience that the people have.	Social practice.. It's means togetherness, in the organization there are so many people that have a experience to solved the problem. And offcourse that the ability must be usefull to solved everything the problems.
<b>explicit</b>	Expertise.. In the organization there are the people have diffrent ability . so one of the people must have a more ability than other, to help the other to overcome the problems, and also share with other how to do it.	Rules .. The rules is written or unwritten ,that's to made by organization to increase the effectiveness and efficiency in the process in organizations.

Table 2: Interpretations of Tacit & Explicit Knowledge

As shown in Table 2, explicit knowledge specifically refers to all formal and systematic facts, data, and awareness that can be easily shared or disseminated through manuals, rules procedures, or other social constructs, so it is simpler and more undemanding to transmit explicit knowledge than tacit knowledge (Nonaka, Byosiene, Borucki, & Konno, 1994).

## Results

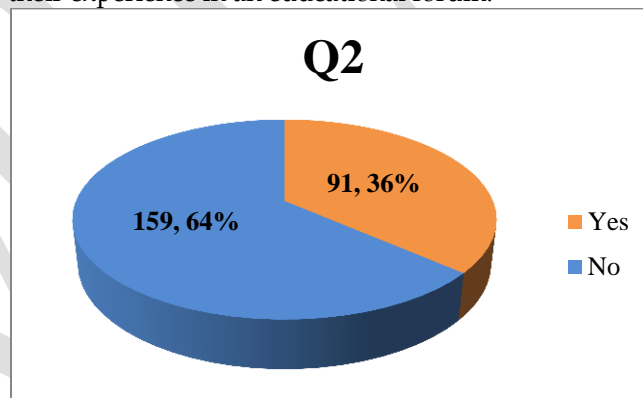
The results of the survey, shown in *Table 8* of Appendix A, were aggregated using Microsoft Excel with the details of each question analyzed and illustrated in tables as well as graphs. The first question of the survey, shown in Figure 1, asked the age of each participant.



**Figure 1: Ages of Participants- Q1**

The demography of the participants was primarily dispersed amongst the age groups of 18-22, 23-30, and 31-40 at 26% or 67, 23% or 58, and 28% or 71, respectively followed by ages 40-50 at 11% or 28 and 10% or 26 participants 50 and over.

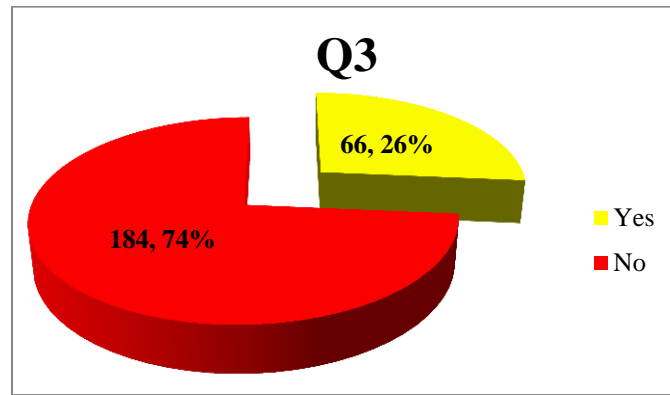
Survey questions 2-8 are regarding the tacit knowledge participants may have regarding the *Second Life* platform or other MUVE/MMOGs prior to using *SL* in an educational setting and the ease of use during their classroom experience. The second question, shown in Figure 2, establishes how many participants had experience with the second life platform prior to their experience in an educational forum.



**Figure 2: Previous use of Second Life- Q2**

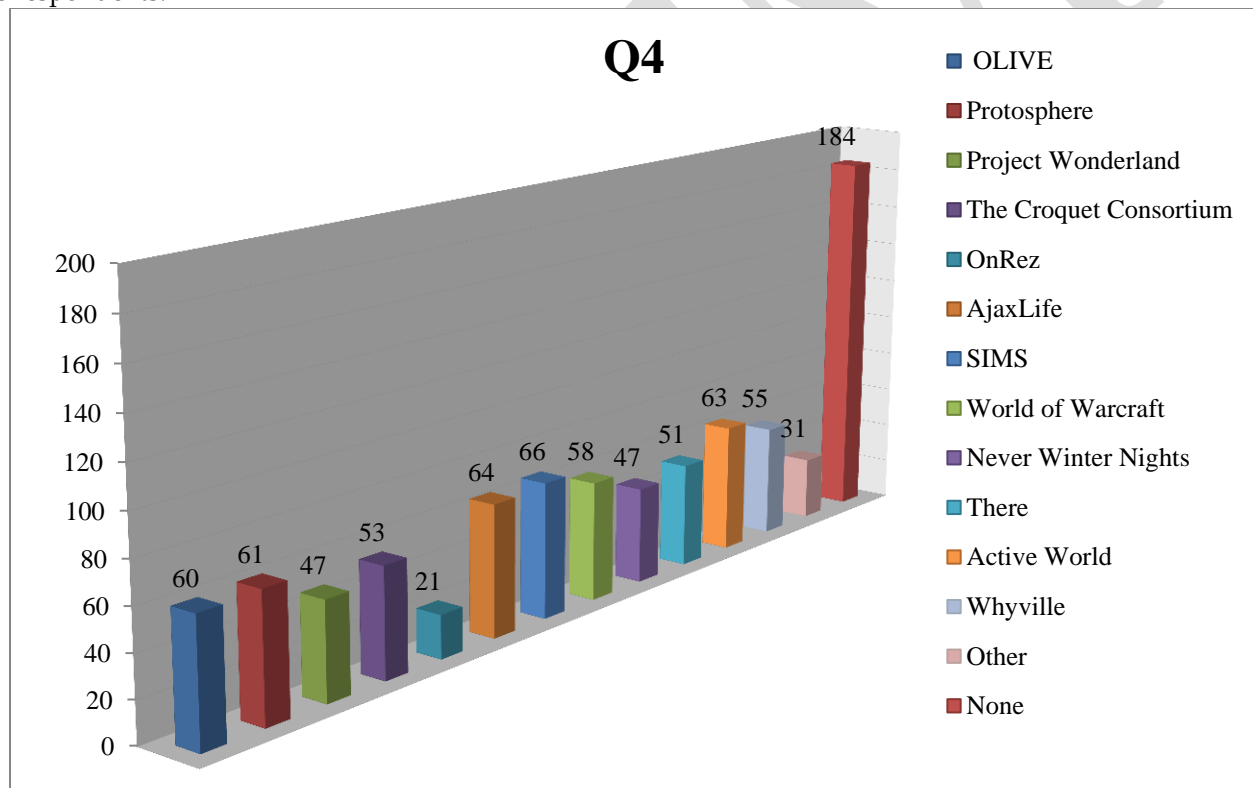
The majority of participants, 64% or 159, indicated that they had never used *SL* prior to taking the class while 36% or 91 participants stated they had.

The third question asks whether participants had experience using other MUVE/MMOGs prior to their experience with *SL* in the educational forum. The majority of respondents, 74% or 184, indicated that they had no previous experience with using any other MUVE/MMOGs prior to their experience with *SL* in the educational forum while 26% or 66 stated that they did.



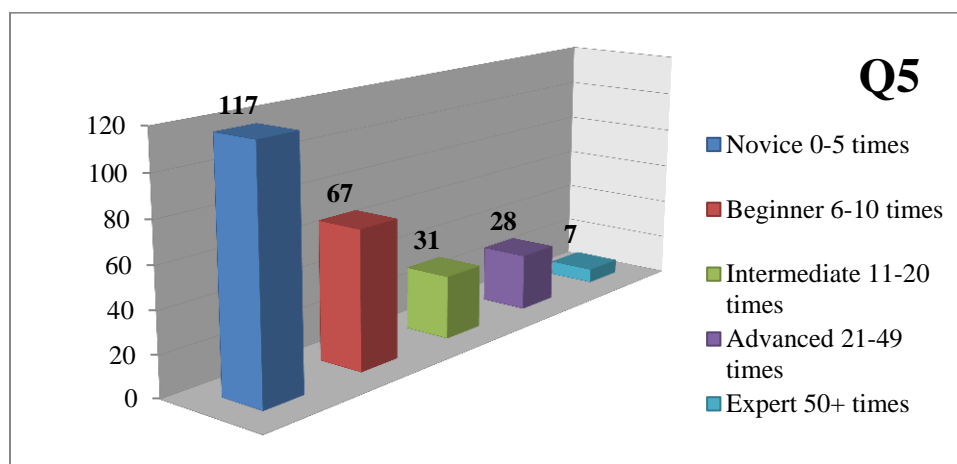
*Figure 3: Experience with other MUVE/MMOGs Q3*

The fourth question, illustrated in Figure 4, allows the selection of multiple responses and asks whether the participants have experience using any other MUVE/MMOGs besides *SL* prior to their use of the platform in the educational setting. Since multiple responses were permitted, the total results for this question exceed 100% of the respondents.



*Figure 4: MUVE/MMOG Experience Q4*

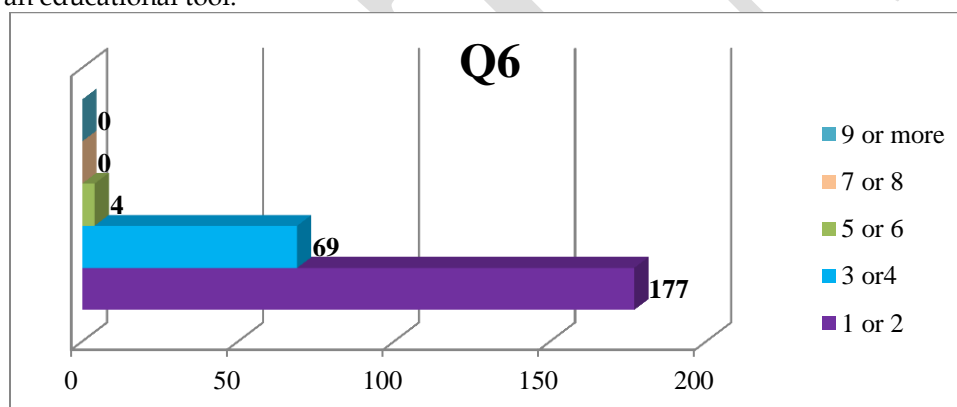
While the majority of the participants, 73% or 184, indicated that they had no experience with any MUVE/MMOG platform before their educational experience using *SL*, the remaining 26% or 66 indicated that they had experience using more than one platform. The most popular virtual worlds were OLIVE, Protosphere, Ajax, SIMS, and Active World, with 60 or more respondents claiming experiential knowledge within these VWs. The fifth question, shown in Figure 5, measures the degree of familiarity the participant has in *SL* based on the level of prior use, with a rating scale of Novice, Beginner, Intermediate, Advanced, and Expert that denotes frequency of use 0-5, 6-10, 11-20, 21-49, or 50+ times, respectively.



**Figure 5: Familiarity with Second Life Q5**

Nearly half the participants, 117 or 46.8%, indicated they were novices, having used *SL* five times or less prior to their educational experience. The next largest group, beginners, encompassed 26.8% or 67 participants, followed by 31 or 12% for intermediate users, 28 or 11% being advanced users, and 7 or 2% claiming expert familiarity with *Second Life*.

Question six, illustrated in Figure 6, asks participants to specify how many courses they have taken that uses the *SL* platform as an educational tool.

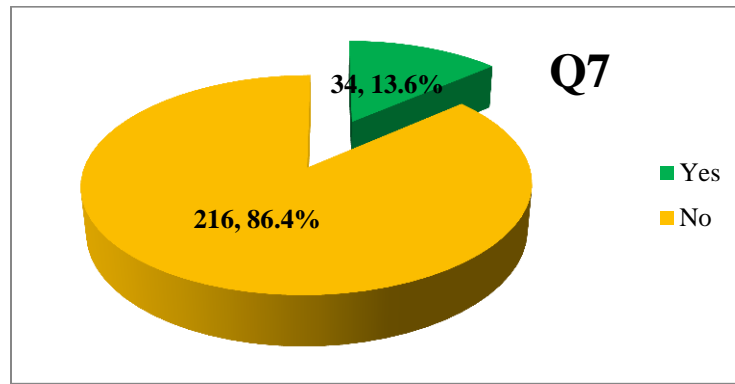


**Figure 6: Courses taken in Second Life Q6**

Over half the participants, 177 or 70.8%, indicate they have only taken one or two courses using the *SL* platform while 69 or 27.6% stated they had taken three to four courses and the remaining 4 participants or 1.6% said they had taken five or six classes that used *SL*.

The next question that measures the initial tacit knowledge of the participants asks about the level of difficulty participants had navigating through the class in the *SL* platform. Question seven, shown in Figure 7, illustrates that 216 or 86.4% stated it was not difficult to navigate the online *SL* platform while the remaining 34 or 13.6% said they experienced difficulty.





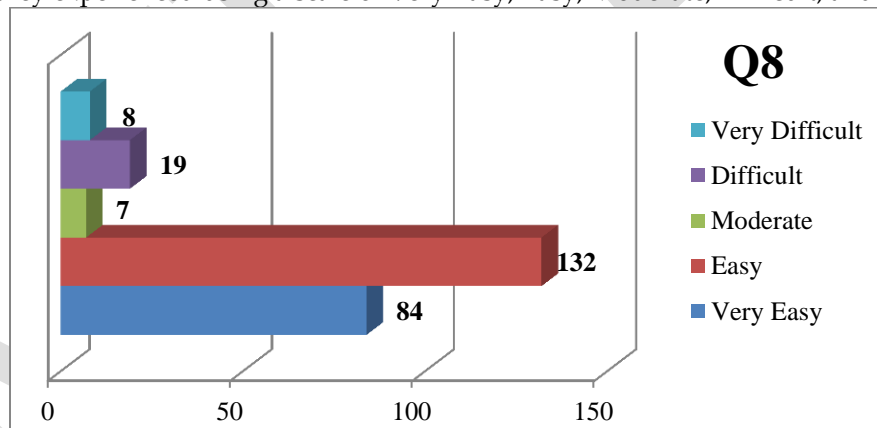
*Figure 7: Navigating Second Life Q7*

The correlation analysis in Table 2 shows the responses from questions two and seven to demonstrate the strength in the relationship between previous use of *SL* and the ease of navigating through the platform in the educational forum.

	Yes	No
Yes	1	
No	-1	1

Table 3: Correlation Analysis Q2 & Q7

The correlation analysis shows that there is strong positive relationship between a 'yes' response to both questions while the relationship weakens when there is a 'yes/no' response to the questions. The final question regarding initial tacit knowledge is shown in Figure 8, where the question asked request participants to rate the level of difficulty they experienced using a scale of Very Easy, Easy, Moderate, Difficult, and Very Difficult.



*Figure 8: Level of Difficulty Q8*

While 84 or 33.6% found navigating the *SL* platform 'very easy,' an additional 132 or 52.8% thought navigation was 'easy' and 19 or 3.6% found it 'difficult' while 7 or 2.8% indicated navigation difficulty was 'moderate' and the remaining 8 or 3.2% said it was 'very difficult' to navigate *SL*.

Questions 9-12, graphically illustrated in Figure 9 also measure the presence of tacit knowledge in regards to the benefits students realized by taking the course using the *SL* platform. The questions used a Likert scale ranging from 'Strongly Agree,' 'Somewhat Agree,' 'No Opinion,' 'Somewhat Disagree,' and 'Strongly Disagree' where participants indicate their level of agreement with the statements that describe how *SL* impacted their tacit knowledge.



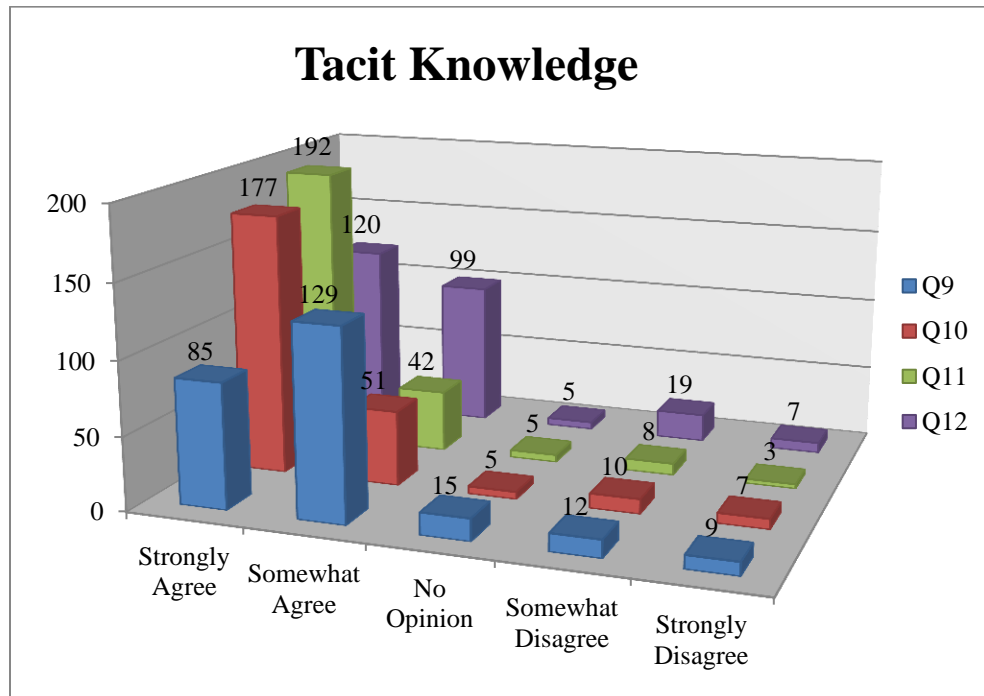


Figure 9: Tacit Knowledge Q9-Q12

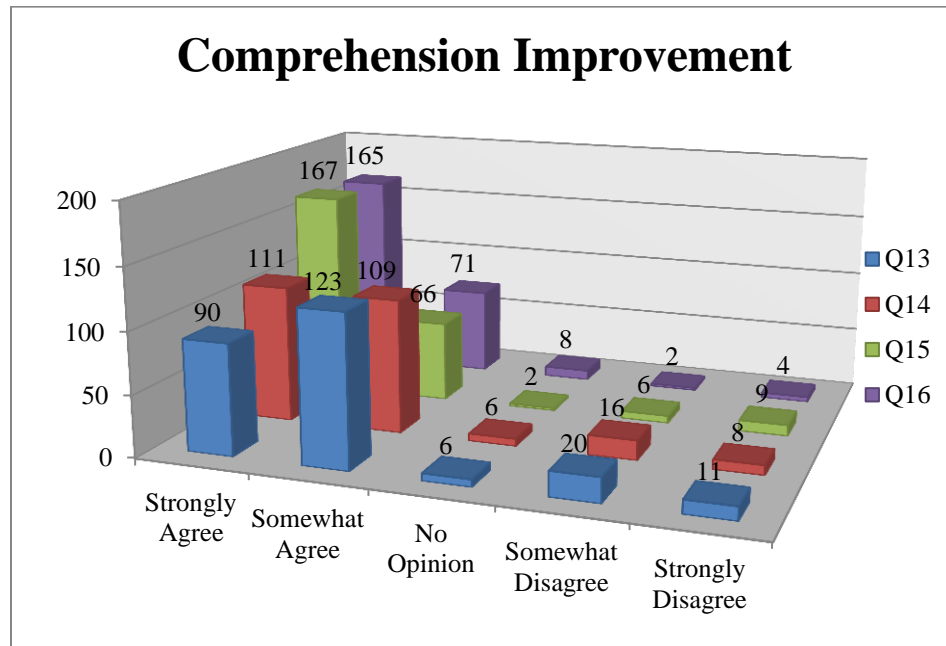
Question nine is regarding whether the use of *Second Life* in education increased interest in learning the material and 85 participants or 34% selected 'strongly agree' while 129 or 51.6% said they 'somewhat agree' that *SL* improved their interest in the curriculum. The tenth question states that the use of the *Second Life* platform provided realistic scenarios that fostered learning, which the majority of participants, 177 or 70.8%, 'indicated they 'strongly agreed' to. Another 51 participants or 20.4% indicated they 'somewhat agree' to the statement. The eleventh question was regarding the participants' impressions of the overall degree of improvement in retention presentation of the activity in the *Second Life* platform facilitated and 192 or 76.8% stated they 'strongly agree' that they experienced improvement while 42 or 16.8% said they 'somewhat agree' that their retention improved. Question 12 states that the participant would recommend use of *Second Life* to facilitate retention of information and 120 participants or 48% indicated they 'strongly agree' while another 99 or 39.6% said they 'somewhat agree' with this contention.

A correlation analysis was conducted for questions 9-12, shown in Table 3, which highlights a strong positive relationship between indications of 'strongly agree' and 'somewhat agree' responses amongst all four questions.

	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Somewhat Agree</i>	<i>No Opinion</i>	<i>Somewhat Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>
<i>Strongly Agree</i>	1				
<i>Somewhat Agree</i>	-0.99937	1			
<i>No Opinion</i>	-0.78267	0.792388	1		
<i>Somewhat Disagree</i>	-0.59459	0.581882	-0.03482	1	
<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	-0.82667	0.808956	0.662266	0.456532	1

Table 4: Correlation Analysis for Q9-Q12

Questions 13-16, shown in Figure 10, are intended to measure the extent of improvement in the participants' comprehension of the material due to the presentation of the curriculum using the *Second Life* platform. The statement in question 13 denoted the realistic influence of *Second Life* as an interactive educational experience to facilitate understanding of the curriculum and 90 participants or 36% indicated they 'strongly agree' that *SL* improved comprehension over traditional classroom or online means. Additionally, 123 participants or 49% denoted that they 'somewhat agree' that the *SL* platform aided their comprehension.



**Figure 10: Measure of Improvement in Comprehension Q13-Q16**

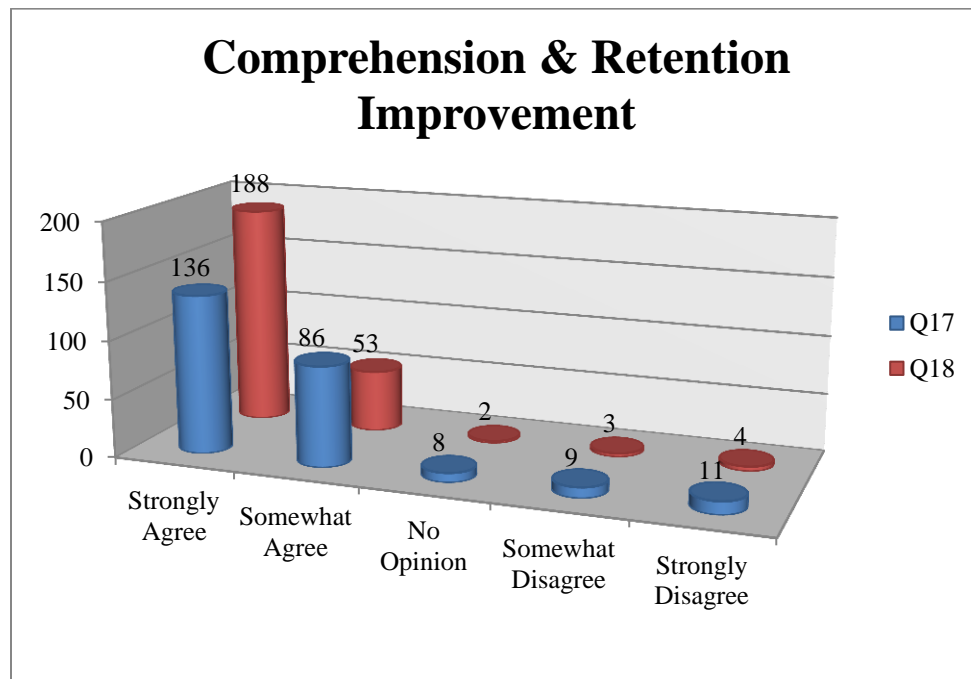
The statement in question 14 refers to the user's ability to interact with objects in the lesson using the *Second Life* platform and 111 respondents or 44.4% 'strongly agree' with another 109 or 43.6% 'somewhat agree' that the *SL* platform was an effective learning approach. Question 15 states the *Second Life* VW platform was an effective learning approach to teach specific procedures associated with realistic concepts and 167 participants or 6.8% 'strongly agree' while another 66 or 26.4% 'somewhat agree' with the premise. The statement in question 16 measured the degree of comfort participants had with the use of *Second Life* to engage in educational activities and 165 or 66% 'strongly agree' while another 71 or 28.4% 'somewhat agree' that they were comfortable with using *SL*.

A correlation analysis for this series of questions is presented in Table 4, which shows a perfect positive correlation for questions 13-16 when the responses are 'strongly agree' or 'somewhat agree' amongst all four questions.

	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Somewhat Agree</i>	<i>No Opinion</i>	<i>Somewhat Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>
<b>Strongly Agree</b>	1				
<b>Somewhat Agree</b>	-0.99851	1			
<b>No Opinion</b>	-0.24418	0.294732	1		
<b>Somewhat Disagree</b>	-0.97637	0.964221	0.031513	1	
<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	-0.65102	0.608715	-0.53991	0.78122	1

Table 5: Correlation Analysis for Q13-Q16

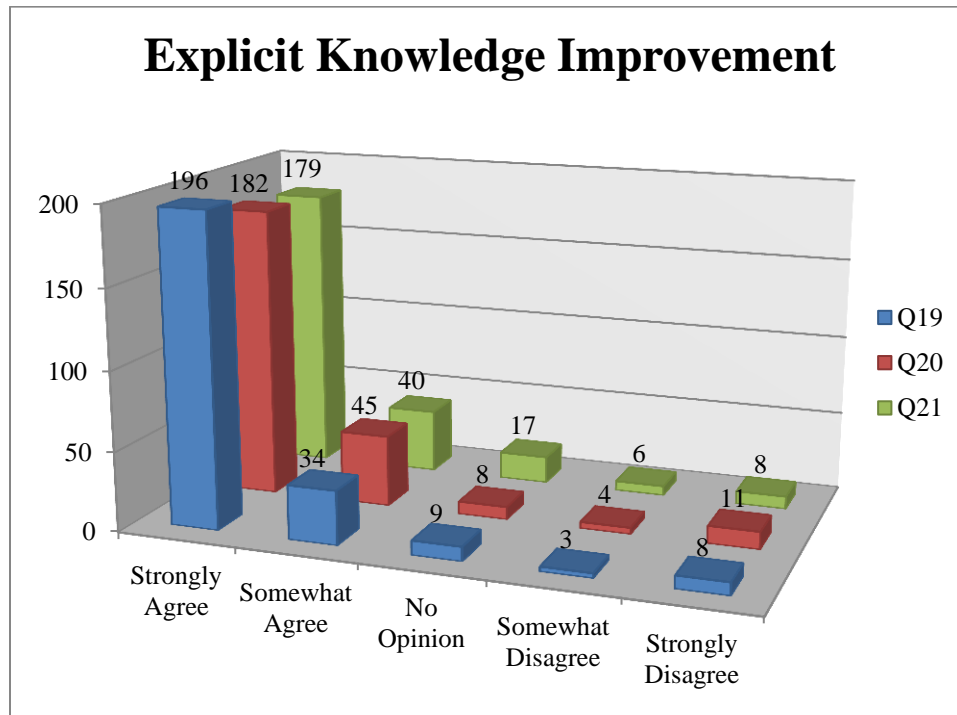
The series of questions representing both comprehension and retention are shown in Figure 11 where question 17 states that interaction with the course material through *Second Life* increased comprehension and retention of the material over traditional classroom or online methods. Responses indicated that 136 or 54.4% 'strongly agree' and 86 or 34.4% 'somewhat agree' that *SL* use improved both comprehension and retention of curricular material.



*Figure 11: Comprehension & Retention Improvement Q17-Q18*

Question 18 asked whether the participants earned a better grade using *Second Life* than traditional classroom or online methods and 188 participants or 75.2% 'strongly agree' while 53 21.2% 'somewhat agree' that their grade improved.

The next group of questions measured participants' improvement of explicit knowledge with question 19 stating that *Second Life* use improved process knowledge relative to skills taught over taking the class through traditional classroom or online methods. The majority of participants, 196 or 78.4%, indicated they 'strongly agree' with another 34 or 13.6% 'somewhat agree' with this statement.



**Figure 12: Improvement of Explicit Knowledge Q19-Q21**

Question 20 stated that the use of *Second Life* in the educational forum improved student self-efficacy over taking the class through traditional classroom or online methods with 182 or 72.8% denoting that they 'strongly agree' and 45 or 18% saying they 'somewhat agree' with the statement. The last question in this group, question 21, stated that students would recommend other instructors use *Second Life* to provide an interactive activity in the future with 179 or 71.6% stating that they 'strongly agree' and 40 or 16% indicating they 'somewhat agree' with the statement.

Questions 22 and 23, shown in Figure 13, highlight participant impressions regarding improvement in tacit knowledge with question 22 stating that *Second Life* use facilitates improvement in student abilities to associate curricular elements with real situations better than when the class was experienced through traditional classroom or online methods. The number of participants that indicated they 'strongly agree' and 'somewhat agree' was nearly the same with 115 or 46% selecting the former and 113 or 45.6% choosing the latter.

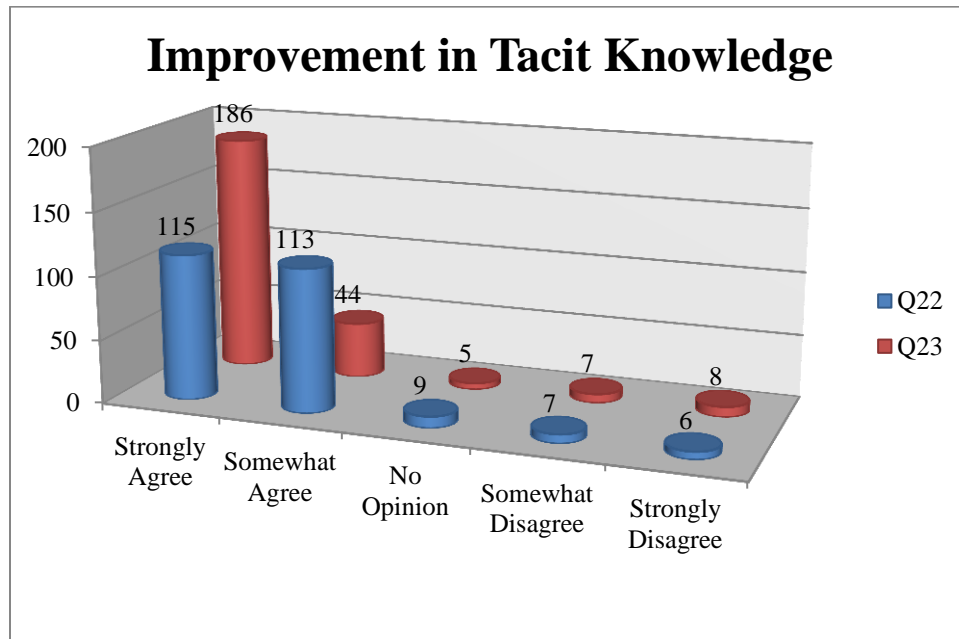


Figure 13: Tacit Knowledge Improvement Q22-Q23

The statement in question 20 posits that the students' ability to revisit complex situations using *Second Life* supported the development of experiential knowledge that contributed to their understanding of the curricular material and 186 participants or 74.4% indicated that they 'strongly agree' while 44 or 17.6% said they 'somewhat agree' with the intonation. The correlation analysis for questions 17-23 is shown in Table 5 and illustrates a perfect positive relationship between each question when a 'strongly agree' response is given

	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Somewhat Agree</i>	<i>No Opinion</i>	<i>Somewhat Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>
<b>Strongly Agree</b>	1				
<b>Somewhat Agree</b>	-0.9739	1			
<b>No Opinion</b>	-0.11984	-0.07647	1		
<b>Somewhat Disagree</b>	-0.70954	0.602119	0.217978	1	
<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	-0.06041	-0.10235	0.316153	0.374476	1

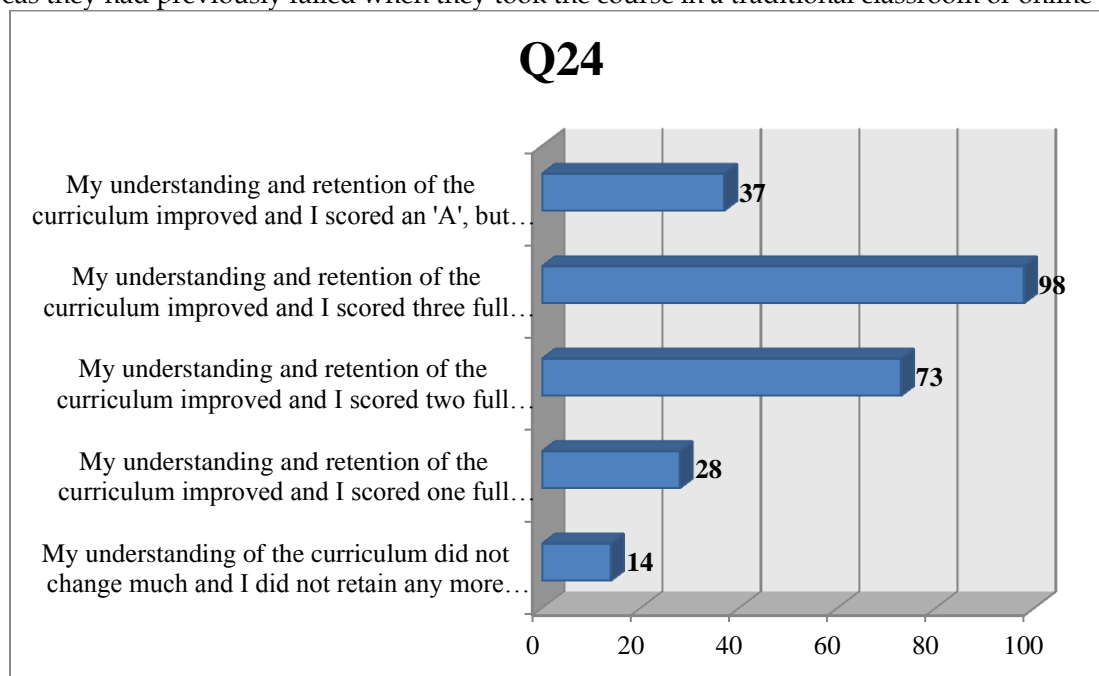
Table 6: Correlation Analysis Q17-Q23

The final question of the survey measures the degree of improvement in their grade the student experienced retaking the course using the *SL* platform. Using the grading scale shown in Table 7, students were asked to select the statement that best represented their experience in taking the same course using traditional classroom or online methods in comparison to experiencing the course including the *SL* platform.

Letter Grade	Numeric Percentage
A	90-100%
B+	87-89%
B	80-86%
C+	77-79%
C	70-76%
D	60-69%
F	Below 60%

Table 7: Grading Scale

The results for this question shown in Figure 14 indicate that 98 or 39.2% of the respondents agreed that their understanding and retention of the curriculum improved and they scored three full grades higher than when they took the course in a traditional classroom or online setting, as in from a 'F' to a 'B' as a final grade. The next largest margin of improvement was 73 or 29.2% stating they gained two full grades higher from a 'F' to a 'C' followed by 37 or 14.8% indicating their understanding and retention improved to the extent that they scored an 'A' whereas they had previously failed when they took the course in a traditional classroom or online setting.



**Figure 14: Educational Improvement from SL Experience Q24**

The next largest margin showed that 28 participants or 11.2% said their understanding and retention improved their grade from a 'F' to a 'D' as opposed to when they took the course in a traditional classroom or online setting and 14 respondents or 5.6% said their retention of the material and understanding of the curriculum did not change enough to improve their grade versus when they took the course in a traditional classroom or online method.

## Discussion

Curricular guidelines that comprise educational demands indicate that it is no longer sufficient to simply equip students with fundamental skills because they must learn how to constantly adapt their skills to new situations (Mahon, Bryant, Brown, & Kim, 2010). The integration of *Second Life* is extraordinary because it permits different group conferences, which allow the dual audio and graphic indications that strictly draw similarities during in-person conventions (Ahn, Bailenson, & Park, 2014). According to many examiners, every curriculum includes situation that discuss daily events and *SL* allows students to experience performing actual interactions successfully to train their reactions.

Through the *Second Life* program, a considerable amount of tacit and explicit information can be exchanged between individuals through exchanges between their avatars. The surveys demonstrated that the learning curve was not as steep as posited in some literature and many students were able to significantly benefit from the use of virtual details to illustrate aspects within the curriculum (Hayes, n.d.). The popularity of the use of *SL* is examined through three critical components of the virtual environment experience: technical, immersive, and social.

The questions regarding tacit knowledge illustrated that prior experience using virtual platforms similar to or including *SL* made navigation within the educational setting easier and can be inferred to aid in the diminishment of the learning curve. The acquisition of explicit knowledge can be inferred to facilitate improved outcomes in the comprehension of the lesson since this also makes it easier to navigate within the *SL* VW so that

the student can benefit from direct engagement. The efficacy of the use of SL for educational purposes is supported by the number of participants that indicated their grade improved by at least one letter grade due to the inclusion of the SL platform for classwork.

### Conclusion

The socio-technical environments of virtual worlds such as Second Life demonstrate the potential for teachers to appeal to diverse intelligences in their students through successful implementation of 3-D immersive spaces in education. This reflects the general nature of a term that draws on multiple writings of the virtual and the difficulties in attempting to fix descriptions in an area that is undergoing persistent technological development. The thought of *Second Life* as an educational place is not a new idea, but this idea now has more and more possibilities. Now more than ever, using this environment properly and creatively is an important consideration for all educators (Ahn, Bailenson, & Park, 2014). Within the constructivist paradigm, learning is not viewed as the transmission of ideas, facts, and theories, but rather learning is considered a process of constructing activities that allow learners to create, problem-solve, make decisions, and reflect enhance engagement and learning (Ahn, Bailenson, & Park, 2014). The 3-D animated VWs like *Second Life* can be good tools for delivering educational material to enhance learners' motivation level regarding thinking skills and consolidation, lowers their anxiety, attracts their interest in learning, and creates a positive potential that enables self-regulation. Furthermore, *SL* causes positive attitudes towards the implementation of paradigms gained through learning experiences and improves collaborative interaction. The inclusion of *SL* can also be used in multicultural contexts to increase learners' awareness of diverse perspectives to improve communicative competence and provides a cultural competence environment (Childs, Schnieders, & Williams, 2012). This is beneficial to engagement and participation of students due to the authentic and collaborative learning environment that enhances participation and engagement, supports and encourages learners to engage with language and linguistic behavior regarding learners' involvement, and makes them innovative and imaginative.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A

Table 8: Aggregate Survey Questions & Results

<i>Second Life in Education Survey</i>							
Please answer each question completely by selecting the choice or choices that best apply.							
	Q 1	Age					
		What is your age range?	18-22	23-30	30-40	40-50	50+
			67	58	71	28	26
		<b>Experience with Second Life</b>					
Tacit Knowledge Improvement	Q 2	Have you used <i>Second Life</i> before your experience with the platform in an educational setting?	Yes			No	
						42	208
	Q 3	Have you used another 3D Multi User Virtual Environments (MUVE) or Massively Multiplayer Online Games (MMOGs) platform before your experience with <i>Second Life</i> in an educational setting?	Yes			No	
						66	184
	Q 4	Other than <i>Second Life</i> , which Multi User Virtual Environments (MUVE) or Massively Multiplayer Online Games (MMOGs) platform do you have experience with? (Select all that apply)					

						OLIVE	60
						Photosphere	61
						Project Wonderlan d	47
						The Croquet Consortium	53
						OnRez	21
						Ajax Life	64
						SIMS	66
						World of Warcraft	58
						Never Winter Nights	47
						None	184
Q 5	How would you rate your level of familiarity with <i>Second Life</i> before you used the platform in an educational setting?	Novice	Beginner	Intermediate	Advanced	Expert	
	Level of prior use:	1-5 times	6-10 times	10-20 times	21-49 times	50+ times	
		117	67	31	28	7	
Q 6	How many courses have you taken that used the <i>Second Life</i> virtual platform?	1 or 2	3 or 4	5 or 6	7 or 8	9 or more	
		177	69	4	0	0	
Q 7	Was it difficult to navigate through the <i>Second Life</i> platform for use in the educational forum?	Yes	No				
		34	216				
Q 8	Rate the level of difficulty you experienced navigating the <i>Second Life</i> platform for your use in the educational setting?	Very Easy	Easy	Moderate	Difficult	Very Difficult	
		84	132	7	19	8	
<b>Benefits of Second Life Use</b>							
Choose ONE response that best describes how much you agree with each statement.							
Improve	Q9	Use of the <i>Second Life</i> platform in an educational activity increased my interest in learning the material	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	No Opinion	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
			85	129	15	12	9

Improvement in Comprehension	Q10	Use of the <i>Second Life</i> platform provided a more realistic sense of an actual scenario, which helped me grasp the material better	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	No Opinion	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
			177	51	5	10	7
	Q11	Overall, the activity presented in the <i>Second Life</i> platform helped me remember and retain more details than a traditional (classroom or online) learning experience	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	No Opinion	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
			192	42	5	8	3
	Q12	I would recommend that the instructor use <i>Second Life</i> to create realistic conditions for better retention of information	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	No Opinion	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
			120	99	5	19	7
Improvement in Comprehension	Q13	Use of the <i>Second Life</i> platform to create an interactive experience provided a more realistic sense of an actual situation that aided my understanding of the curriculum over traditional (classroom or online) means	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	No Opinion	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
			90	123	6	20	11
	Q14	Use of the <i>Second Life</i> platform to interact with objects in the lesson was an effective learning approach	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	No Opinion	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
			111	109	6	16	8
	Q15	How would you rate your level of familiarity with Second Life before you used the platform in an educational setting?	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	No Opinion	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
			167	66	2	6	9
Improvement in Comprehension	Q16	I was comfortable with using <i>Second Life</i> to engage in educational activities	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	No Opinion	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
			165	71	8	2	4

Retention & Comprehension	Q1 7	Interaction with the course material through <i>Second Life</i> was more effective in helping me understand and remember the material than when I took the course through traditional means (classroom or online)	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	No Opinion	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
			136	86	8	9	11
	Q1 8	Using <i>Second Life</i> to take the course resulted in a better grade than when I took the class through traditional (classroom or online) methods	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	No Opinion	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
			188	53	2	3	4
Explicit Knowledge Improvement	Q1 9	Use of the <i>Second Life</i> platform led to improvement in process knowledge relative to skills taught over taking the class through traditional (classroom or online) methods	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	No Opinion	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
			196	34	9	3	8
	Q2 0	Use of the <i>Second Life</i> platform led to improvement in self-efficacy over taking the class through traditional (classroom or online) methods	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	No Opinion	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
			182	45	8	4	11
	Q2 1	I would recommend that the instructor use <i>Second Life</i> to provide an interactive activity next year	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	No Opinion	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
			179	40	17	6	8
Tacit Knowledge Improvement	Q2 2	Use of the <i>Second Life</i> platform led to improvement in my abilities to connect elements of the teaching to learning outcomes better than when I took the class through traditional (classroom or online) methods	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	No Opinion	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
			115	113	9	7	6
	Q2 3	The ability to revisit complex situations using <i>Second Life</i> to build experiential knowledge contributed to my understanding of the curricular material	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	No Opinion	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
			186	44	5	7	8

Q2 4	<i>Use the following grading scale to answer this question:</i>	
	A	90-100%
	B+	87-89%
	B	80-86%
	C+	77-79%
	C	70-76%
	D	60-69%
	F	Below 60%
<i>Select the statement that best represents your overall experience using Second Life in the educational forum:</i>		
	My understanding of the curriculum did not change much and I did not retain any more details than when I took the course in a traditional (classroom or online) method.	14
	My understanding and retention of the curriculum improved and I scored one full grade higher (from a 'F' to a 'D') than when I took the course in a traditional (classroom or online) setting.	28
	My understanding and retention of the curriculum improved and I scored two full grades higher (from a 'F' to a 'C') than when I took the course in a traditional (classroom or online) setting.	73
	My understanding and retention of the curriculum improved and I scored three full grades higher (from a 'F' to a 'B') than when I took the course in a traditional (classroom or online) setting.	98
	My understanding and retention of the curriculum improved and I scored an 'A', but when I took the course in a traditional (classroom or online) setting, I failed.	37
<b>End of Survey. Thanks for your participation</b>		

# THE EFFECT OF USING CARTOONS ON THE ACCURACY OF YOUNG ELEMENTARY IRANIAN EFL LEARNERS' SPEAKING

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## Abstract

The purpose of the present study was to investigate the effect of using cartoons on the accuracy of young elementary Iranian EFL learners' speaking. Forty female elementary EFL learners, studying English at Goldis institute in Tabriz, participated in this study. All the participants were at the age range of 12-15 and they were randomly assigned in two groups, the experimental group and control group. The experimental and control groups received the same instruction, however, the experimental group received an extra treatment which was watching cartoons. In the experimental group, the students were supposed to watch the cartoon for about 15 minutes at the end of each session. The researcher conducted a pre-test and a post-test to test the participants' speaking skill. The pre-test and post-test were selected from Cambridge Key English Test (KET) each containing two parts. The results of the study revealed that using cartoons has a beneficial effect on the accuracy of young elementary Iranian EFL learners' speaking. The findings of the study maybe used by EFL teachers to improve EFL learners' oral performances and by syllable designers to develop appropriate syllabi for young learners.

*Key words:* Grammatical accuracy, Cartoon, Communication, Speaking

## Introduction

As advances in technology and transportation allow people from different nations and cultures all around the world to interact with each other, communication across languages becomes even more essential. Most researchers are sure that speaking, among four language skills, is an important skill necessary for effective communication in any language and should be developed along with the other skills. In general, for students it is essential to understand spoken utterances and give appropriate answers. Speaking a language is specially difficult for students that learn it as a foreign language because using a language effectively requires the ability to use the language in a social interaction (Shumin, 1997 as cited in Richards & Renandya, 2002). Yet, using new methods in education helps students to learn effectively and to eliminate language barriers. In fact, rapid development in science, technology and media has improved language teaching in recent years. Applying technology to teaching English language shows that students involved will find motivation in studying and learning a language universally spoken (Subathra, 2012). Their potential to provide accurate input has increased a lot with the provision of such technical devices like TV, LCD, projector, laptop, DVD player and video materials in classrooms. Accordingly, the use of video and TV has grown rapidly due to the increasing focus on communicative aspects of language use (Cakir, 2006).

Since most foreign language learners learn target language in their own cultures and class contexts, it is essential to give them an opportunity to speak in a language through promoting interaction. So, teachers must arouse in their learners a willingness and need to speak. A possible way to do this might be to provide them with extensive exposure to authentic language through audiovisual stimuli like films (Shumin, 1997 as cited in Richards & Renandya, 2002). It is argued that the most important problem in EFL classes is students' lack of motivation, shortage of exposure to target language and lack of emphasis on pronunciation by teachers (Galakjani, 2013). Carrasquillo (1994, as cited in Richards & Renandya, 2002) notes that audiovisual materials can motivate learners by attractive and informative content material, expose learners to a varied range of authentic speech with different registers, accents and intonation, and provide a language used in the context of real situation. In their research, Melvin and Stout (1987) found that when students use authentic materials for studying culture, they get more confident and are able to use the language effectively in real world situations. They state that authentic language input is helpful for language learners to practice skills they need outside the class and also to learn culture. One of the best ways to provide enjoyable and authentic input for youngsters is

using cartoons. Watching cartoons promotes exposure to English language. It is believed that using cartoons as a source of learning English for the young learners can act as a trigger for exploring new and exciting area of language learning. Youngsters like cartoons and are highly motivated to pick up the language exposed to them through cartoons. Krashen (1981) argues that watching cartoons is a basis for an enjoyable learning environment which makes language learning a happy experience.

### Accuracy and Fluency in Speaking

Communication is a process that customarily takes place sequentially but once commenced, it engenders its own logic of sequence and does not essentially follow a linear predictable way. In other words, the elements involved in communication are actively engaged simultaneously in engendering development, and ultimate outcome. The ultimate outcome and the desired outcome and the gap between them would generally give an account of how prosperous the process has been (Khattak, Yaqoob, & Basri, 2003).

Speaking in a foreign language has been considered the most challenging and complex of the four language skills (Zhang, 2009). Shumin (2002) also states that speaking English is the most difficult skill for learners. In particular, EFL learners often hesitate when speaking English. This is a result of learners' lack of exposure to authentic English language environments to use English for communicating and expressing themselves.

To have mastery in speaking skills includes the ability to communicate verbally in a functional, appropriate and accurate way in the target language. Speaking is one way to communicate a message orally. To make students able to communicate, we require to apply the language in real communication. According to Gert and Hans (2008, p. 207), speaking is speech or utterances with the purpose of having the aim to be recognized by speaker and the receiver processes the utterance in order to recognize their intentions.

The term accuracy relates to correct use of linguistic structures (grammatical accuracy), appropriate use of register (sociolinguistic accuracy), precision of vocabulary (semantic accuracy), and proper use of cohesive devices (rhetorical accuracy) (Omaggio, 1986). There are two different teaching approaches in speaking which are related to teaching methods. The former one is the accuracy-oriented approach which does not neglect the grammatical errors, since they can result in fossilization. Instant error-correction is strictly required to avoid fossilization. This approach focuses on repetition of newly introduced forms and grammatical structures in oral communication (Willerman, 2011, as cited in Dincer et al, 2012). The other approach is the fluency-oriented approach which believes that grammatical or pronunciation errors are not important, especially at the beginning levels. Correction can hinder learners' improvement of speaking. This approach stems from the Natural approach and emphasizes that errors are tolerable and probable as signs of natural language development (Willerman, 2011, as cited in Dincer et al, 2012). According to Zehr (2010), although the accuracy-oriented approach is somehow overleaped among the current EFL pedagogues, one can still see in it some advantages over the fluency-oriented approach. First of all, learners are given an opportunity to correct errors. They will become aware of repeated mistakes before fossilization happens. It is true that correction of errors that are provided without intention may discourage learners from speaking. But correction itself can also be encouraging, given in a suitable manner, for it enables learners to make sure where exactly the problem exists in their speech (Zehr, 2010). Brown and Nation (1990) claim that the teacher should decide whether the correction is appropriate for interruption, and if it is, the instructor has to take into consideration possible causes and then think of suitable ways of dealing with the error. Learners will also be fully aware of the target language items that they are trying to acquire in practice. This awareness will finally facilitate learning.

### Cartoons as Audio-Visual Aids

According to Kerr (1996), integration of technology into classroom practice needs a shift in both teaching style and the teacher's view of what classroom life is all about. He points out that teachers who have the knowledge and skill in technology and are enthusiastic about using it encounter obstacles like overly packed curricula and crowded classrooms. Audio – visual aids are different types of equipments that appeal to the sense of learning and vision and are used in classrooms for presentation of abstract information.

It is a well-known fact that audio-visual materials are a great help in encouraging and facilitating the learning of a foreign language. According to Wright (1976,p.1) , many media and many styles of visual presentation are

useful to the language learner. That is to say, all audio-visual materials have positive contributions to language learning as long as they are used at the right time, in the right place.

There are many educational reasons to use films and videos in the classroom. Students can listen to the language within a visual context that improves comprehension and they can visually see the culture presented instead of reading or hearing about this culture. Teachers can increase their teaching activities, present culture more effectively, improve their students listening skills, fulfill written texts, encourage students and themselves, update their knowledge of the target country and culture, and move naturally from listening to speaking and writing.

According to Chen (2001), some benefits of using multimedia devices for teaching and learning are to improve learning in different contexts and institutions of different quality, to offer opportunities to students working at different grades and levels, to provide (tirelessly, without holding up other students) repetition when repetition is provided to improve skills and learning, and to make up, in the short term, for high student groups and limited numbers of well-informed and experienced teachers – in combination with determined teacher development initiatives and improvements in teachers' working conditions.

From the above mentioned point of view, cartoons as educationally valuable sources of language input can be used at any time during the teaching or learning as long as they are relevant to the point or have been designed with a specific purpose. Cartoons can be used as useful materials of improving the learning situation. However, cartoons should not be used simply to fill in time when the facilitator does not have anything else to present. As a matter of fact, using cartoons would surely break the monotony of reading text after text in the course books. For example, very often a picture speaks louder than words and has more effect than just reading the text. The same scene that the cartoon illustrates would undoubtedly take longer to describe using the written word and the scope for understanding would be limited. It is also believed that the usage of cartoons can encourage students and decrease academic stress, anxiety and disruptive behavior (Rae, 2000).

Experience shows that cartoons have a number of usages. Cartoons can be used individually, in pairs, in small groups and even in large lecture classes. Cartoons are a wonderfully multi-dimensional medium in enhancing teaching and training. Visually, the effect of cartoons is immediate and language learners, irrespective of age or background, are able to respond in some ways to the educational point being presented. With the combination of words and pictures, it can attract attention and interest. Other benefits include the promotion of understanding, motivation toward learning, improved attitudes, productivity and creativity (Rae, 2000). According to Kroehnert (1999), the end result with most cartoons exercises is that learners are made aware of their need to use lateral thinking, to look at things differently, and to try to destroy any formed before stereotypes that they may have.

### Empirical Study

Ortiz (2012), focused their work on the effectiveness of video self-modeling to increase fluency and pronunciation for English language learners. Their study showed that video has potential to improve reading fluency by letting students see themselves performing with and without mistakes. According to Ortiz, speaking is an important skill for all language students, and it is an important for teachers and school personnel to have a basic understanding of the video-based language learning process in order to avoid creating incorrect conclusions (Ortiz, 2012, p.28).

In the same vein Wagener's (2006) research highlighted the importance of available digital video resources for language learners. One of the main research variables in this study was associated with the student progress in listening and translating skills, as well as vocabulary acquisition. This research showed the positive implications of using video technology in the language classroom. Instructional video materials significantly resulted in the development of all the three observed aspects: listening, translating skills, and student's vocabulary.

As Schneider (1993) noted, technology offers solutions to other related problems encountered by teachers including students not feeling responsible for learning, not making enough attempt, not speaking English in class, or using the native language, which was also verified in the study by Kluge & Taylor (2000) on the same area (i.e. teaching speaking and communication skills). Employing the similar method, Washburn and Christianson (1996) did their research on a more particular area in speaking, i.e. effective communicative strategies, to reduce their students' communication failures marked by long pauses which, in turn, inefficient



fluency. As a result, they claimed that the students had progressed in speaking compared with those who did not record.

In their study, Snyder and Colon (1988) found that foreign language students exposed to audiovisual aids performed more better in vocabulary and listening comprehension than students not exposed to them. Video recording provides a big amount of instructional materials for foreign language teachers (Gillispie, 1985). Garber and Holmes (1981) have experimented with silent short video movies on everyday topics to develop written and oral skills in students. Many instructors are selecting video for the implementation of complete courses and not only as supporting material in the foreign language classroom (Manning, 1988). Johnson and Van Iten (1984) reported the successful use of commercial German television courses for foreign language instruction.

In all language learning environments, the need for communication is quite clear. one of the problems that Iranian learners encounter in language institutes is producing accurate speech. It seems that one of the best devices to achieve this goal is using cartoons. Therefore, the present study aimed to find out the effect of watching cartoons on the accuracy of young elementary Iranian EFL learners' speaking performance. To do so, the following research question was posed:

1. Does using cartoons in language classes have any effect on the accuracy of young elementary Iranian EFL learners' speaking performance?

## Method

### *Participants*

The initial participants of this study included 50 Elementary students whose first language was Persian, in two intact groups, learning English at Goldis institute in Tabriz. All the participants were female, so, sex factor was assumed to be controlled. The participants' age range was from 12 to 15. They entered the institute either by taking part in a placement test or starting from the very beginning. However, not relying only on this criterion, the researcher administrated Cambridge Key English Test (KET) to reassure the homogeneity of the groups. Based on the results, 40 students were considered for this study. Then, the students were randomly assigned to two groups, the experimental and control groups.

### *Instrumentations*

In order to test the hypothesis, a proficiency test, a pre-test and a post- test were used.

The proficiency test was one of the instruments used in order to determine whether the two groups were homogeneous in their English proficiency in terms of listening and speaking.

Test 1 from Cambridge key English Test (KET) was employed in order to measure the participants' proficiency levels. The test contained questions to measure the participants' knowledge of general English and included two parts of listening and speaking.

The researcher used a pre-test and a post-test to test the participants' speaking skill. The pre-test and post-test were selected from Cambridge key English Test (KET) each containing two parts.

In part 1 of the speaking test, each candidate interacted with the interlocutor, using the language normally associated with meeting people for the first time, giving factual information of a personal kind, for example, name, place of origin, study, family, etc. The candidates were also expected to be able to talk about their daily life, intrests, likes, etc.

Part 2 of the speaking test, which is called prompt card activity was held after Part 1.

Prompt cards were used to stimulate questions and answers of a non-personal kind. The teacher read out instructions and gave a question card to one candidate and an answer card to the other. After the candidates have asked and answered the questions, they changed roles.

A cell phone was used for recording the oral production of all the participants of the study. **Procedure**

The present study aimed at exploring the effects of watching English cartoons on Iranian elementary learners' speaking. At the beginning of the study, to check the homogeneity of the participants in terms of listening and speaking in the second session, the researcher administered standardized KET test. The students performance on the speaking part of the KET test was recorded, transcribed and corrected in terms of grammar and vocabulary, pronunciation and interactive communication

Initially, 50 young elementary students participated. However, based on the results of the KET test, the extreme scores were excluded and thus the number of the participants decreased to 40 (the lowest and highest marks were eliminated from among participants). As the students were in two intact groups, the 10 students gaining the extreme scores still attended the classes and were allowed to participate in the classroom activities but their pre and post test scores were excluded from the final analyses. After ensuring the initial homogeneity of the participants, the researcher randomly assigned them in two groups: the experimental and the control groups. Both groups studied the same textbook (Hiphip Hooray 6). As the pre-test scores, the students' scores on the speaking part of the KET test were used.

The experimental and control groups received the same instruction, that were held three sessions each week, however, the experimental group received an extra treatment which was watching cartoons. The name of the cartoon used was The Epics. In the experimental group, the students were supposed to watch the cartoon for about 15 minutes at the end of each session. This happened in a 3 week period of time. Prior to watching the cartoon, to get the students' attention, the researcher wrote two questions on the board which were to be answered at the end of watching the cartoon. After 12 sessions, another speaking test, similar to another sample from KET, was administered as the post test to both experimental and control groups.

### *Accuracy Measure*

As the accuracy pre-test scores, the scores on the speaking part of the KET were considered. The data were coded for Analysis of Speech (AS) units. An AS unit is defined as "a single speaker's utterance consistency of an independent clause, or sub-clausal unit, together with any subordinate clauses associated with it" (Foster, Tonkyn & Wigglesworth, 2000, p.366). Accuracy was measured by employing one general performance measure, i.e., grammatical accuracy which was the total number of errors per AS unit. Two raters corrected the papers and the inter-rater reliability was calculated.

The sum of the scores of speaking and listening parts were used as the students' language proficiency scores.

### **Results**

The main concern of the present study was to investigate the effect of using cartoons on the accuracy of young Elementary Iranian EFL learners' speaking. To this end the data was collected and the following analysis were conducted:

1. An independent samples T-test was conducted on the KET scores in order to test the groups' initial homogeneity.
2. An interrater reliability was conducted on the accuracy scores of two sets of transcriptions by two individuals in order to evaluate their correlation.
3. A test of normality was run to check the normality of the pre-test and post-test distributions.
4. An independent samples t-test was conducted between the experimental and control groups.
5. Two paired sample t-test was conducted on the accuracy scores of the pre-tests and post-tests in order to examine the effect of watching cartoons and not watching cartoons within the experimental and control groups.

The level of significance to reject the null hypothesis was set at 0.05.

### **The language proficiency test (KET)**

As it was mentioned before, the study was conducted with 40 students who were chosen from 50 EFL learners based on their proficiency scores. The participants randomly were assigned to two groups (experimental and control). In order to check their homogeneity, the researcher conducted an Independent sample T-test. Table 4.1 below indicates the descriptive data for the proficiency scores of the groups, and Table 4.2 shows the Independent sample T-test results for the proficiency scores.

Table 1 Group statistics of students' scores on the proficiency test

<b>Group Statistics</b>					
	groups of students	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
students' scores on the	control group	25	25.6000	5.09902	1.01980

proficiency test KET    experimental group    25    28.3600    5.58928    1.11786

Table 2 An independent samples T-test of the Students' scores on the Proficiency Test

Indep Test ...		Levene Test ...		t-test for Equality...					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Significanc e	t	Df	Sig(2- tailed).. .	Mean Differenc e	Std. Error Diff...	Lower	Upper
students' scores on the proficiency test KET	Equal variance	1.939	.170	-1.824	48	.074	-2.76000	1.51314	-5.80238	.28238
	Not Equal variance			-1.824	47.601	.074	-2.76000	1.51314	-5.80304	.28304

As Table 2 indicates ,the P-value is bigger than 0.05 ( $0.074 > 0.05$ ), which means there was no significant difference between the two groups as far as their general proficiency was concerned.

### Inter- rater Reliability

To calculate the inter-rater reliability, the pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was used for computing the correlation between the scores of Rater 1 and Rater 2 in the speaking pretest. Table 4.3. illustrates the result.

Table 3 Pearson correlations- coefficient of two raters' scores on the pretest

Correlations		rater1	rater2
rater1	Pearson Correlation	1	.889**
	Significance(2-tailed)		.000
	N	40	40
rater2	Pearson Correlation	.889**	1
	Significance(2-tailed)	.000	
	N	40	40

\*\* . Correlation at 0.01(2-tailed):...

As Table 3 shows, the computed pearson correlation coefficient, with  $\alpha$  set at 0.05, in the pretest was 0.889 ( $p < 0.01$ ) which indicates that there was a significantly positive and strong relationship between the scores of Rater 1 and Rater 2 in the pretest.

Also ,the Pearson Product-Moment correlation coefficient was used to find out the inter-rater reliability of the posttest scores of Rater 1 and Rater 2. The results are illustrated in Table 4 Pearson correlations- coefficient of two raters' scores on the post-test.

Correlations		rater1	rater2
rater1	Pearson Correlation	1	.966**
	Significance(2-tailed)		.000
	N	40	40
rater2	Pearson Correlation	.966**	1
	Significance(2-tailed)	.000	

N	40	40
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\*\* . Correlation at 0.01(2-tailed):...

As Table 4 shows, the computed pearson correlation coefficient in posttest was 0.966 ( $p < 0.01$ ) which indicates that there was a high positive relationship between the scores of Rater 1 and Rater 2 in the posttest.

### Test of Normality

One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test compares the cumulative distributions of two data sets to check the normality of distributions. To do further analyses, the normality of the scores distribution in the pre-test and post-test had to be examined. Table 5 represents the results of KS test on the pre-test.

Table 5 One-sample kolmogorov-smirnov test of Students' scores on the Pretest

One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test			students' scores on the pre-test
N			40
Normal Parameters <sup>a,b</sup>	Mean		2.0107
	Std. Deviation		.39539
	Absolute		.102
Most Extreme Differences	Positive		.062
	Negative		-.102
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z			.648
Asymptotic Significance (2-tailed)			.795
a. Test Distribution is Normal			
b. Calculated from data			

As illustrated in Table 5 ,the pretest distribution is normal,  $\text{sig} = 0.795 > 0.05$ . Moreover, the scores distribution in the posttest had to be examined to ensured normality. Table 6 shows the result.

Table 6 One-sample kolmogorov- smirnov Test of students' Scores on the Post-test

One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test			students' scores on the post-test
N			40
Normal Parameters <sup>a,b</sup>	Mean		1.9757
	Std. Deviation		.43832
	Absolute		.097
Most Extreme Differences	Positive		.056
	Negative		-.097
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z			.614
Asymptotic Significance (2-tailed)			.845
a. Test Distribution is Normal			
b. Calculated from data			

As illustrated in Table 6 ,the posttest distribution is normal,  $\text{sig} = 0.845 > 0.05$ . Since both the Pre-test and the Post-test distributions are normal, non-parametric analysis could be conducted.

Independent sample T-test to compare the speaking accuracy of the Pretest and Posttest

A T-test analysis was run to determine if there were any statistically significant differences between the two groups' mean scores on the speaking accuracy of the participants' pretest. Table 7 and 8 illustrate the results.

Table 7 group statistics of students' scores on the pretest

Group Statistics					
	groups of students	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
students' scores on the pre-control group test	control group	20	1.8930	.37813	.08455
	experimental group	20	2.1285	.38564	.08623

Table 8 An independent samples T-test of students' scores on the pretest

		Levene Test ...		t-test for Equality...			Mean Difference	Std. Error Diff...	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Significance	t	df	Sig(2-tailed)...			Lower	Upper
students' scores on the pre-test	Equal variance	.014	.905	-1.950	38	.059	-.23550	.12077	-.47998	.00898
	Not Equal variance			-1.950	37.985	.059	-.23550	.12077	-.47999	.00899

Table 7 shows the means, standard deviations and standard error means of the two groups for the speaking on the pretest. The pretest mean score was 1.89 for the control group, and 2.12 for the experimental group and the standard deviations were 0.37 and 0.38 for the groups respectively.

It is important to note that the scores were calculated by dividing the accurate use of target forms by the total number of target forms.

As indicated in Table 8 there is no significant differences between the students' scores on the pretest,  $df = 38$ ,  $t = -1.950$ ,  $p = 0.905 > 0.05$ .

Similarly, an independent samples t-Test was run for the post test scores(see Tables 9 and 10).

Table 9 Group statistics of students' scores on the post-test

Group Statistics					
	groups of students	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
students' scores on the post-test	control group	20	1.8065	.49930	.11165
	experimental group	20	2.1450	.29112	.06510

Table 10 An independent Samples T-test of Students' Scores on the Post-test

Indep Test ...		Levene Test ...		t-test for Equality...			Mean Difference	Std. Error Diff...	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Significance	t	df	Sig(2-tailed)...			Lower	Upper
students' scores on the ...	Equal variances	9.799	.003	-2.619	38	.013	-.33850	.12924	-.60013	-.07687

post-test	Not							
	Equal							
	variances							
	...							

As it is shown in Table 9, the difference between the mean of experimental and control groups in the posttest is noticeable.

This is confirmed in Table 10 which shows that the difference between the post-tests of two experimental and control groups is significant,  $p=0.003<0.05$ .

#### Paired samples t-test

Two paired-sample t-tests were conducted to compare the significance of difference of watching cartoon within experimental and control groups.

The results of the paired-sample T-Test in the control group are illustrated in Table 11.

Table 11 Paired samples T-test of the Students' scores on the Pre and Post-test in the Control group

Paired Samples Test		Paired Differences		Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	Sig.(2-tailed)...
		Mean	Std. Deviation		Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	students' scores on the pre and post-test control groups - Groups of student ...	.34975	.70271	.11111	.12501	.57449	3.148	39	.003

As indicated in Table 11, the difference between the pre-test and post-test of the control group is significant,  $p=0.003<0.05$ .

Additionally, another paired samples t-test was run on the scores of the students in the experimental group (Table 12).

Table 12 Paired samples T-test of students' scores on the pre and post-test experimental groups

Paired Samples Test		Paired Differences		Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	Sig.(2-tailed)...
		Mean	Std. Deviation		Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	students' scores on the pre and post-test experimental groups - Groups of student ...	.63675	.60147	.09510	.44439	.82911	6.696	39	.000

As shown in Table 12, there was a significant difference between the students' speaking scores in the pre-test and post-test.

## Discussion

The aim of the present study was to investigate the effects of multi-media concerning the effect of using cartoons on the accuracy of young Elementary Iranian EFL learners' speaking. The statistical analyses of the hypothesis indicate that using cartoons has a beneficial effect on the accuracy of young Elementary Iranian EFL learners' speaking.

The findings from this study are consistent with the findings of Wright (1976, p.1) who states that many media and many kinds of visual presentation are useful to the language learner. That is to say, all audio-visual materials have positive contributions to language learning as long as they are used at the right time, in the right place. In the same vein, River (1981, p.399) claims that it clearly contributes to the understanding of another culture by providing vicarious contact with speakers of the language, through both audio and visual means. Videos are well-liked by both students and teachers. Hemei (1997, p.45) also argues that students like video in language class because video presentations are interesting, challenging, and stimulating to watch. Video shows them how people behave in the culture whose language they are learning by bringing into the classroom a wide range of communicative situations. The results of this study are also in line with Arthur (1999) who claims that video can give students real models of conversations to imitate for role-play; can make them familiar with other cultures by teaching appropriate and suitable forms of speaking. Moreover, Snyder and Colon (1988) found that foreign language students exposed to audiovisual aids performed significantly better in vocabulary and listening comprehension than students not exposed to them. Video recording provides a wealth of instructional materials for foreign language teachers (Gillispie, 1985). Garber and Holmes (1981) have experimented with silent short video movies on everyday topics to develop written and oral skills in students. Many instructors select video for the implementation of complete courses and not only as ancillary material in the foreign language classroom (Manning, 1988). Johnson and Van Iten (1984) also reported the successful use of commercial German television courses for foreign language instruction. The result of the study indicated that using cartoons, as a type of audio-visual material, affected grammatical accuracy of young Elementary Iranian EFL learners' speaking.

## Conclusion

Nowadays learners all over the world are faced with having problems to communicate in a second or a foreign language. Oral production in a foreign language is much more difficult for language learners because speaking a language effectively requires the ability to use the language interactively (Shumin, 1997, as cited in Richards & Renandya, 2002). SLA researchers have tried to clarify discovering the benefits of using technological devices in language classes.

Throughout the last decades a large number of technological devices including computers, audio, and videos have become an important part of learning (Warschauer, & Meskill, 2000). Audio-visual tools appeal to the sense of learning and are used in language classes for teaching of abstract information (Kerr, 1996).

Swaffar and Vlaten (1997) state that audio-visual material is a multi-sensory medium that contributes to the student engagement in the learning process. These devices help language learners to more easily understand the meaning of spoken language.

The ultimate goal of the present study was to discover the effect of using cartoons on the accuracy of young elementary Iranian EFL learners' speaking.

It can be concluded that, using cartoons, as a type of audio-visual material, can be helpful in improving language learners performance. This can be particularly important in EFL contexts, like Iran. The analysis of the learners' performance indicated higher accuracy in the watching cartoon group. The contribution of this study is that it provides L2 learners and L2 teachers with a clear explanation of how watching cartoons affected the learners' accuracy in speaking. Meanwhile, the findings of this study will also have practical implications in syllabus design and SLA research. The research results indicate the importance of using cartoons on the accuracy of learners' speaking by involving participants in the process of learning. The implication of the

research can be helpful for the use of language teachers who can apply cartoons by considering their proved beneficial effect on speaking area.

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# A STUDY ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE DEGREE OF PERSONALITY TRAITS THROUGH INTEGRATING LISTENING TASK ON IRANIAN INTERMEDIATE EFL LEARNERS' IMPROVEMENT OF LISTENING COMPREHENSION ABILITY

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## ABSTRACT

The present study aimed to investigate on the effectiveness of the degree of personality traits through integrating listening task on Iranian intermediate EFL learners' improvement of listening comprehension ability. The main question this study tried to answer was whether the degree of personality traits through integrating listening task might enhance higher ability of listening comprehension in Iranian learners of English at intermediate level. For this purpose 100 learners of English at ..... language institute participated in this study. Having being homogenized by an Oxford placement test (OPT), 40 learners were selected and they were randomly assigned into two groups of Extrovert and Introvert. A pretest of listening comprehension was administered to both groups, Then the Introvert (experimental) group received treatment based on listening task through small talk. While the other group received no treatment. At the end both groups sat for post-test and received the same listening test in order to explore the subjects' ability in two groups on the specific treatment program.

The data of the study were analyzed using an independent sample t-test to indicate the groups' posttest mean difference. The results indicated that the Iranian EFL learners in the Introvert (experimental) group received higher scores in listening comprehension after being treated with listening task through small talk.

**Key words:** Personality, Personality trait, Learner, Listening comprehension ability

## Introduction

Foreign language listening comprehension is a complex process and crucial in the development of foreign language competence; yet, the importance of listening in language learning has only been recognized relatively recently (Rost, 2002). Since the role of listening comprehension in language learning was either overlooked or undervalued, it merited little research and pedagogical attention in the past. But at present, some researchers have devoted some time to listening and believe it to be an important skill in teaching and learning. For instance, Nunan (1998) believes that, "listening is the basic skill in language learning. Without listening skill, learners will never learn to communicate effectively. In fact over 50% of the time that students spend functioning in a foreign language will be devoted to listening" (p. 1). Listening has been given little attention in the English language classroom. This could be due to the fact that there has been a lack of research interest into listening. Furthermore, listening has often been considered as a passive skill which learners just "pick up". Teachers believe that exposing students to spoken language is sufficient instruction in listening comprehension (Miller, 2003). Previous research has identified a few problems that hinder comprehension to take place.

Above all the present study is aimed at ameliorating the pedagogical status of the possible effects of the degree of personality traits through integrating listening task on EFL learners' improvement of listening comprehension ability, which might highlight its significant in language pedagogy and curriculum innovation. This being so, the researcher has been inspired to conduct this study to explore the possible effect of the degree of personality traits through integrating listening task in which learners are strongly interested to promote listening comprehension ability. The present study is conducted to address the pedagogical status of the degree of personality traits through integrating listening task on Iranian intermediate EFL learners' improvement of listening comprehension ability.

### Definition of key terms

Terms defined in this study are as follows:

- "**Personality**" can be defined as "the combination of characteristics or qualities that form an individual's distinctive character" (Cambridge International dictionary of English, 1995, p.1070), or it can be defined as "the total of psychological, intellectual, emotional and physical characteristics that make up the individual, esp. as others see him" (The new lexicon Webster's encyclopedic dictionary of the English, 1995, p.749).
- "**Personality trait**" refers to enduring personal characteristics that are revealed in a particular pattern of behavior in a variety of situations.

Individual differences in personality have many real life consequences

- a. the sum total of the physical, mental, emotional, and social characteristics of an individual
  - b. the organized pattern of behavioral characteristics of the individual. (Collins English Dictionary 2012)
- "**Learner**" is "a person who is still learning something" (Cambridge International dictionary of English, 1995, p.806).
  - **Listening comprehension ability**: Is the ability to identify and understand what others are saying. This involves understanding a speakers' accent or pronunciation, his or her grammar and vocabulary, and grasping the meaning conveyed. (Saricoban, 1999).

### Traditional approaches to writing

Listening plays a significant role in the lives of people. Of the four major areas of communication skills and language development--listening, speaking, reading, and writing--the one that is the most basic is listening. It is evident that children listen and respond to language before they learn to talk. When it is time for children to learn to read, they still have to listen so that they gain knowledge and information to follow directions. In the classroom, students have to listen carefully and attentively to lectures and class discussions in order to understand and to retain the information for later recall. Listening is not only the first of the language arts skills developed, it is also the skill most frequently used in both the classroom and daily life. Clearly, much of the educational process is based on skills in listening. Students have to spend most of the time listening to what the teacher says, for instance, giving lectures, asking questions, or telling directions. In a language classroom, listening ability plays a significant role in the development of other language arts skills. When students first learn a language, they generally have to listen to the words several times before they are able to recognize and pronounce those words. Listening can also help students build vocabulary, develop language proficiency, and improve language usage (Barker, 1971). Cayer, Green, and Baker (1971) find that students' ability to comprehend written material through reading as well as to express themselves through speaking and written communication are directly related to students' maturity in the listening phase of language development. Dunkel (1986) asserts that developing proficiency in listening comprehension is the key to achieving proficiency in speaking. Not only are listening skills the basis for the development of all other skills, they are also the main channel through which students make initial contact with the target language and its culture (Curtain & Pesola, 1988).

Despite the importance of listening practice in language instruction, English language classes in many countries still emphasize only the skills of reading and writing. This is especially the case of an English-as-a-foreign-language (EFL) situation in which the English language is taught as a subject at school and used only inside, but not outside, the classroom. EFL students are studying English in their home countries where English is not the dominant native language. Students who are from environments where English is not the language of the country have very few opportunities to hear the real language; these students

therefore are not accustomed to hearing the language as it is produced by native speakers for native speakers. Consequently, students from the countries in which English is taught as a foreign language frequently have great difficulty understanding English spoken to them when they come into contact with native speakers of the language. A few problems that hinder listening comprehension are as follows: unfamiliarity of topics/texts, lack of socio-cultural, factual and contextual knowledge of the target language.

## Method

### Participants

The initial participants of this study were 100 Iranian EFL learners of English at intermediate level from a language institute. An Oxford placement (OPT) test was administered to participants. The test was implemented for the purpose of homogenizing the sample of the study and to make sure that the study enjoys homogeneous participants with respect to the participants' English language proficiency. This test was divided into 3 parts, cloze test, structure, and vocabulary proficiency. Students with scores of 1 standard deviation below and above the mean were selected. Having been homogenized by an OPT test 40 students were selected and they were randomly divided into two groups, Extrovert (control= 19) and Introvert (experimental= 21). The participants were varied in terms of age and the field of study. That is all students irrespective of their major and ages were selected on the basis of selection tests.

### Materials

The following materials were employed throughout the course of this study. An OPT test was used for the purpose of homogenizing the proficiency of the learners. Another type of the test which was used for the purpose of the study was listening test. This type of test was used as a pre-test to measure the learners' initial subject knowledge in two groups. And finally a listening test was used as a post-test based on which the efficacy of personality traits through integrating listening tasks was determined.

### Procedure

In the first step, a version of the OPT proficiency test was used in a group of 100 participants, 40 participants whose scores fell one Standard Deviation (1SD) below and above the mean were selected as the main participants of the study.

Then Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (EPQ) was administered for recognizing the subjects' personality traits. Then they were divided into two groups. One control group (Extrovert) and one experimental (Introvert).

Then all groups received listening comprehension test to assess their listening comprehension ability based on their specified personality traits. Then the Introvert (experimental) group received treatment based on listening task through small talk. While the other group received no treatment.

At the end both groups sat for post-test and received the same listening test in order to explore the subjects' ability in two groups on the specific treatment program.

The whole project took for 12 sessions, and each session for 50 minutes. And the last step was to be the posttest of listening comprehension in which the subjects' ability in both groups on the specific treatment program were assessed.

## Results

The present study dealt with the possible effect of the degree of personality traits through integrating listening task on Iranian intermediate EFL learners' improvement of listening comprehension ability. Descriptive data analyses with the appropriate statistical method (distribution of t) were employed through Statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) to explore the comparison between extroverts and introverts' listening comprehension ability. For fulfilling the purpose of the study, a sample of 100 students (both male and female) studying in English Language institutes were given a Standardized Oxford Placement Test (OPT) to sort out practically a homogenous group. Based on the scores obtained from the OPT, the researcher selected 100 homogeneous students ( $\pm$  1SD from the mean score) to answer the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (EPQ) - Out of these subjects, 40 students, 19 extroverts, and 21 introverts were selected randomly for listening comprehension.

The descriptive statistical analysis done on the collected data of pre-test and post-test is shown in table (1).

Table(1) descriptive statistical analysis of pre-test and post-test

Group		Pre-test	Post-test
Experimental (Introvert)	Mean	54.9	68.4
	N	21	21
	SD.	4.8	4.7
Control (Extrovert)	Mean	58.45	58.1
	N	19	19
	SD	5.64	5.2
Total	Mean	59.15	63.25
	N	40	40
	SD	5.216	7.121

Table (2) shows the corrected means of dependent variable listening comprehension ability. The data demonstrate that the means of Introvert (experimental group) are upper than Extrovert (control group).

Table (2) Mean and Corrected Mean of listening comprehension ability

Source	Post-test		Corrected Mean	
	M	SD	M	SE
Experimental (Introvert)	38.4	4.7	37.77	.36
Control (Extrovert)	28.1	5.11	28.72	.36

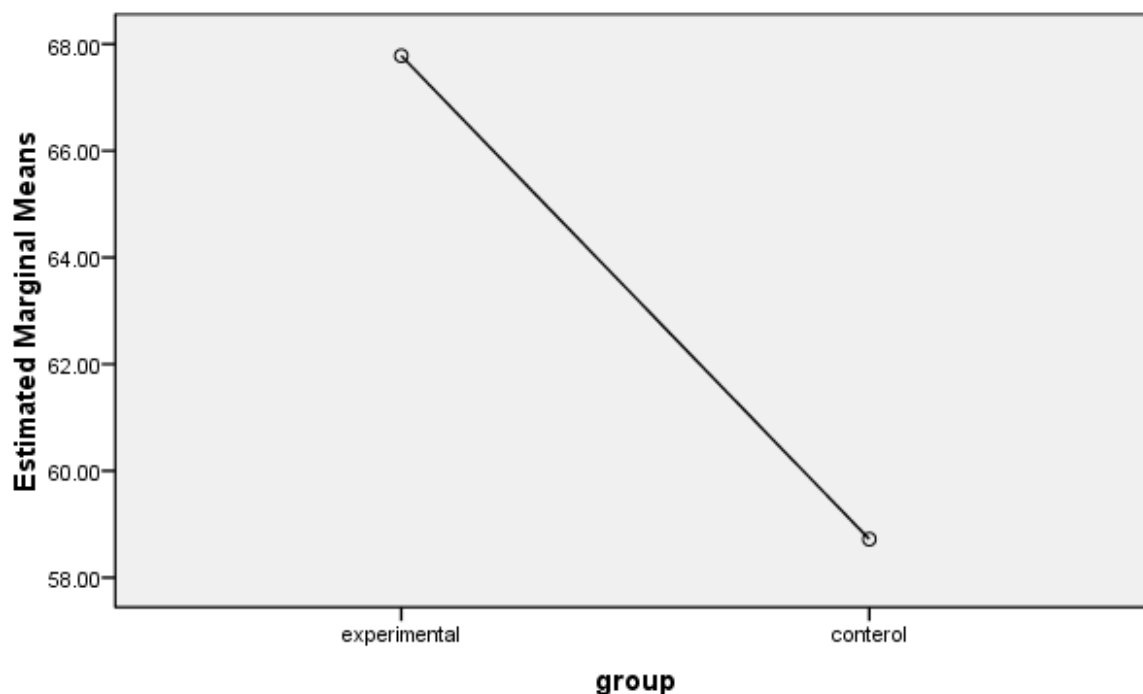
Sum of analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) of listening comprehension ability in Introvert (experimental) and Extrovert (control) group after eliminating between-subjects effect is demonstrated in table (3):

Table (3) Sum of Analysis of Covariance

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	1879.415	2	939.71	354.48	.00	.95
Pre - test	818.52	1	818.52	308.76	.00	.89
Group	805.48	1	805.48	303.84	.00	.89
Error	98.08	37	2.65			
Total	46200	40				

As it can be seen, the corrected model ( $f=00$ ,  $F=354.48$ ) is statistically significant. The results ( $F=303.84$ ,  $f=.00$ ,  $Eta=.89$ ) shows that there is a difference between two groups. It means that there is significance difference between Introvert (experimental) and Extrovert (control) group. As a result the null hypothesis "the degree of personality traits through integrating listening task does not have any effect on Iranian Intermediate EFL learners' improvement of listening comprehension ability" was rejected, so it can be concluded that the degree of personality traits through integrating listening task has an effect on Iranian EFL Learners' listening comprehension ability

To clarify the result, the data will be demonstrated in graph (1). The vertical axis represents the post-test and the horizontal axis represent Introvert (experimental) and Extrovert (control) group.



The graph shows that there is a significant difference between listening comprehension ability of Introvert (experimental) and Extrovert (control) group. It clearly shows that the Introvert group who received treatment on the basis of listening task through small talk had better scores on post-test.

### Conclusion

The main concern of this experiment was to see whether the results from the study could be repeated. Secondly, it intended to show whether the other personality traits could affect learning performance with adaptive learning systems.

The first conclusion to be drawn was that the personality trait (at least extraversion-introversion) influences learning activity on adaptive learning systems. In this light, the work of Felder and Brent (2005) is worth noting. They contended that the introverted need to be more carefully treated to enhance their learning experience in listening comprehension.

Another empirical contribution is that our participants appear to differ in response to learning content linked to their personality traits. Actually, these experimental findings resemble several publications on personality theory (e.g., Felder et al., 2002; Shuck, 1999). To our knowledge, learning about an understanding of complex symbolic expressions in order to work with data and procedures. This might imply better learning outcomes for the intuitive personality (Soles & Moller, 2001). This pattern is on a par with the thinking personality trait too. This study showed that Introvert (experimental) group were better at learning procedural knowledge than the feeling learners, which has also been found in some other work, that the thinking personality trait values logical process (Myers et al., 1998; Vincent & Ross, 2001). However, the data can be taken to suggest that care is needed when designing learning systems and that personality trait awareness and learning content need to be co-evolved.

The main research question of this article was to investigate whether or not the learners' personality features may have certain effects on their learning systems, and if that is the case, how to embrace this feature in designing adaptive learning systems. We should note that using the personality variable to illustrate the different components of learning effect is not novel, but little has empirically done this before with adaptive learning systems. The degree of personality traits through listening task on Iranian EFL learners' listening comprehension ability was thus introduced in this study; we mean the personality trait that can be indicative of

their learning styles and preferences that can be used for structuring appropriate learning materials. This would help to design learning activity by making explicit the personality nature of the learner.

The findings in our experimental contexts, regarding the likely effect between learners and personality traits, are not new (e.g., Riding & Rayner, 1999). The results clearly showed that different learners might process the same learning material with different personality traits, so it is necessary that learning design should accord with individual differences. Hence, a practical contribution purported by this article is that understanding between the personality traits and its matching learning systems design through listening task may be of central importance. It is, of course, difficult to generalize from the conditions of this study to more common learning systems that have diverse content of different domain knowledge, beyond the content of study explored here. However, the data can be taken to suggest that, at the very least, care is needed when designing adaptive learning tasks and the personality and its effect on the learning systems need to be considered.

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# THE EFFECT OF GROUP GAMES ON IRANIAN ELEMENTARY LEARNERS' LETTER LEARNING KNOWLEDGE

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## Abstract

The present investigation was an attempt to study the effect of group games on Iranian elementary learners' letter learning knowledge. To that end, 40 elementary students who did not have any knowledge of English were selected out of a pool of 60 students. They were divided into experimental and control group, each group contained 20 learners. Then a test of letter recognition was administered to both groups as a pre-test to take their initial knowledge of letter knowledge. Cambridge Young Learners English Tests - CYLET was used for this study. The experimental group received treatment in learning the letters through games in fifteen sessions. The control group received no treatment. Finally both groups sat for the post-test for letter recognition test. The results were computed and analyzed through SPSS (ANCOVA) and it was explored that group game had a positive effect on Iranian EFL learners' letter learning knowledge.

*Key words:* : Language games, Competitive game, Cooperative game, Motivation, Class atmosphere

## INTRODUCTION

At the elementary school level and in the field of special education, games have long been advocated as an effective tool to assist learning. Teachers of elementary school students, for example, use language learning games to keep restless children motivated and interested in the language. There is also overwhelming consensus among secondary school and college educators that language learning games are fun and motivating while allowing variation from a monotonous classroom routine. However, many teachers are still hesitant about implementing language learning games as a central teaching tool in the classroom. Everyone that has studied a foreign language knows that it can be a very difficult and demanding endeavor at times. The expression "No pain, no gain" is a point of view commonly held by language teachers. Teachers often only credit games for their fun factor and, therefore, tend to use them merely as time-filling activities with no teaching value. Some teachers even refuse to use games since they consider them a waste of time. This subchapter aims to show that games are not an alternative to work in class but that they are in fact an effective pedagogical device that helps students on their way to becoming proficient language users. As the game manufacturer Parker Brothers puts it, "Playing games is fun, and [...] many games instruct and uplift while entertaining" (qtd. in Palmer: 5).

Although the element of fun should not be the only reason to use games in the language classroom, it is a valid reason. The word "game-playing" provokes many positive associations in our head. We immediately think of fun, leisure time, get-togethers with friends, etc. When we hear the word "studying," however, a lot of powerful negative images and associations are activated in our brain (i.e. sitting still, feeling bored, getting bad grades, etc.). Normally, when a student is told to study new vocabulary words, he will not be very happy. However, when he is told to play a game with new words, he will have a much more positive attitude towards the learning material and the task and consequently memorize the new words faster and better. The reason for this is the so-called "affective filter" which can either promote or prevent comprehensible input from being used for language acquisition. Thus, playing games can make the sometimes difficult language learning process a fun and enjoyable experience.

## Review of the Related Literature

There is controversy over using games in language classes. Some teachers believe that learning must be serious in nature and having fun in the classroom does not lead to real learning. Some other think that using games in language classes is a waste of time, so they do not make use of them since, based on their belief, games have only one element, which is fun



(Ojeda, 2004). In spite of all of these beliefs and misconceptions, games have become popular over the past decade (Fletcher and Tobias, 2006). Language games not only encourage learners, but also help teachers provide a context in which language is used meaningfully. Furthermore, games are amusing, challenging and encourage and increase cooperation among learners.

Dalton E. (2005), in her study "Language Learning Games" tries to invent or discover instructional strategies that reduce the intense stress learners experience in formal language learning situations, e.g., EFL classes. She states that games can help with motivation, particularly cooperative games, and are also a way to be sure that all learners are included in the learning effort. She also mentions that not all language learning games are equivalent. Some are helpful in practicing individual vocabulary words such as Matching, while others involve the learners in complex discourse like Simulation.

So, in the process of developing in-class activities, the author has found that games and language activities are both highly useful not only for learning isolated vocabulary, but also for expanding into the realms of sentences and discourse, depending on the design of the game in question. Simple vocabulary games like Bingo and Concentration help learners with isolated vocabulary, but do not increase overall communicative competence in themselves. More sophisticated "memory chain" games in which each learner adds to the sentence of the learner previous can help build sentence competence, but the more subtle elements of discourse are not addressed. Finally, in elaborate role plays and "jigsaw" games, in which the learners either compete or work cooperatively to solve a language task such as constructing dialogue for an everyday situation or resolving a more structured mystery with clues, true discourse elements such as greetings, politeness phrases and idioms can be incorporated. Our goal needs to be to find games and learning activities which address all three levels of learning.

Carolyn Hildebrandt (2002) who is interested in "cooperative and competitive games in constructivist classrooms" reports the results of three analyses of first graders' social behavior in constructivist classrooms during cooperative and competitive games. The first analysis involved time sampling of aggressive and cooperative behaviors; the second focused on enacted interpersonal understanding (negotiation strategies and shared experiences); and the third on turn taking and rule following.

Based on these studies the significant differences in children's reciprocal negotiation strategies and shared experience suggest that developmentally appropriate early childhood teachers should take a closer look at cooperative games and consider adding them to their collection of group games, but they should not discard their competitive games.

## STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The use of games implies an enhanced and more demanding role for the teacher. Many teachers are terrified of deviating from their regular role by integrating a completely new procedure of language instruction in their classroom, namely game playing. Palmer and Rodgers (2011) explain that for a teacher, playing games "[...] may be doubly threatening in that the language teacher is being simultaneously urged to take on a new focus in language instruction [...] as well as a new procedure (game-playing)" (10). That is why it is advisable that games are incorporated into a conventional curriculum and that teachers work slowly towards the integration of games if they have never used them before. Palmer and Rodgers suggest, "[...] if an activity involves reasonably familiar classroom procedures involving reasonably familiar instructional goals [...], the initial teacher and student *Angst* can be minimized" (10). In addition to that, it is even more important that the teacher is well acquainted with every game used, defines its objectives and knows how it pertains to the topic to be learned.

## Significance of the study

Using games in teaching English letters is better than any other methods because it enables teachers to teach them by absorption and repetition which is the way people learn their native language. There are four reasons for this. First, by using games, students not only gain knowledge but also can apply and use what they learn. Second, it is obvious that fun learning games usually contain repetition, which make the language easier and understandable by students. Third, using games motivate students and increase the cooperation and competition in the classroom and this creates positive atmosphere. Fourth, learning a new language requires a great and tiring effort. Games facilitate the matter because they are amusing and challenging and they allow meaningful use of the language in context. It is obvious that games are connected with competition, enjoyment, active interaction, high motivation and interesting atmosphere. This helps students to learn and acquire the language easily. Chiasson (2002:1) emphasized the need to create a welcoming classroom for language learning: In order to take risks, you need a learning environment in which you do not feel threatened or intimidated. In order to speak, you need to feel you will be heard and that what you are saying is worth hearing. In order to continue your language learning, you need to feel motivated. In order to succeed, you need an atmosphere in which anxiety levels are low

and comfort levels are high. Issues of motivation and language anxiety are key to this topic of affect in the second language classroom.

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Based on these studies the significant differences in children's reciprocal negotiation strategies and shared experience suggest that developmentally appropriate early childhood teachers should take a closer look at cooperative games and consider adding them to their collection of group games, but they should not discard their competitive games.

### Materials and Methods

The study was conducted with 40 Iranian students who do not have any knowledge of English in Guilan, Iran. The researcher tried to have the same number of female and male participants in both experimental and control group

### Data Analysis Procedure

The results of post test were analyzed for further discussion via ANCOVA on the scores obtained from experimental and control group to see whether using games had any effects on EFL learners' letter learning knowledge.

### Results

Table (1) shows the number of students who took the pre-test and post-test. It should be mentioned that no one excluded.

**Table 1: Number of Students Participated in Pre-test and Post-test Cases**

Included N		Excluded Percent	Total		N	Percent
			N	Percent		
Pre-test*group	40	100%	0	0%	40	100%

Post-test\*group      40      100%      0      0%      40      100%

Forty participants were selected for this study. They were divided into two groups, experimental and control. The descriptive statistical analysis done on the collected data of pre-test and post-test is shown in table (2).

**Table 3: Descriptive statistical analysis done on the collected data of pre-test and post-test**

Group		Pre-test		Post-test	
Experimental	Mean	59.9		68.4	
	N	20		20	
	SD	4.8		4.7	
Control	Mean	58.45		58.1	
	N	20		20	
	SD	5.64		5.2	
Total	Mean	59.15		63.25	
	N	40		40	
	SD	5.216		7.121	

### Interpretive Statistics

Analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) is particularly appropriate when subjects in two or more groups are found to differ on a pre-test or other initial variable. In this case, the effects of the pre-test and/or other relevant variables are partialled out, and the resulting adjusted means of the post-test scores are compared. Through ANCOVA differences in the initial status of the groups can be removed statistically so that they can be compared as though their initial status had been equated. In this study, in order to investigate the research hypothesis "group game does not have any statistically significant effects on Iranian EFL learner's letter learning ability", the differences between mean scores of pre-test and post-test of control and experimental group were calculated through ANCOVA. Before running ANCOVA, the following hypotheses were examined:

4. Linear relationship between variables (pre-test and post-test)
5. Equality of Variances
6. Homogeneity of regression

In order to examine the equality of variances, Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances was run. It tests the null hypothesis that the error variance of the dependent variable is equal across groups.

**Table 4: Levine's Test of Equality of Error Variance**

F	df1	df2	Sig
.26	1	38	.61

According to table (4.5) the calculated F is not meaningful. So there is equality of variances and ANCOVA can be run.

The data in table (4.6) are related to test of homogeneity of regression. Before running covariance, between-subjects effects of pre-test-group should be investigated.

**Table 5: Tests of Between-Subjects Effects**

Source	Type III Sum of Square	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Corrected Model	1879.82	3	626.61	230.93	.00
Group (a)	17.86	1	17.86	6.6	.015
Pretest (b)	802.97	1	802	295.95	.00
Group*pretest(a*b)	.41	1	.41	.15	.7

Error	97.68	36	2.71
Total	46200	40	

As table (4.6) shows, between –subjects effect (a\*b) is not significant ( $F=0.15$  ,  $Sig=0.7$ ). It shows that the data supports homogeneity of regression. Therefore, covariance should be run just for between – subjects effect of post-test and group to show whether mean scores of two groups are the same or not. The results of this analysis are demonstrated in table (6).

**Table 6: Mean and Corrected Mean of Letter Learning Ability**

Source	Posttest		Corrected Mean	
	M	SD	M	SE
Experimental	38.4	4.7	37.77	.36
Control	28.1	5.11	28.72	.36

Table (4.7) shows the corrected means of dependent variable letter learning. The data demonstrate that the means of experimental group are upper than control group.

Sum of analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) of letter learning in experimental and control group after eliminating between-subjects effect is demonstrated in table (4.8):

**Table 7: Sum of analysis of covariance**

Source	Type III Sum of Square	df	Mean Square	F	Sig	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	1879.415	2	939.71	354.48	.00	.95
Pretest	818.52	1	818.52	308.76	.00	.89
Group	805.42	1	805.48	303.84	.00	.89
Error	98.08	37	2.65			
Total	46200	40				

As it can be seen, the corrected model ( $f=00$ ,  $F=354.48$ ) is statistically significant. The results ( $F=303.84$  ,  $Sig=.00$ ,  $Eta=.89$ ) shows that there is a difference between two groups. It means that there is significant difference between experimental and control group. As a result, the null hypothesis “group game does not have any statistically significant effects on Iranian EFL learner's letter learning ability” was rejected.

To clarify the result, the data will be demonstrated in graph (4.2). The vertical axis represents the post-test and the horizontal axis represents experimental and control group.

## Conclusion

There is plenty of evidence in this study to suggest that games are not just an occasional tool to add interest and excitement to the teaching session. The possibility of applications in world language instruction goes far beyond using games as warm-ups or as an alternative when an extra activity is needed. It is safe to say that games can constitute a substantial part of language programs and can be used for many purposes in a language curriculum. If games are properly designed, implemented, and directed they are a powerful tool for teachers. Language games can be used for presentation of new vocabulary, for practice, and to stimulate language production. Games can also support the development of students' communicative skills in a rich and non-threatening environment.

The games that the researcher used were a valuable resource of information about each participant and the group dynamics. The students' emotions that resulted when playing games provided useful information for the researcher. From a broad perspective, it was noticed that students felt comfortable with being themselves and perceived a cheerful energy among the players while playing. This relaxed and positive atmosphere demonstrates that an environment had been created where individuals could express themselves freely. Even

though students were excited and showed a great sense of humor, they were not trying to get attention in a negative way.

The participants showed enthusiasm, excitement, and engagement all through the games. These emotions were expressed in different ways and demonstrated high levels of intrinsic motivation, effort, and concentration. However, the emotions found were not always positive. During the games the participants also showed signs of anxiety that unveiled students' perspectives and conflicts with rules and competition.

An important discovery from this study is that respecting the rules of the games is essential to achieving their educational goals. Being organized, fair, and consistent with the rules has a calming effect on the students and contributes to creating a positive and fruitful environment. In contrast, if the rules are not clear and properly enforced it could create anxiety and confusion in the students. Respecting the rules provides the necessary boundaries that will help students develop their skills in working with others.

Another aspect to consider is that the competitive facets of the games must be directed carefully. From the findings, the researcher came to the conclusion that students were vulnerable to excessive competition and for that reason too much competition should be avoided. Educators should direct students' attention to the pleasure of learning while playing the game and not necessarily getting a prize, or looking for victory. However, a line should be drawn that helps students differentiate between celebrating success and being enthusiastic about the game, and excessive pride and boasting.

Reflecting on the principles of non-competitive games can be a powerful tool to enhance educational goals. Teachers can identify certain aspects that are crucial for the good functioning of the games and improve their dynamics. In order to provide maximum opportunity for students' participation, creativity must be used to find alternatives to rules that could leave students out of the game when they make a mistake.

The findings also support the fact that games stimulate students to use their skills to understand the target language. Their enthusiasm engenders full concentration that helps students understand the language that is being used throughout the games. Students use their creativity to make connections that help them retain the new utterances. From the perspective of the group dynamics, games proved to be student-centered and promote collaboration. The team aspect of some of the games can encourage cooperation and build team spirit.

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# A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE EFFECT OF GRAMMAR TRANSLATION METHOD AND COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING ON IRANIAN LOWER-INTERMEDIATE EFL LEARNERS' LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY

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## Abstract

This study compared the effectiveness of Communicative Language Teaching and Grammar Translation Method of teaching English on the language proficiency of the students. To conduct the study, 150 participants were homogenized through an OPT. 60 out of 150 students were selected. The criterion for selection of the students was that their score should be one standard deviation below and above the mean. They were considered as lower-intermediate learners. Then, they were randomly assigned either to the experimental (n=30) or to the control group (n=30). Traditional (GTM) method and the Communicative (CLT) method were taught separately to the control group and experimental group respectively for a period of one month and a half. A teacher made pretest and posttest, same in difficulty level, were made to evaluate students' proficiency in the subject of English. A paired sample and an independent sample *t*-test were calculated to evaluate the effectiveness of CLT and GTM. This study produced both qualitative and quantitative data through questionnaire and interviews. Man Whitney U test square was also calculated. With respect to Grammar-Translation Method, the questions were classified under the title of "the role of grammar", "the role of error correction", and "the role of translation". On the other hand, the questions in Communicative Language Teaching were grouped into "the role of negotiation of meaning in CLT classroom", "the role of communicative activities in CLT classroom", and "the role of formal instruction in CLT classroom".

The results of the study revealed that significant statistical difference was found between the two means which indicated that experimental group outscored control group in achievement after the treatment.

In the questionnaire it was found that there was a difference between two groups in relation to their attitude in teaching methodology which was significant at  $p < 0.001$ .

Moreover, the result of interview showed that students reported that they like grammar instruction and they knew the grammar rules is reverse of teachers' expectation or perception. In addition, students reported that even though they don't like to be corrected in front of the class, they still thought that error correction is necessary in any circumstance. Furthermore, thought that grammatical accuracy is of the utmost importance. As to student perceptions on translation, it is found that generally translation is a useful tool in learning and there should be more translation exercises. However, they also reported that without translation, they still could understand the meanings of a reading passage. Students in the study also regarded that negotiation of meaning and activities are important in language learning. Also, students considered that classroom activities contribute greatly to successful language learning, and thus activities should be incorporated into the classrooms as many as possible.

It can be concluded from the data of the study that the communicative approach is better than the traditional method (GTM) in teaching English.

**Keywords:** Communicative Language Teaching, Grammar Translation Method, language proficiency

## Introduction

There can be no denying the fact that for learning and teaching any language method or methods are very much important. It is true that method or methods for learning and teaching language can be changed with the span of time but language cannot be changed. It is universal.

Teaching is basically an interaction between the teacher and learner. It is a system of actions intended to induce learning. Teaching is a two process, teacher deliver a lecture while the learners receive it and gain it (Bruce, 2007). The most effective teaching in language teaching is that in which both teacher and learners are equally involved, because in language teaching communication and discussion of both sides (teacher and learner) are necessary for effective learning of second or foreign language acquisition (Richardson, 1998).

It is true that for effective teaching one needs to adopt an effective method of teaching learning process, because each work or task has its own value and significance, the same is the case of second language acquisition also (Bahrani, 2011). If a teacher uses such method of teaching which is not according to the need and requirements of learners, then both teacher and learners face difficulty in teaching learning process (Shabina, 2008).

Due to quick changes in life we have need of new methods and techniques to make our life easy and comfortable; the same is the case of English language learning also. We have need of such methods and approaches through which we can learn the English language easily (Law, 2003).

There are different methods and approaches of teaching English. Some are very important and having global importance because of the changing situations and due to the needs and requirement of time while others are considered dull and ineffective methods and approaches of English language teaching. But the fact is that no method is worthless, each method has its own value and significance (Sue, 2011). A good teacher is that who uses that method or approach which enables the teacher to achieve the desired objectives easily and within less time as compare to other (Swain, 1985).

The current teaching English language in colleges is still characterized by the adoption of the traditional teaching method, which is known as the Grammar Translation Method. With this model, language structures are presented by the teacher, then practiced in the form of spoken or written exercises, and then used by the learners in less controlled speaking or writing activities.

Although the traditional grammar teaching method helps improve the students' mastery of the grammatical rules, the students cannot use these rules flexibly and appropriately in communication. That is to say, the traditional grammar teaching method has its disadvantages which prevent the students from developing their communicative competence. Firstly, the traditional grammar teaching method is teacher-centered. As a result, the majority of the classroom time is spent on the teachers' elaborate explanation of English grammar rules, while all the students are either listening or taking notes. Thus little attention is paid to the development of English communicative competence. The students accept the English knowledge passively in the procedures set ahead of time by English teachers step by step. There is little use of the English language. The typical exercise is to translate sentences from English into their native language or vice versa, to fill in the blank with a proper word and to correct errors in a sentence. So the students lack English communicative opportunities. Secondly, memorization and rote learning are the basic learning techniques, which cannot help to arouse students' interest, build their self-confidence or improve their communicative strategies in English learning and even makes them fear English grammar learning. An alternative to the traditional grammar teaching method is the Communicative Approach. The Communicative Approach makes language teaching as in real-world situation. Where GTM emphasized on grammar learning for language communication, on the other hand Communicative Approach makes students' participation or cooperative completion of learning language tasks between or among students and teachers. As the above mentioned two methods are fully different from others, it is highly demanding to compare which method is better than another one for learning English language.

In the Western world, "foreign" language learning in schools was synonymous with the learning of Latin or Greek. Latin, thought to promote intellectuality through "mental gymnastics", was only held to be indispensable to an adequate higher education. Latin was taught by means of what has been called the Classical Method: focus on grammatical rules, memorization of vocabulary and of various declensions and conjugations translation of texts, doing written exercises. (Brown, H.D., 1994)

As other languages began to be taught in educational institutions in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Classical Method was adopted as the chief means for teaching foreign languages. Little thought



was given to teaching oral use of languages. After all, languages were not being taught primarily to learn oral/aural communication but to learn for the sake of being “scholarly” or, in some instances, for gaining a reading proficiency in a foreign language. Since there was little if any theoretical research on second language acquisition in general, or on the acquisition of reading proficiency, foreign languages were taught as any other skill was taught.

In the nineteenth century, the Classical Method came to be known as the Grammar Translation Method. Grammar-Translation Method began in Germany, or more accurately, Prussia, at the end of the eighteenth century and established an almost impregnable position as the favored methodology of the Prussia Gymnasien after their expansion in the early years of the nineteenth century. The origins of the method do not lie in an attempt to teach languages by grammar and translation, these were taken for granted anyway. The original motivation was reformist, the traditional scholastic approach among individual learners in the eighteenth century had been to acquire learners a reading knowledge of foreign languages by studying a grammar and applying this knowledge to the interpretation of texts with the use of a dictionary. Most of them were highly educated men and women who were trained in classical grammar and knew how to apply the familiar categories to new languages. However scholastic methods of this kind were not well suited to the capabilities of younger school pupils and, moreover, they were self-study methods which were inappropriate for group teaching in the classroom.

The Grammar-Translation Method was an attempt to adapt these traditions to the circumstances and requirements of schools. Its principal aim was to make language learning easier. The central feature was the replacement of traditional texts by exemplary sentences. Grammar-Translation was the offspring of German scholarship, the object of which, according to one of its less charitable critics, was “to know everything about something rather than the thing itself” (W H.D Rouse, quoted in Kelly 1969)

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) originated from Europe, with the increasing interdependence of European countries in the 1960s. Both American and British proponents now see it as an approach that aims to (a) make communicative competence as the goal of language teaching and (b) develop procedures for the teaching of the four language skills. “The Communicative Language Teaching stresses the importance of providing learners with opportunities to use English for communicative purposes and attempts to integrate such activities into a wider program of language teaching” (Howatt, 1984). According to this approach, teaching and learning are for communication. It presupposes that language always occurs in a social context, and it should not be divorced from its context when it is being taught. Learning in order to communicate is now commonplace.

According to (Richards, 2000) it is clear that Communicative Language Teaching is based on activities. This method involves teachers and learners both to participate in learning process. Basically it is an interactive method. In this method there is interaction between teacher and learners (Aziz, 2011). Its effectiveness may be significant for curriculum designers, developers, implementers, and evaluators, as well as text books writers, working and prospective teachers. If the curriculum of English language is developed and constructed according to the Communicative Language Teaching or interactive method of teaching English language, then it will be good and effective not only for teachers but for English language learners also (Andrew, 2007).

Grammar Translation Method and Communicative Language Teaching have a vital and dominant status in teaching of English. Like these two methods there were other different methods and approaches that had been used successfully, but the fact is that Communicative Language Teaching is an advance approach of teaching English in the present competitive era. Communicative Language Teaching is the only way of teaching which fulfills the communicative needs of learners and especially for those learners who are not basically the native speakers of the target language (Robert, 2000).

Communicative Language Teaching is a successful approach of teaching English as a foreign language. Most of the qualified and experienced teachers are using Communicative Language Teaching in English language class rooms in order to improve the teaching learning process (Herron, 1976). Communicative Language Teaching is based on activities, communication in the target language freely and friendly among the teacher and learners. Group discussion, fair work, demonstration and presentations are the main features of Communicative Language Teaching (Howatt, 1984). As compare to Grammar Translation Method Communicative Language Teaching does not ignore the importance of language structure but follow it in communicative manner, and give preference to interactive activities (Dumville, 1990).

The related researches about Grammar Translation Method are as follows:

Brown H.D. (1994), in his *Principles of Language Learning and Teaching*, stated "It does virtually nothing to enhance a student's communicative ability in the language."

Cunningham, C. (2000) in the paper "Translation in the Classroom- a Useful Tool for Second Language Acquisition" indicated "while there may indeed be some negative effects from using translation, there is a place in the learning environment for translation. Translation can contribute to the students' acquisition of the target language, at all levels".

Austin J Damiani (2003) in his paper "The Grammar Translation Method of Language Teaching" stated "As a teacher, I liked using the grammar translation method because I could assume the intelligence of my students; I could talk to them like the intelligent people that they are, and we could talk about the grammar and vocabulary that I was teaching. In another method, I would have had to use simple language and familiar phrases to communicate in the target language, and even then, I could not be sure that my students knew and understood what it was that they were saying."

Several researches examined the effectiveness of CLT on students; language learning. Some of these studies have been explained below.

According to Hymes (1972), competence should be viewed as "the overall underlying knowledge and ability for language which the speaker-listener possesses" (p. 13). That is, the concept of communicative competence involves knowledge of the language and the ability to use the knowledge in context. Communicative competence is a complex notion that involves linguistic as well as sociocultural sectors. From proposed definitions, it can be concluded that communicative competence consists of knowledge of linguistic rules, appropriate language usage in different situations, connection of utterances in a discourse, and strategies to cope with for the use of language.

Karava-Doukas (1996) suggested that the mismatch between the beliefs and practices may contribute to the neglect of examining teachers' attitudes before implementing any new approach. That is, only promoting the approach and trying to convince the teachers of the effectiveness of CLT does not successfully change the teachers' existing beliefs about language learning and teaching.

Razmjoo and Riazi (2006), similarly, in their study would like to express that the teachers as a whole expressed positive attitudes toward the five principles of CLT. The teachers held strong views about CLT in the areas of grammar role and teacher role.

Karim's (2004) survey study examined university level EFL teacher's attitudes toward CLT in Bangladesh. The findings showed that most teachers displayed positive attitudes toward the basic principles of CLT. He also interested to disclose, the teachers were aware of the features of CLT and their perceptions of CLT corresponded with their reported CLT practice.

Hawkey (2006), in Italy, applied both survey and face-to-face interviews to investigate whether teachers agreed with the advantages of the communicative approach in language teaching. The teachers stated positive views about CLT such as "CLT improving learner motivation and interest", and "CLT improving communicative skills" (p. 247). Through his research it is known that, teachers' interviews suggested that the teachers were motivated to use pair-work activities to meet the learners' communicative needs.

Liao (2003) investigated high school English teachers' attitudes toward CLT in China. The first phase survey study reported most Chinese teachers are supportive of the implementation of CLT. The findings indicated that among 302 participants, 94% responded favorably toward CLT and were willing to practice it. In the second-phase interview study, four interviewees were selected from survey participants who displayed favorable attitudes toward CLT. The teachers expressed their agreement with CLT such as, "the teacher should take into account the students' need", and "the aim of the class is to enable students to communicate easily in real life situations" (p. 125).

Chang's (2000) survey study in Taiwan investigated 110 high school English teachers' attitudes toward CLT and their practice of CLT. The results showed that Taiwanese high school English teachers hold positive attitudes toward CLT. Moreover, the teachers who hold positive attitudes toward CLT tend to use more communicative activities in their classroom practice.

The objectives of the study included:

1. To compare the effectiveness of Communicative Language Teaching and Grammar Translation Method of teaching English on the language proficiency of Iranian EFL learners in Islamic Azad University of Tonekabon with regard to the vocabulary, reading comprehension, grammar, and general speaking.
2. To justify which method is better than another one in practical sense.

3. To examine students' attitudes towards the application of CLT approach and GTM.

Thus, the current research attempts to investigate these underpinning questions:

1. Will CLT be more effective than GTM in EFL learners' language proficiency regarding vocabulary, reading comprehension, grammar, and general speaking??
2. What are the learners' attitudes towards GTM and CLT?

## Methods

### Participants

The subjects consisted of 150 adult students, who studied English in an institute in Tonekabon Province, Iran. The age range of the subjects varies from 15 to 26. They were all nonnative speakers of English, and their first language was Persian. At first, the students were homogenized through an OPT. Then, 60 students whose score fell one standard deviation below and above the mean were selected. Based on their scores on OPT, they were considered as lower-intermediate learners. Then, they were randomly assigned either to the experimental (n=30) or to the control group (n=30).

### Instruments

In this study a pretest and a posttest were used for both groups. In pre-test and posttest, the students were tested for comprehension (20 marks), vocabulary (45 marks), grammar (15 marks); and speaking (20 marks). The speaking part of the test was comprised of two portions: part A (10 marks) dealing with their achievement in group discussions on general topics related to daily life situations; and the part B (10 marks) dealing with their understanding and communicative ability in context (syllabus). The total marks allotted in the grammar portion were 15 and the speaking tests were 20. For measuring the attitude of two groups, a Likert scale with 18 items was used developed by Zeeshan (2013). Every statement comprised of five options with Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Neutral (N), Disagree (D) and, Strongly Disagree (SD).

Interview was used to collect the information related to perceptions of students on the effectiveness of GTM and CLT. With respect to Grammar-Translation Method, the questions were classified under the title of "the role of grammar", "the role of error correction", and "the role of translation". On the other hand, the questions in Communicative Language Teaching were grouped into "the role of negotiation of meaning in CLT classroom", "the role of communicative activities in CLT classroom", and "the role of formal instruction in CLT classroom". The classification of the questions was based on Schulz (2001).

### Procedures

Traditional (GTM) method and the Communicative (CLT) method were taught separately to the control group and experimental group respectively for a period of one month and a half. A teacher-made pre-test was used to evaluate the proficiency levels of the two groups in the subject of English. A teacher-made post-test, same in difficulty level with that of the pre-test, was conducted to measure the achievement of two groups. The purpose was to examine the difference, if any, in the achievement of both groups taught with different methodologies. During the treatment period, the two groups were taught "American English File" textbook, phrases, and essay writing. The attitude of sample students (CG & EG) towards learning the English language was measured after the treatment period.

In the control group, the grammatical points were taught by using the students' native language (Persian). The students in the control group received explicit grammatical instruction on If Clause conditions one, two, and three. The students learned the four grammatical points through repeating practice, drills, and memorizing grammatical rules.

The form and meaning of each condition was demonstrated and three sentences as examples were exhibited. Then the students were requested to answer some questions showing their understanding, thereafter form some sentences correctly. The negation was explained in the same way and at the end of the class contrastive questions and discussions were clearing the differences between three conditions.

They were asked to memorize a bilingual word list. The first language (i.e. Persian) was used in the following situations:

- Forming each of the conditions and plural nouns especially when students were unable to perform the correct order.

- Translating the meaning of the examples which were provided to clarify the form of the conditions and use.
- Distinguishing between the three forms of if clause conditions and their meaning.
- Explaining the negation structure and the examples that were given to the students.
- Allowing students express themselves in Persian when they cannot in English.

The step-by-step rule-first presentation of the language rules before drill and practice (Seliger, 1975, as cited in Kim, 2007) was used as a major approach for the control group. First, the instructor clearly introduced and explained the key concepts of the target grammatical points by using the textbook. Second, some examples were provided to students after the introduction of the grammatical point. Third, the students were requested to do some exercises on their own in the class. Fourth, the teacher went over the exercises and gave answers. Fifth, the students completed the rest of the exercises on the textbook outside the classroom.

Students were given some reading passages and were asked to read the passages and translate them into Persian, answer some reading comprehension questions, find the synonym and antonym of the words, and fill in the blanks with the appropriate words.

In the experimental group the students in the experimental group had the opportunity to learn the grammatical points through communicative activities such as pair-work activities, group discussion activities, games, role-plays, and songs. As an example, students were divided into small groups and for a discovery grammar activity. During the activity, students had to find out the underlying rules or patterns of the target grammatical point. In addition, students had to formulate, analyze, and hypothesize the target grammatical points without the help of the instructor. Then, the instructor gave feedback and introduced and explained the key concepts of the target grammatical points with examples. Finally, the instructor provided some communicative activities in order to help students to comprehend the target grammatical points.

The students were usually asked to work in pairs, groups or individually to do both mechanical and meaningful practice. For mechanical practice, both kinds of oral and written practice were exploited with the aim of developing accuracy. Students had to do one or two oral practices such as repetitions and substitutions, and one written exercise of gap-fill or sentence building-up. With meaningful practice, they had to use the target structures to fulfill one or two of such fluency-based tasks as information gaps, role-plays, discussions, and often one parallel writing exercise. During this stage, the teacher took the role of a guide, a consultant, and a facilitator who assisted students with their communicative tasks. The teacher's feedback and error correction was given immediately in the hope to help students get accuracy.

The students were asked to produce the structures through some real-life situations, especially their own real life. In this stage, working in pairs or groups was often intensified; besides, the interaction between individuals and the whole class was effectively exploited. This fluency-oriented phase offered students wider opportunities to keep on participating in one or two of such communicative activities as role-plays, discussions, collaborative writing, etc.

The reliability of pre-test and posttest on Cronbach's Alpha was 0.80. The validity of attitude scale construction was ensured by getting expert opinions of two professors and administering this attitude scale on 30 students (15+15) not included in the experimental study, known for their positive and negative attitudes about learning the English language. Reliability of control group and experimental group attitude in pre-test and post-test on Cronbach's Alpha was 0.85.

### Data Analysis

In order to determine the effectiveness of each method, a paired sample *t-test* was calculated. In addition, in order to compare the effectiveness of the methods, an independent sample *t-test* was calculated. This study produced both qualitative and quantitative data through questionnaire and interviews. Frequencies, percentages were calculated to describe what the attitudes of the subjects are towards GTM and CLT. Man Whitney U test square was also calculated. SPSS 18 was used to analyze the data collected for this study.

### Results

The data obtained from achievement test (pre-test and post-test) of control group and experimental group was tabulated and interpreted using Mean, Standard Deviation (SD) and *t-test*. In pre-test, the mean score of control group and experimental group was 22.30 and 21.60, respectively. The difference between the two mean scores was 0.70, which was greater than 0.05 level alpha. So, no significant statistical difference was found between the

two means obtained by control group and experimental group. This finding signifies that the two groups were almost equal in English language achievement before the treatment period (Table 1).

In the post-test, mean scores obtained by control group and experimental group were 24.45 and 27.75 respectively. The difference between the two mean scores was 0.002 which was less than 0.05 level alpha. So, significant statistical difference was found between the two means which indicates that experimental group outscored control group in achievement after the treatment of three months (Table 1).

**Table1. Overall achievement of the control group and experimental group in pre-test and post-test**

Segment	Group	N	$\bar{x}$	SD	T value	Sig
Pre-test	Control	30	22.30	5.35	.39	.70
	Experimental	30	21.60	5.09		
Posttest	Control	30	24.45	3.10	-3.4	.002
	Experimental	30	27.75	3.03		

A detailed segmental pre-test result also indicates that the two groups were almost equal in English proficiency and there was no statistically significant difference found between the achievements of the two groups in any part of the achievement test, while the standard of significance was 0.05 at alpha (Table 2).

**Table2. Detailed achievement of both control group and experimental in pre-test**

Parts of test	Segment	N	$\bar{x}$	SD	T value	Sig
Comprehension	Control	30	5.60	.95	.92	.362
	Experimental	30	5.30	1.10		
Vocabulary	Control	30	2.70	1.00	.73	.468
	Experimental	30	2.45	1.15		
grammar	Control	30	5.80	2.21	-.07	.941
	Experimental	30	5.90	2.00		
General speaking	Control	30	2.88	.70	.00	1.000
	Experimental	30	2.90	.61		

Detailed description of students' achievement in posttest was shown in the following table.

**Table3. Detailed achievement of both groups in posttest**

Parts of test	Segment	N	$\bar{x}$	SD	T value	Sig
Comprehension	Control	30	4.80	.79	.70	.47
	Experimental	30	5.00	1.00		
Vocabulary	Control	30	2.48	.76	.46	.648
	Experimental	30	2.38	.60		
Grammar	Control	30	5.85	.97	-.07	.941
	Experimental	30	6.30	1.42		
General speaking	Control	30	3.80	.69	.00	1.000
	Experimental	30	4.65	.66		

The table showed that the experimental group using CLT outperformed the control group using GTM in all aspects, i.e. comprehension, vocabulary, essay writing, and general speaking.

In order to answer to the main question Mann-Whitney U- test was used. The data was ordinal type, because they measure the attitudes of the students towards CLT and GTM.

**Table 4. Mean Ranks of the variables and their comparison between two groups**

Groups	N	Mean Rank	Mann-Whitney U
CLT	30	45.78	26.50
GTM	30	17.45	P= 0.000
Total	60		

As shown in table 1 the mean rank for CLT group was 45.78 and for GTM group was equal to 17.45. It may be seen from the table 5 that there was a difference between two groups in relation to their attitude in teaching methodology which was significant at  $p < 0.001$ .

The result of interview revealed that in general students agreed that grammar teaching is very important in language learning and many of them (65%) reported that they like form-focused instruction. Moreover, they reported that they actually knew the grammar rules during writing. Many students (70%) also agreed that grammar exercises and drills could help their learning.

In the interview section, questions regarding the error correction revealed that students support the practice of error correction in classroom. Most of students replied that error correction in students' homework is necessary and essential. Furthermore, 90% of students were in favor of error correction in their writing. Also, several students disliked corrections of grammar errors or mispronunciation in classroom.

Students were asked four questions concerning the role of translation. The results showed that students were in favor of the use of translation in classroom. It was found that generally translation is a useful tool in learning and there should be more translation exercises. However, they also reported that without translation, they still could understand the meanings of a reading passage.

Students in the experimental group were asked some questions regarding negotiation of meaning. It was found that students in the study also regarded that negotiation of meaning and activities are important in language learning. As to student perceptions of form-focused instruction in CLT-based classroom, it is found that fluency and accuracy are both important to learners and sometimes accuracy outweighs fluency.

The results of interview showed that students (more than 90%) were in favor of using activities in CLT-based classrooms. In addition, students considered that classroom activities contribute greatly to successful language learning and thus activities should be incorporated into the classrooms as many as possible.

With respect to students' perceptions of accuracy in communicative language teaching, generally the importance of accuracy in language use is maintained. However, there is also an emphasis on the fluency in language use. This suggests that accuracy and fluency are the goals of language learning and they should be merged in harmony in EFL classrooms.

### Conclusion

It can be concluded from the data of the study that the communicative approach is better than the traditional method (GTM) in teaching English. The experimental study included in this research proved the fact that, if provided with suitable conditions, Iranian learners can increase their communicative ability. The use of the CLT approach has shown to increase motivation for learning.

The study showed that, if provided with suitable conditions, a better classroom environment with audio/visual aids like computer, multimedia, etc., a well-trained and active teacher with a good command of English using communicative approach to facilitate his/her purpose of teaching can produce better results than teaching through traditional methods. It proves the fact that the CLT approach is more suitable for teaching English as a foreign language than the traditional method (GTM).

Experimental group significantly improved in speaking skill. It proves that using the CLT method improves communicative skills of the learners.

Students reported that they like grammar instruction and they knew the grammar rules. In addition, students reported that even though they don't like to be corrected in front of the class, they still thought that error correction is necessary in any circumstance. Furthermore, they thought that grammatical accuracy is of the utmost importance. As to student perceptions on translation, it is found that generally translation is a useful tool in learning, and there should be more translation exercises. However, they also reported that without translation, they still could understand the meanings of a reading passage. Students in the study also regarded that negotiation of meaning and activities are important in language learning.

The results of this study is in line with the study conducted by Phi Ho, Ph & Binh, N (2014) who concluded that being instructed language components with CLT, the students achieved better outcomes not only in form but in function.

In the study while participating in the activity, the students had a good opportunity to use the language. They had to express their thoughts, interpret their reasons, and apply if clause conditions into their performance. At the end, group members had to present their work by speaking English, and receiving opinions, evaluation, and feedback from the other groups. In other words, the activity helped lead the students from taking the grammatical point as input to producing it as output (Skehan & Foster, 1997). The students' self-exploration concluded with better short-term and long-term utilization of the material studied in language learning (Kumaravadivelu, 1994). Therefore, it is reasoned here, CLT was more effective for the students' grammatical ability on prototypical (non-productive) rules. This finding showed well-designed activities that incorporate classifying, matching, comparing, problem-solving, experience sharing, idea exchanging, and group discussions (Willis, 2007) are important and helpful for EFL learners.

Iranian learners lack English language communication skills, and the use of old traditional methodology is one, among other, cause for this shortcoming.

Because English is a foreign language and it is not an official language in Iran, it is difficult for students to use English in their daily lives. Therefore, there are few opportunities to use the language except for those who work with foreigners, travel overseas, and engage in business with other countries. Because of the absence of an English-speaking environment, students rarely use, practice, or apply the target language in communication outside the classroom. As Hird (1995) mentioned, "There are almost no real-life communicative target language needs for the EFL learner" (p. 23). Iranian has a similar situation. Hence, students' grammar and communicative abilities are likely to suffer because of the rare opportunities to practice, use, and apply knowledge of grammar in communication.

An appropriate technological supplement might help mitigate the problem of the poor language learning environment. Naturally, access to both software and hardware would be needed in order to complement the shortage of a non-English-speaking environment. For example, if a school has language labs, students can do self-study or be assigned additional practice after the class. If the school provides interactive language software, students can preview what they are going to learn or review what they have learned, not only in class but also outside school. For instance, students can download conversations to an MP3 and listen to them while waiting walking down the street.

Also, classroom hardware such as computers, CD/DVD or tape players, monitors, and speakers, help students in learning a language in class.

According to Van Lier (1996), motivation is important in foreign or second language learning. In a survey finding of Littlewood, et al. (1996), university students in Hong Kong made efforts to communicate in class because they perceived the importance of learning English. Taiwanese university students also see the importance of learning English and show their preference for a relaxing, student-centered, and interactive learning environment (Wu, 2002). The results in the research study are in line with Wu's findings. About 83% of the students agreed that they prefer CLT instruction over GTM. Most of the students agree that CLT makes learning grammar easier and enjoyable. In addition, CLT creates more opportunities for interaction with the teacher and other students, and for communicative performance that meets the goal of learning English: communication.

Communicative competence as a result of the CLT approach should be acknowledged. This research can prove to be a milestone in this direction. The syllabus for English language teaching may be revised accordingly. Teachers' training programs should include the use of technology in teaching and a focus on increasing

communication on the part of learners should be emphasized. The examination system should not focus only on writing skills, and the evaluation of all language skills should be ensured.

If possible, institutes and schools should budget more for classroom equipment and provide an online learning platform for teachers and students. It is always helpful to have equipment such as computers, CD/DVD or tape players, screens, and speakers in each classroom. For example, showing materials by PowerPoint saves time compared to writing the same content on the blackboard. Playing movies that relate to the lessons helps students' understanding of the main topics. Having real-life conversations makes students familiar with typical daily communication in English.

CLT has taken an important complementary role in teaching EFL. Appropriate design of communicative activities thus helps students learn English. For example, some work-like situations and activities can be created for students in order to meet their goals after they graduate and start working in companies. Through designed activities in grammar class, students not only can practice English structures and forms but also can realize accurately the usage of grammatical knowledge in a real-life conversation. In other words, grammar forms and structures become helpful and useful for students to express and interpret their messages when they communicate with others (Wang, 1999).

One of the limitations of this study is that going through all CLT activities with sufficient time to introduce and practice the material was very difficult for the teacher and for the students. In addition, the teacher and the students were also required to follow institute's academic schedule. Because of limited teaching hours and tight schedules, there may have been insufficient time for the students to develop a level of comfort with the CLT and then to practice and internalize the grammatical points.

Moreover, since CLT contains many communicative activities, it is not easy for a teacher to control the class and monitor activities for each group or each student. Large class size is generally seen as having a negative effect on the implementation of CLT (Tsai, 2007). In this study, the class size is thirty students. In such a context, it is difficult to arrange students to discuss in groups because they may not pay attention to the lessons and the teacher has difficulty monitoring their behavior (Wang, 1999). The teacher noted that it was hard to manage communicative activities in a class with thirty students. In particular, with limited teaching hours, the teacher felt pressure to go over the materials and finish activities in class because the teacher "must spend a lot of time lecturing students regarding class discipline" (Tsai, 2007, p. 140-141). Therefore, reducing the class size is a necessary step toward successful implementation of CLT. If each class contained only ten to fifteen students, the teacher could more easily attend the needs of each group or each student and provide a higher quality of teaching. In other words, smaller class size is more efficient for teachers to attend to the whole class and to expand the probability of instilling communicative competence because teachers are more available to students in a successful communicative and interactive modality (Chang, 2005).

In addition, only lower-intermediate students were selected in this study, and the achievement of the students in terms of reading comprehension, essay writing, vocabulary, and general speaking was investigated.

Further research in this area should be conducted on a large scale. The application of the CLT approach should be tested on different levels of education in schools, such as primary, elementary, secondary and higher education. All of the four language skills should be included in language assessment. Further work is also needed in syllabus design for the CLT approach.

Moreover, further studies are needed to investigate the effect of CLT and GTM on students overall achievement with a smaller sample.

Finally, further studies should be conducted with students at other language levels and in other areas.

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# A COMPARATIVE STUDY ON THE CURRENT STATE OF THE ART OF READING SKILL ACCOUNTS

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## Abstract

The present paper starts off with the current state of the art of reading skill accounts of a number of reading skills giants in the field of EFL/ESL teaching. Following the major accounts proffered by them the major distinctions among them will be delineated. The paper will conclude with a survey of the converging views proffered by these scholars to provide the language teachers with a broader picture of what has been going on over the past decade as far as reading skill is concerned.

**Key terms:** extensive reading, intensive reading, phonics, reading skills, reading strategies, reading approaches

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Reading skill has invariably been a major concern for EFL educators. Although a plethora of reading skill books and research papers has been written to unravel the secrets of reading skill over the past decades, a great many of them regrettably have primarily focused on fragmented parts and pieces of reading skill boiling down to a sort of incomprehensive account of it. To delve further into the current issues on reading skill, the present paper aims to offer a survey on a number of major vantage points proffered by outstanding scholars in the field to provide the readers with a far broader comprehensive perspective as far as this particular skill is concerned.

## 2. CURRENT POSITION ON APPROACHES TO READING SKILL

To start off, it should be noted that the substantial vitality of reading skill is not a mystery currently. Irrespective of whether this skill is pertained to identifying main ideas, determining meaning from the context, or improving reading speed, L2 learners need to be regularly reminded of the importance of this activity and why it is being practiced.

There is a wide agreement that ESL/EFL students need to increase their vocabularies and to develop strategies for coping with unfamiliar words. The value of studying word derivations, cognates, and word formation has long been cited, along with the need for regular practice in determining lexical meaning from the context (e.g., Chastain 1976; Norris, 1970; Yorkey 1970). Even a number of scholars in the field have stressed on discussing with the language learners what they need to do to become efficient readers (e.g., Chastain, *ibid.* Plaister, 1968).

Placing a great deal of emphasis on the "meaning-centered" reading, Nunan (1999) relates the concept of reading to the parameters of "schema theory". Noting that the basic principle behind the schema theory is that texts themselves, whether spoken or written, do not carry meaning, rather they provide signposts, or clues, to be utilized by learners or readers in reconstructing the original meanings of speakers or writers. Nunan accounts for reading as an interactive process between the reader and the text in that the reader is required to fit the clues provided in the text to his or her own background knowledge. He distinguishes between two opposing approaches to reading (i.e. bottom-up vs. top-down). To him the bottom up approach views reading as a process of decoding written symbols into their aural equivalents in a linear fashion. To delineate it concisely, he states that in this approach one first discriminates each letter as it is encountered, sounds them out, matches the written symbols with the aural equivalents, blends these together to form words, and derives meaning. He states that contrary to this approach in a top-down approach one starts with a whole concept/word and gradually gets

to its ingredients. He also dubs this approach as the “whole word approach” by the virtue of the fact that the words are taught by their overall shape and configuration.

In addition to these approaches he also refers to a third approach called “phonics”, pointing out that it is an approach to the teaching of reading in which learners are taught to decode words by matching written symbols with their aural equivalents. Pointing out the mutual exclusiveness of either of these approaches, however, Nunan (1999) states that “reading is an interactive process, in which the reader constantly shuttles between bottom-up and top-down processes” (p. 254).

Among other things, recognizing the salience of cultural aspects of reading comprehension, Nunan also holds that “background knowledge” is a more important factor than “grammatical complexity” in the ability of the readers to comprehend the cohesive relationships in the texts. Thus he maintains that having access to some background knowledge would facilitate the job of reading comprehension to a great extent.

Although Nunan’s proposals initially enjoyed a wealth of support they have come under intense scrutiny and criticism. As a case in point, Stanovich (1980), among others, points out that if reading were a process of developing and testing hypotheses, then it would actually take longer than decoding approach. Also his phonic approach proposal has been criticized on the grounds that it takes around a quarter of a second to match a letter of the alphabet with its aural equivalent. At this rate, good readers would only be able to process around 60 words per minute. However, we know that the average reader can read between 250 and 350 words per minute. Accordingly, reading, under this approach would appear to be a logical impossibility. Taking a similar stance Smith (1978) points out that in speech processing terms phonics simply does not work simply on the grounds that in many words it is impossible to determine the sound, represented by the word until one has read the entire word.

Ur (2012), in his approach to reading skill, lends a great deal of support to the “phonemic awareness” as far as the beginning readers are concerned. He states that it is very helpful to do some preliminary work on phonemic awareness particularly at the beginning levels of L2 learning. According to him phonemic awareness involves making sure the students can hear and differentiate between the different sounds, or phonemes of English which they will need to match with the letters or letter combinations that represent them.

Grabe (2009) brings to bear the overriding importance of sociocultural and institutional elements on encouraging the L2 reading by outlining that;

- a) There are differing sociocultural backgrounds of the L2 reader which have to be taken into account by the language teachers.
- b) There are differing ways to organize discourse and texts in L1 and L2 settings which should not be left unattended to by the language teachers.
- c) There are differing expectations of educational institutions in L1 and L2.

Considering the bottom up and top down approaches introduced by Nunan as some reading strategies, Duffy (1993) contends that these “strategies” need to be stressed in teaching reading. Admitting that research in the L1 and L2 fields has demonstrated that strategy use is different in more proficient as opposed to less proficient readers, he asserts that more proficient readers make use of different types of these strategies and they use them in different ways.

Emphasizing on the vital part played by these strategies/approaches, Janzen (2002) suggests that the reading teachers should move one step further than just using the strategies and start analyzing the strategy used. Not only the reading strategies implemented by the learners need to be brought to the forefront but also the strategies used by the teachers need to be attended to so that the students would be able to incorporate effective strategy use into their own reading.

In a similar vein, Gaskill (1978) suggests that in ESL reading programs two distinct reading approaches need to be recognized in the first place: (a) reading skills, directed toward the development and improvement of skills which are thought to aid in the process; and (b) reading comprehension, directed toward exposing student to a wide variety of reading selections and reading experiences in such a way as to foster independence in dealing with reading in the second language.

Substantiating Gaskill’s emphasis on reading comprehension, Ur’s (2012) approach to reading is also fundamentally premised upon the go togetherness of reading and understanding. He puts a great deal of emphasis on the notion that in order to read meaningfully we need to be provided with a rather “comprehensive

context” in the first place. To him reading void of understanding is simply nothing but “decoding” to the effect that the written symbols are merely translated into their corresponding sounds and no understanding takes place.

Grabe (1993, as cited in Schmitt, N. 2001) embarks upon focusing on reading skill from a rather different outlook. He maintains that linguistic, processing, individual, experiential, sociocultural and institutional elements all play a highly significant role in reading skill. He brings to fore the differential levels of the linguistic and processing elements in L1 and L2 learners and asserts that differing amounts of lexical, grammatical, and discourse knowledge at beginning stages of L1 reading differ from L2 reading to the effect that the L2 learners implicitly know most of the basic syntactic structures of the language prior to embarking upon L2 reading. Furthermore, he notes that it should be borne in mind that the differences across languages potentially generates significant differences in the way the print is processed and in the type of transfer that may or may not occur.

Highlighting the significance of reading approaches, Hatch (1978, as cited in Celce-Murcia, M. & McIntosh, L., 1979) states that reading is a skill that everyone needs whether they are a student in elementary, secondary, university or adult school. Yet she acknowledges that it is a Cinderella skill that has largely been downgraded in most ESL teacher-training programs. To her, reading instruction means different things to different teachers and she contends to live up to the differing needs of the readers they need to understand the basic methods of reading instruction including (a) phonics, (b) syllabary, (c) linguistic, (d) whole word method, (e) other strategies. To get the learners geared up for rapid reading practice with comprehension, she points out strong motivation devices are also needed. She goes on to assert that for the students to have strong motivational devices they need to work through a carefully sequenced set of reading materials incorporating research findings on first and second language reading.

## 2.1. CURRENT POSITION ON THE READING SKILL PURPOSES

Remarking on the issue that currently more time is spent on teaching reading than any other skill, Nunan (1999) refers to a variety purposes underlying reading. Of overriding importance among them one may refer to reading for pleasure, to obtain information, to verify the information one already knows, and to read to check the accuracy of a text one had already written. Roughly along the same lines, Rivers and Temperly (1978) suggest that there are seven main purposes for reading including;

- a) Obtaining information for some purposes or because one is curious about some topic
- b) Obtaining instructions on how to perform some task for our work
- c) Acting in a play
- d) Keeping in touch with friends
- e) Knowing when or where something will take place
- f) Knowing what is happening or has happened
- g) Enjoyment or excitement

Holding a competence-oriented view, Devine (1988) posits that a further reading purpose centers around the point that readers are actually better able to perform their attitudes and competence if they grasp a good mastery over it.

Harmer (2008) brings to fore a number of other reading skill purposes by suggesting that reading is useful for language acquisition in general provided that students more or less understand what they read, the more they read, the better they get at it. He goes on to state that reading provides good models for future writing of L2 learners and offers them further opportunities for language study. He believes good reading texts can introduce interesting topics, stimulate discussions, excite imaginative responses and provide the springboard for well rounded, fascinating lessons. Implying the significance of being acquainted with the reading levels and genres, he also asserts that ideally the language learners need to read authentic texts of certain genres, however, at the lower levels the learners need to be encouraged to get involved with some simplified or graded readers (texts) to ease the tension of having them risking incomprehensible input.

## 2.2. CURRENT POSITION ON READING SKILL STRATEGIES

Nunan (1999) refers to the following strategies required to perform reading tasks;

- a) Having a purpose
- b) Previewing
- c) Skimming
- d) Scanning
- e) Clustering (reading cluster of words as a unit)
- f) Avoiding bad habits (avoiding habits such as reading word by word)
- g) Predicting
- h) Reading actively (asking questions and then reading for answers)
- i) Inferring (identifying ideas that are not explicitly stated)
- j) Identifying genres (identifying the overall organization of the text)
- k) Identifying paragraph structure
- l) Identifying sentence structure
- m) Noticing cohesive devices (assigning correct referents to performers)
- n) Inferring unknown vocabulary
- o) Using background knowledge
- p) Identifying style and its purpose
- q) Evaluating
- r) Integrating information
- s) Reviewing
- t) Reading to present (understanding the text and presenting it to others)

In parallel with Nunan, Davies (1995) sets out the different types of reading as follows;

- a) Receptive reading (being rapid and automatic)
- b) Reflective reading (incorporating a number of pauses and reflecting on what we read)
- c) Skim reading (reading rapidly to establish a general way as to what the text is about)
- d) Scanning (searching for specific information)

Appreciating the importance of extensive reading, Ur (2012) asserts the main aim behind it is to increase reading fluency and confidence. However, he admits that there are a number of problems with this sort of activity due to which teachers are typically reluctant to practice them. He delineates the following problems;

- a) The first problem concerns the time to the effect that teachers are typically worried about getting through the course book or preparing for an exam and are unwilling to devote major parts of classroom sessions to it.
- b) The second problem concerns the issue that language institutions occasionally do not have the necessary financial resources to set up and maintain and keep adding to a library. Ironically many schools seem to be able to find more money to buy advanced technological equipment than they do to buy book, which cost far less.
- c) The final problem lies in monitoring this sort of strategy. He refers to the practice of extensive reading in the current classrooms is that of constant monitoring of learners' reading.

Ur (2012) renders a number of strategic advices for language learners to get improved in their reading skill. The salient ones among them are as follows;

- 1- If you are not familiar with the content, find something out about it before you read the text.
- 2- Read the "whole" chunks of meaningful texts: word combinations rather than single words.
- 3- Try not to "vocalize" (pronounced the words in your head) as you read.
- 4- Focus on information that is vital for understanding.
- 5- Feel free to skip parts of the text that you find are not necessary for understanding.
- 6- Where possible, try to guess unknown words from context (inference).
- 7- Use the dictionary only when absolutely necessary.
- 8- Be aware of your purpose in reading.

He claims that there is some controversy over how far reading strategies can be explicitly taught. Referring to his own experience he states that we can teach the strategies only up to a point. It is definitely helpful to raise students' awareness of them with explicit recommendations and classroom discussion, eliciting individual students' experience of how they have used particular strategies when reading. He goes on to say that some strategies have already been designed that combine a series of strategies to use when approaching a reading text. Two of them are KWL, and SQ3R: more can be found in Grabe (2009, pp. 231-2).

A number of reading suggestions have also been offered by Harmer (2008) which he believes are amazingly constructive in consolidating the reading process in language learners, they include;

- 1) *Jigsaw reading* (in which the students read a short text setting up a problem and then in a set of three groups they read three different texts all of which are about the same thing. Finally the learners come together and try to work out the whole story).
- 2) *Reading puzzles* (in which the learners are given some texts which have been chopped up and the students need to reassemble it once again).
- 3) *Using newspapers* (in which the students need to match the newspaper articles with their headlines for example).
- 4) *Following instructions* (in which the students need to read instructions for a simple operation and then have to put the instructions in the correct order).
- 5) *Poetry* (in which the students are each given a line from a poem. They cannot show the line to the other members of the group. They have to reassemble the poem by putting the lines in order).
- 6) *Play extracts* (in which students read an extract from a play or a film and after ensuring that they understand it they have to work on acting it out).
- 7) *Predicting from words and pictures* (in which students are given a set of words from a text. Working in groups they have to predict what kind of a text they are going to read. Then they read the text to see if their original predictions were correct or not).
- 8) *Different responses* (in which the students can do many things with a reading text apart from answering comprehension questions. For example when the text is full of facts and figures the students are required to put the information into graphs, or they might be required to describe something, etc.).

Stressing on the vitality of the reading strategies in teaching reading skills Duffy (1993), following the position held by Nunan, posits that reading strategies range from bottom-up vocabulary strategies, such as looking up an unknown word in the dictionary, to more comprehensive actions, such as connecting what is read to the reader's background knowledge. He claims research in the L1 and L2 fields has demonstrated that strategy use is different in more proficient and less proficient readers. More proficient readers make use of different types of strategies and they use them in different ways. Moreover, reading strategies can be taught to the students and when taught, strategies help improve students' performance on tests of comprehension.

Brown and Palincsar (1989) propose that, as far as the reading strategies are concerned, students can be initially taught a differing set of reading strategies (e.g. summarizing, predicting, clarifying, and asking questions) and following that they can proceed to deal with the subtle points involved in them.

Appreciating the part played by deriving the "sense units" in a reading text, Ur (2012) enumerates the following reading strategies;

- a) Decoding letters in order to read words, particularly at the early stages of reading.
- b) No need to read every word accurately.
- c) Understanding all the words in the text is very likely to lead to understanding the text.
- d) The more clearly the words linked together, the easier the text will be to read.

Adopting a rather mechanical stance as regards reading strategies, Hatch (1978) affirms that students have wide-ranging needs in reading skills which can be divided into four stages (i.e. word reading, phrase and sentence reading, paragraph reading, and advanced reading). She goes on to note that at each level, the teacher must have access to reading materials helping rather than hindering the learners. She maintains the following materials are most likely to fit in well with each reading level.

- (a) At the word level, the teacher needs to choose a combination of linguistic, whole word, syllable, and phonics methods, probably in that order.
- (b) At the phrase and sentence level, the teacher should give students massive practice in phrase reading.
- (c) At the paragraph level the teacher should continue word recognition, phrase- and sentence- readings exercises, and begin massive practice with cloze passages. Materials should be of high interest and sequenced for difficulty.
- (d) At the fourth level, students should continue activities from all the previous stages and, in addition, be taught how to skim articles for information. The SQ3R study technique, which helps students retain information in textbooks, should be taught using texts that the students are reading for their classes whenever possible.

A great many of other scholars have also embarked upon delineating how best it is possible to strategically aid the language learners in their grapple with L2 reading. As a case in point, Chastain (1976) recommends practice in the use of bilingual and monolingual dictionaries which currently is believed not to be highly substantiated especially when it comes to encouraging learning in intermediate and advanced learners. Been (1975) encourages students to “guess the meaning of unfamiliar words” and to use “contextual redundancies” in determining lexical meaning. Supporting Been’s standpoint, Stafford (1976) reported intermediate ESL students are especially in need of strategies to deal with unfamiliar vocabulary, as well as, needing practice in syntax and in reading for different purposes.

### 2.3. CURRENT POSITION ON READING SKILL PRINCIPLES

As to the beginning reading process Ur (2012) provides some practical principles as far as reading skill is concerned. He states that both for students learning a new alphabet, and for those who already know it, it is generally preferable to begin reading “only after acquiring some basic knowledge of the spoken language”. Then reading can quickly become a matter of recognizing meaning, rather than just decoding symbols.

He posits that with students learning a new alphabet, it is probably most practical to begin with single letters (the conventional phonic method), starting with the most common and useful. As soon as they have learned a few of the most common letters (a, e, i, o, s, n, t, r) students can read and write an enormous number of common words. He also refers to the application of “global reading method” (teaching the written form of meaningful words first and analyzing the different component letters later). However, he adds the reservation that it is worth teaching very early on a few very common words whose spelling and pronunciation are not transparent (e.g. the, she, what).

To him, students who already know the Latin alphabet, on the other hand are likely to pick up the different sound-symbol correspondences as they encounter them in the context: from the teacher’s reading aloud the texts or single items, or from reading texts in their course materials. He goes on to say that it is more useful for reading if the student knows the most common sound of the letter. The name of the letter is used only for explaining spelling. It is of course possible to teach both-“this letter is called *aitch* and it is pronounced *h*”. This would be appropriate for older beginners; but with young ones, it is arguably more helpful to teach them first how to pronounce the letter as it is read in a word, and leave the names until later.

As to teaching the upper case and the lower case letters together or not, Ur asserts that his own preference is to teach the both forms for the letters together. This slows down the process a little but means that the letters the students do know can immediately be recognized in authentic texts outside the classroom.

Concerning whether the conventional order of the alphabet needs to be taught to the beginning readers he underlines that conventionally the order of the alphabet is taught very early, particularly in younger classes who learn to sing the alphabet song. However there is not much justification for this. He goes on to state that the order of alphabet is only needed when students start looking up words in paper dictionaries or other reference books, which for most classes happens quite a lot later. Moreover, many students today look up words using electronic dictionaries, apps on their mobile phones or dictionary websites, for which the alphabet is not needed.

With respect to beginning reading tasks Ur (2012) refers to a number of activities. The first activity referred to is under the title of “letters in words”. These exercises focus on single letters, but students have to identify the letters in words which they already know in their spoken form. These exercises are particularly useful for classes which are learning a new writing system. The second activity he refers to is under the title of “cognates”.

Throughout this activity the students are asked to identify words that are likely to be the same, or roughly similar, in their own language. The third activity referred to by him is under the title of “(identifying) English words”. During this activity the students are asked to identify the words and do something with them to demonstrate comprehension.

Referring to the salience of fluent reading Ur (2012) contends once our students have mastered basic reading comprehension, we need to help them deal with more sophisticated texts and tasks quickly, appropriately and skillfully. Note that the focus here is not on reading texts intensively for the sake of the language learning but on activities which foster the ability to read better. The aim is for our students to become fluent readers in the same way that we want them to be fluent listeners and speakers: to access the meaning of a text successfully and rapidly, with minimum hesitations.

Ur lays a lot of stress on the concept of fluent reading. He believes reading is a highly demanded objective which is of the following characteristics.

- 1- *Language level*: in the sense that the text needs to be easy enough to be comprehensible to the learners.
- 2- *Content*: that is the topic needs to be accessible to the learners.
- 3- *Speed*: in the sense that learners read fairly fast, meaningful unit by meaningful unit, rather than word by word.
- 4- *Selective attention*: that is the learners need to concentrate on the significant bits and skim the rest.
- 5- *Unknown vocabulary*: that is in fluent reading learners are not worried by unknown words.
- 6- *Prediction*: that is learners think ahead, hypothesize and predict.
- 7- *Motivation*: that is learners are motivated to read.
- 8- *Purpose*: that is learners are aware of a clear purpose in reading.
- 9- *Different strategies*: that is learners use different strategies for different kinds of reading.

Underscoring the importance of reading skills, he refers to the significance of the “scanning” and “skimming” processes and elaborates on them in full. Harmer (2008) goes on to refer to the following reading principles;

- Principle-1: Encourage students to read as often and as much as possible.
- Principle-2: Students need to be engaged with what they are reading.
- Principle-3: Encourage the students to respond to the content of the text, not just concentrate on its construction.
- Principle-4: Prediction is a major factor in reading.
- Principle-5: Match the task to the topic when using intensive reading texts.
- Principle-6: Good teachers exploit reading texts to the full.

### 3. POINTS OF DIVERGENCE

As to “reading purposes” as far as reading skill is concerned Rivers and Temperly (1978), diverge from the position held by Nunan in the sense that they refer to the salience of reading in terms of being used in “acting in a play” as well as “quenching one’s sense of curiosity”. Alongside with them Harmer stresses that reading is good for language acquisition in general and it provides good “models for future writing” and offers opportunities for language study. He also refers to the “reading levels” and the “adaptation of the reading materials” to these levels. Referring to the importance of “extensive type of reading” he goes on to claim that reading types need to be highly appreciated and asserts that the main aim behind reading skill is to “increase reading fluency and confidence”.

Adopting a differing angle of vision, Renadaya and Jacobs (2003) lay enormous emphasis on “extensive reading properties” and posit that it encapsulates “post reading” leading to enthusiasm for reading.

Nunan (1999) substantially brings to fore the overriding significance of “reading strategies”. From among the major reading strategies he particularly narrows down his attention toward such strategies as (a) having a purpose in reading, (b) reading actively (asking questions and then reading for answers), (c) identifying genres (identifying the overall organization of the text), (d) evaluating, (e) integrating information and (f) reading to present (understanding the text and presenting it to others).



Referring to the insufficiencies and constraints of learners' "reading strategies", Janzen (2002) states that the reading teachers should move one step further than just using the reading strategies to the effect that they need to analyze the reading strategy used by the learners as well. He goes on to unravel that not only the reading strategies used by the learners need to be scrutinized but also the reading strategies employed by the teachers need to undergo detailed investigation so that the students would be able to incorporate effective strategy use into their own reading.

As for the concept of "phonics" Hatch (1978) and Nunan (1999) are staunchly supportive of it. However, the very essence of it has been heavily berated by Smith (1978) on the grounds that in many words it is impossible to determine the sound, represented by the word until one has read the entire word. It seems this view is currently widely held as barely a trace of comprehension can be found in it.

#### 4. POINTS OF CONVERGENCE

As far as the converging points on reading skills are concerned it is worth mentioning to refer to background knowledge as the most prevailing reading skill ingredient. Relating this element to schema theory, the vital prominence of this element has prolifically been endorsed by a number of scholars in the field (e.g. Nunan, Duffy) to mention a few. Nunan and Duffy also share a common view on the role played by bottom-up, top-down approaches in reading skills.

The significant role played by cultural/sociocultural elements as far as reading skills are concerned has also been underlined by a plethora of researchers. Nunan, as a case in point, holds that the "background knowledge" alongside "cultural knowledge" is a more important factor than "grammatical complexity". Grabe (1993), following Nunan's footsteps, contends that sociocultural and institutional variables play a highly significant role alongside linguistic, processing, individual, and experiential elements.

As to the role played by reading skills in providing a model for the language learners to follow, Harmer (2008) lays emphasis on the issue that not only reading skills can equip the learners with some reading models at the moment but also they can provide the learners good models for "future writing" and opportunities for language study. It's worth mentioning to note that the critical role played by reading strategies has also been underlined by a great deal of scholars (Chastain, 1976; Duffy, 1993; Hatch, 1978; Janzen 2002; Norris, 1970; Plaister, 1968; Ur, 2012; Yorkey, 1970) to mention only a few.

#### 5. CONCLUSION

As to a concluding remark, it appears aptly plausible to note that the whole fabric of the reading skill converging accounts far outweighs the diverging ones. To sum it up, such variables as reading strategies, background knowledge, cultural knowledge, model providing, extensive reading, sociocultural issues, and reading fluency have been widely endorsed by many a great scholars in the field. In contrast to the current massive support of points of convergence, the diverging points seem not to have enjoined an equal amount of affinity to the effect that only a very few reading experts have been supportive of them. Accordingly, it seems safe to claim that out of the above mentioned discussion and literature review we can draw the conclusion that all things being equal the language learners would be better off attending to the resemblances outlined above rather than getting engulfed in trivial discrepancies sporadically scattered among the reading experts.

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# THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN IRANIAN EFL LEARNERS' READING COMPREHENSION AND THEIR PERSONALITY TRAITS: EXTROVERSION VS INTROVERSION

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## ABSTRACT

This study aimed to find out a conceivable answer to the question of whether personality traits i.e. extraversion vs. introversion influences reading comprehension of EFL learners. Instruments of this study were Preliminary English Test (PET), Eysenck Personality Inventory (EPI), and test of reading tasks (8 kinds of reading tasks, 60 items). The study was conducted on 100 undergraduate Iranian learners at Azad University of Tabriz, Iran who participated and answered a PET test. The 80 homogeneous participants who scored one standard deviation below and above the estimated mean responded to EPI. Through this questionnaire, the learners were divided into two groups of extroverts (46 learners) and introverts (34 learners). In order to have equal number of participants in each group, the researcher randomly selected 30 from each group and excluded the rest. Then both groups took the same test of reading tasks and their results were compared. Finally, to observe whether or not there were any significant differences between the two groups in terms of performing reading tasks, an independent t-test was run. The results indicated that in reading comprehension there was no significant difference between the two groups of students (introverts and extroverts).

**KEYWORDS:** Personality, Extrovert, Introvert, Task, Reading Comprehension

## 1. Introduction

English as a foreign language (EFL) is the use or study of English by speakers with different native languages. Nowadays, learning English has become a necessity all over the world which requires mastery of the four main language skills namely listening, speaking, reading and writing.

One of the most important academic skills that should be considered in learning foreign language is reading comprehension. In the past, reading was considered as a language learning process in which the teacher used reading materials to teach vocabulary and grammar, but nowadays it is considered as a communicative process in which reading for meaning is the core objective. Reading can be considered as a source of information, as a pleasurable activity, and as a means of extending one's knowledge of the language (Hamzekhani and Maghsoudi, 2014).

In spite of this crucial role of reading, many students still have problems concerning reading. This seems true even if the learners have a considerable amount of linguistic knowledge. Reading comprehension involves the extraction of meaning from text and results from an interactive process between the text and the reader (Butcher & Kintsch, 2003; Kintsch, 1998). Previous research evidences that a range of different factors including reasoning ability, prior knowledge, strategy knowledge, decoding skills, and intrinsic as well as extrinsic motivation contribute to the prediction of reading comprehension (Artelt, Schiefele, & Schneider, 2001; Cox & Guthrie, 2001).

Reading comprehension is defined as the process of unlocking meaning from connected text. Up to now, reading comprehension as a great source of knowledge has been one of the important parts in second/foreign

language tests and examinations; it plays a basic role in the educational and professional life of many students. Moreover, the main goal of reading a text as it has been mentioned by Chastain (1975) is comprehension. However, the very failure of many reading procedures is that comprehension is not achieved adequately, if anything happens at all. It is mostly emanated from ignoring the readers who are a main part in the reading act. The ignorance is mainly related to the readers' differences.

The concept of language teaching has always been with us at different stages. Some experts like Busch (1982) who writes about second language learning make the point that language is closely bound up with human behavior and personality. Nowadays, with so many people being interested in learning English, the factors that could impact on their learning effectiveness become more important to know. As we all know, many factors influence the second language learning process. Yet one of the most important elements for SLA research to explain is the great individual variability second language learners obtain in their respective second languages, so it is getting more important to know more about the influence of personality on SLA (Hamzekhani and Maghsoudi, 2014).

Personality factor theory is founded upon the work of Jung (1971). Bradley and Hebert (1997) state that "according to the personality factor theory, individuals are predisposed to one of four preference alternatives in their behavior: (a) How a person is energized - designated by extrovert (E) versus introvert (I); (b) What information a person perceives - designated by sensing (S) versus intuition (N); (c) How a person decides-thinking (T) versus feeling (F); (d) The life-style a person adopts - judging (J) versus perceiving (P)" (pp. 340-341).

In order to provide effective sensitive instruction, teachers of second or foreign languages need to learn to identify and understand their students' significant individual differences (Ehrman & Oxford, 1995; Ehrman, 1993). The aspect of personality that has received most attention in second language pedagogy research is extroversion and its counterpart introversion.

### 1.1. *Difference between Introverts and Extroverts*

The personality type that has attracted the most attention in second language research is extraversion/introversion (Dornyei, 2005). Commonly used descriptions of extraverts are "outgoing", "energetic", and "talkative" compared to introverts as "agreeableness" "reserved" and "quiet" (Tiliopoulos & Boag, 2011).

Hjelle and Ziegler (1992) stated that it had been tried to detect whether there were significant differences in behavior related to individual differences along the introversion-extroversion continuum or not. Below are some practical ways in which introverts and extroverts are discovered to vary:

1. While introverts would rather theoretical and scientific jobs (e.g., engineering and chemistry), extroverts prefer people-oriented jobs (e.g., sales and social work).
2. Introverts receive higher grades in college than extroverts. Also, students who withdraw from college for psychiatric reasons tend to be extroverts.
3. While introverts show higher arousal levels in the mornings, extroverts show higher arousal levels in the evening. Furthermore, introverts work better in the morning, and extroverts work better in the afternoon.

John the Peregrine (2009) claim that extroverts seem annoyed with an activity such as sitting alone to read books for extended periods of time. Of course, most extroverts read books, but it is a kind of filler for their odd moments when they have no one to talk to and they usually choose their books from the bestseller list with potential to be conversational. Someone who continuously talks tend to read the books that are mostly being talked about. An introvert mainly prefers reading far more vigorously than the extrovert, sitting down for hours reading books for the sheer pleasure of it. Introverts tend to get an enjoyment from books of fiction; whereas, extroverts have a longing to read literature and non-fiction books.

Eysenck (1965) clarifies an extravert as a sociable person who is interested in parties, has a lot of friends, and disliked reading or studying by himself. He has a longing for excitement, takes chances and is usually an impetuous individual. He is enthusiastic about useful jokes, always has a prepared answer, likes change, and gets irritated fast. In contrary, he characterizes an introvert as a peaceful, timid, introspective, and enthusiastic person about books rather than people; he is silent and reserved except to close friends. He enjoys planning ahead, "looks before he leaps", and hates the impulse of the moment.

## 2. Review of Literature

In spite of significant changes in approaches to language teaching that have occurred in recent years, the status of reading is an issue that language teachers still have to resolve. A great number of theorists (e.g. Khelamni, 2000; Goodman, 1970, cited in Ajideh, 2003; Abraham, 2002, cited in Alyousef, 2006) suggested interactive approaches to enhance reading comprehension in which teachers try to activate students' schemata knowledge.

In a study, Al-Issa (2006) mentioned that the degree of reading comprehension depends on our background knowledge and on how much related schema we have during reading a text. Referring to the advantages of schemata theory, Ajideh (2006) pointed out that it is a predictive task and student-centered activity which motivates students to learn second or foreign language and facilitates recalling information.

Moreover, there are several studies devoted to the relation and effect of extroversion and introversion in EFL and ESL. These studies consist of effect of extroversion/introversion on language learning strategies (Imanpour, 2005), relation between affective variables and speaking skill (Ashtari, 2002; Do'nyei & Kormos, 2000; Kormos & Trebits, 2012), the impact of extroversion/introversion on vocabulary learning (Saemian, 2001), the effect of extroversion/introversion on evaluation of writing (Carrell, 1995), relation between personality and academic performance (Chamorro-Premuzic and Furnham, 2003; Rindermann & Neubauer, 2001; Sanchez-Marín et al., 2001; Pulford and Sohal, 2006), and influence of personality factors on reading skill (Li and Chingell, 2010). In the following lines some of the relevant studies would be discussed in details.

Millot and Cranney (1976) in a study on relationship between personality type and learning style in reading comprehension found a significant link between personality types of introversion, intuition and perceiving and learning style. Brown (1973) poses that maybe a relationship could be found between extraversion and reading comprehension. On contrary, Busch (1982) on a study using Eysenck Personality Inventory found a significant relationship between subjects' introversion personality type preference and their reading performance. Another study (Grey, 1999) was done on 400 college-bound students in the United States to detect possible reading comprehension skill problems in relation with affective learning style, determined by personality. The results showed a significant difference in the mastery level of seven out of thirteen reading comprehension skills, based upon personality type preferences, i.e. intuition and thinking.

Carell et al., (1996) conducted a research on a group of Indonesian EFL learners participated in a longitudinal study, one-semester long course which included a series of EFL language measures like nonstandardized, monthly tests of reading, grammar, vocabulary and writing, to investigate the relationship between extraversion and EFL proficiency. The participants' personality types were measured by means of the MBTI instrument. The study found two results: first, there was a slightly negative link between extraversion and students' vocabulary test performance. Second, there was no significant relationship reported between extraverts/ introverts and their performance on grammar, writing and reading comprehension tests.

Also, Pfister (2000) investigated the effect of personality type on English reading comprehension among college bilingual students in the United States; similar to the previous study, pfister employed MBTI model of personality as the research measuring instrument. The results demonstrated that students with EP (extroversion, perceiving) type got better scores on interpretive comprehension items while students with SF (sensing, feeling) type got better scores on literal comprehension items. Generally, In Pfister's research extroverted students outperformed introverted ones in reading tests.

Fahimeh Marefat (2006) did a study about relation of students' character in relation to writing performance in the class. Subjects of research are 42 male and 44 female students. She used Myers -Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) to determine students' character. And in her conclusion she found No significant difference in how E/I (Extro/introversion) determines writing scores.

Busch (1982) tried to determine whether there would be any relationship between extroversion/introversion and English proficiency among the EFL students in Japan. The study came out to reject the hypothesis that the extraverts are more proficient than the introverts. The study clarified that extroversion had negative correlation with proficiency and the introverts had better reading comprehension and grammar proficiency than the extraverts.

Another relevant study conducted in Tehran with Islamic Azad University students and those of Teacher Training University, also showed no significant difference between EFL proficiency of introvert and extravert students (Farnia, 1993). This study also took other variables, such as sex, and subcomponents of an English

proficiency test into consideration. No difference was observed. Rastegar (2002) found a non-significant but negative relationship between extraversion and EFL proficiency of Kerman and Shiraz university students.

Among 81 students from a multi-section basic communication course at southwestern states, Cook and Hurt (1983) found that there existed an approximately high relationship between communication classroom learning outcomes (final grades in the course) and psychological (extroversion) and social structures as organizational communication variables.

Badran (2002) attempted to determine if there existed any relationship between both extroversion/introversion and the pronunciation accuracy in English as a foreign language with respect to the gender variable. He conducted the study among 71 third year students in English department at Mansoura University, Egypt. Regarding his hypothesis, he found three results in his research: first, there was a positive relationship between extroversion/introversion and English pronunciation accuracy, then the male were better in pronunciation accuracy than the female and the last was that the extravert outperformed the introvert in English pronunciation.

Van Daele et al. (2006) explored the effect of extroversion on L2 oral proficiency among 25 Dutch-speaking students learning English and French as foreign languages. The findings of study indicated that the extroversion had little effect on the oral speech production of L2 learners of English and French. In addition, there was not a clear influence of extroversion on the lexical complexity in French. The results illustrated that the influence of the extroversion was negative in the lexical complexity in English.

Razmjoo and Shaban (2008) intended to certify the relationship between extroversion/introversion and grammaticality among the Iranian EFL students. They conducted the study at Guilan University, Rasht by employing 124 EFL students through Farhady's TOEFL Test. The study led to several results: first, there was no meaningful difference between the extravert and introvert students in the English proficiency. Second, there was no significant difference between the extravert and introvert in grammaticality judgment. Third, there appeared a positive relation between language proficiency and grammaticality judgment. The last was that language proficiency predicted the grammaticality rather than the extroversion/introversion.

In formal academic situations, introverts outperform extraverts. This is true, particularly, in the case of advanced subjects. Withdrawing from university for academic reasons is mostly attributed to extraverts, and when reasons become psychiatric, introverts' statistics are much higher (Pervin, 1993).

Research studies aimed at investigating the possible relationship between extraversion-introversion and academic achievement found no link between the two whatsoever (Jamebozorg, 1999; Rahiminejad, 1991).

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

Ehrman and Oxford (1990) found an important relationship between EXT/INT and learner strategies of 20 adults learning Turkish as a foreign language. They found that extraverts preferred social strategies such as asking for clarification, and functional practice strategies such as seeking practice opportunities outside of class while introverts preferred to learn alone and avoid social contacts and spontaneous situations.

Wakamoto (2000) also studied the relationship between EXT/INT and language learning strategies of 222 Japanese EFL learners. He found that functional practice strategies and socio-affective strategies significantly correlated with extravert learners, but with introverts, he could see no preferred language learning strategies. He also concluded that extravert learners will ask for clarification more readily than introverts, so they improve their chances for input needed for developing an interlanguage. In another study, Wakamoto (2007) examined the impact of EXT/INT and associated learner strategies on English language comprehension. He observed that extravert Japanese EFL learners used socio-affective strategies more frequently than introvert ones.

Yadegari (2007) observed that in written communication, extravert EFL learners used interactional strategies and a sub-type of linguistic strategies i.e. transliteration more frequently than introvert ones whereas introvert EFL learners used conceptual strategies more than extravert ones. In another recent study, Gan (2008) investigated the impact of extraversion on pronunciation, communication strategies, vocabulary and language patterns of L2 learners in Hong Kong. The results of analyses indicated that communication

strategies correlated with extraversion although this correlation did not reach the significance level. To him, extraverts seemed to employ communication strategies more than introverts.

Nurianfar, Azizi Far, Gowhary (2014) investigated the reading Strategies used by Extrovert and Introvert Intermediate Students in Ilam Province. Results showed that extroverts seemed to take full advantage of language-use opportunities as they tended to be sociable, and were more likely to join groups, more inclined to engage in conversations both inside and outside the classroom. However, results also concluded that a more extroverted personality might be better suited to classroom learning, especially reading skills. With this intention the study was conducted on 60 sampled students from high school.

Regarding the studies done on the personality traits, Amiri and Nakhai (2013) conducted a study in which based on the results of EPI questionnaire, they divided a number of 108 homogeneous participants into two groups of extroverts and introverts. They indicated that introverts perform significantly better in listening tasks than extroverts. But in reading comprehension, no significant difference between the two groups of students was reported. They also referred to some studies conducted by Pazhuhesh (1994, cited in Amiri & Nakhai, 2013) in which she investigated the relationship between the personality dimension of extroversion/introversion and reading comprehension. In her studies, introverts were significantly better than their extrovert counterparts. In line with this study, Adamopoulos (2004) rejected the hypothesis that the extraverts are more proficient than the introverts. The study displayed that introverts had better reading comprehension and grammar proficiency than the extraverts. On the other hand, performing French immersion program on tests of listening comprehension and oral production, Tucker, Hamayan and Genesee (1976, cited in Amiri & Nakhai, 2013) found that extroverts outperformed the introverts.

The dominant role of personality as an affective learning style on reading performance can be inferred from the above reviewed studies. However, the results are not as comprehensive and congruent as they are supposed to be, i.e. one cannot conclude which type(s) of personality contribute more to reading comprehension. In spite of this incongruity in research outcomes, no one can ignore the fact that predicting students' performance in reading comprehension and detecting their reading disabilities, dominant affective variables like personality should be taken into serious consideration alongside the other cognitive and non-cognitive variables. More new findings are expected to come up with further development in the personality research area, and to put them into teaching practice of second language in order to the rapid development of second language teaching. Thus, this study aims to fill in the gap of literature by finding out a conceivable answer to the following question:

1. Are there any significance differences between the performance of extrovert and introvert Iranian EFL learners' reading comprehension?

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1. Participants

This study was carried out at the Azad University of Tabriz, Iran. A total of 100 undergraduate students were randomly selected in the study. They were from both genders, male and female between the age range of 20-30. Their mother tongues were Persian and Azeri.

#### 3.2. Instruments

*Standard language proficiency test (PET):* This test is designed by Cambridge ESOL and is used as a proficiency test for selecting the intermediate sample among the whole participants. PET consists of three main sections: a 35-item reading comprehension test and an 8-item writing test in the first part (1 hour and 30 minutes), a 25-item listening comprehension test in the second part (35 minutes) and a speaking test consisting of four sections in the third part (10-12 minutes).

*Eysenck' personality questionnaire:* Students' degree of extroversion and introversion will be measured by Eysenck's (1973) extroversion questionnaire. This questionnaire consists of 24 items. The odd-numbered items are concerned with introversion, and the even-numbered items are related to extroversion. The subjects will be supposed to choose "yes" or "no" for each item. Francis, Lewis, Christopher and Ziebertz examined the reliability of the questionnaire and found an alpha reliability of 0.84. In a cross-cultural study, Francis, Brown, and Philipchalk compared the psychometric properties of the EPQR-S in four English-speaking countries among a total of 685 undergraduate students, including 59 men and 153 women in England, 57 men and 92 women in

Canada, 51 men and 81 women in the USA and 53 men and 139 women in Australia. According to this study the short form extroversion scale achieved alpha coefficients of 0.78, 0.83, 0.85 and 0.87 in the four samples.

*Test of Reading Tasks:* This test was constructed by the researchers and consisted of 63 items which decreased to 60 items after piloting and doing item analysis.

### 3.3. Procedure

A total of 100 undergraduate students were randomly selected from both genders, male and female, between the age range of 20-30 from the Azad University of Tabriz, Iran.

Initially, a PET was administered to the 100 undergraduate learners in order to come up with a group of EFL learners at approximately the same level of language proficiency but because of practicality issues and time limitation only reading comprehension parts of the PET was administered in this study. Then, those whose score fell in one standard deviation above and below the mean of the sample were selected. The outcome was a homogenized group of 80 learners.

Furthermore, to determine the personality type of the subjects in terms of Extroversion/Introversion, the chosen subjects (80) were required to take the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire. Through this questionnaire the learners were divided into two groups of extroverts (46 learners) and introverts (34 learners). In order to have equal number of participants in each group, the researcher randomly selected 30 from each group and excluded the rest.

After determining the groups of introvert and extrovert, for measuring participants' reading comprehension, they were required to answer a test of reading tasks consisting of 60 questions.

After administering the tests and gathering the data, the Descriptive Statistics were estimated, then an independent t-test was run to compare the mean score of introverts and extroverts on reading tasks.

## 4. Results

This study was aimed to compare the performance of introvert/extrovert EFL learners on tasks of reading. The design of this study is "a criterion group design", a subset of Ex post facto design. In this study, the personality type (Introversion and Extroversion) was the independent variable, and the performance of students on reading tasks was the dependent variable and the level of language proficiency (intermediate level) was the control variable.

### 4.1. The Homogeneity test

A Preliminary English Test (PET) was utilized as a proficiency test to select the participants at the same level of intermediate proficiency. Since the focus of this study was on the reading comprehension, just the parts of reading comprehension of PET were utilized in this research.

In order to check the reliability of the test, first of all PET was piloted among 45 intermediate EFL learners of an English Language Institute. After analyzing item facility, item discrimination, choice distribution, and reliability (calculated through the KR-21 formula), PET was recognized suitable for being used in the present study. Table 1 shows the results of the PET in the pilot study.

**Table 1: Results of the PET in the pilot study**

N	No. of items	Mean	Range	Variance	SD	r
45	60	35.43	45	225.84	15.02	0.95

As demonstrated in the above table, the reliability coefficient turned out to be 0.95 assuring the researcher that PET could be utilized safely for the purpose of homogenizing the participants. Thus, this test was administered to a group of 100 undergraduate students at the Azad University of Tabriz to homogenize them. Based on the PET, those participants whose score fell in one standard deviation above and below the mean of the sample through the test were selected for the research. Therefore, 80 of the learners were selected to participate in the study. The results are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2: Results of the Homogeneity Test**

N	No. of items	Mean	Range	Variance	SD
100	60	41.40	44	125.10	11.18



In the next step of the piloting process, the test of reading tasks was administered in one session (1 hour and 45 minutes). After piloting them, Item analysis, Reliability (calculated through the KR-21 formula) and Internal Consistency of the tests were checked. According to the piloting results, Reading Tasks decreased from 63 items to 60 items. The results are shown in Table 3.

**Table 3: Results of the test of reading tasks in the pilot study**

N	No. of items	Mean	Range	Variance	SD	r
45	63	38.33	39	226.29	15.04	0.94

In the final step of the piloting, in order to check whether illumination three items would influence the reliability of the tests, the reliability and descriptive statistics of the test of reading tasks were analyzed, checked and estimated again. Results demonstrated a very good degree of reliability. So, the tasks were recognized suitable for utilizing in the study. The results are shown in Table 4.

**Table 4: Results of the test of reading tasks in the pilot study**

N	No. of items	Mean	Range	Variance	SD	r
45	60	36	40	226	15.03	0.95

#### 4.2. The Descriptive Statistics: Test of Reading Tasks

After dividing the learners into two groups of introvert and extrovert through the administration of EPI, the test of reading tasks were administered to both groups. The test of reading tasks comprising 60 items in three parts was administered in three sessions.

The descriptive statistics (mean, range, variance, standard deviation and also reliability) of the tests of reading tasks were calculated. Reliability of the tests was calculated through the KR-21 formula. The results are shown in Table 5.

**Table 5: Results of the test of reading tasks for extroverts and introverts**

	N	No. of items	Mean	Range	Variance	SD	Reliability (r)
<b>Extroverts</b>	30	60	41.15	37	64.90	8.05	0.81
<b>Introverts</b>	30	60	43.8	34	108.34	10.40	0.90

#### 4.3. The Inferential Statistics: Test of Reading Tasks

In order to answer our research question, the data gathered in this study was subjected to one-way ANOVA, since there was one dependent variable (reading) and two independent variables (Introvert and Extrovert). But, firstly the assumptions of the test should be met, which are:

1. Normality of the distribution of each set of scores;
2. Homogeneity of variances.

Table 6 shows the descriptive statistics including skewness ratios utilized by the researcher to check the first abovementioned assumption.

**Table 6: Descriptive Statistics of the scores obtained by the two groups on listening and reading tasks**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Skewness Ratios
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	
<b>extroverts' reading</b>	45	21.00	58.00	43.1556	8.05649	-.301	.354	0.85
<b>Introverts' reading</b>	45	25.00	59.00	46.8000	10.40891	-.350	.354	0.98

Valid (listwise)	N	45
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As illustrated in table 6 above, the skewness ratio of the Introverts' reading scores (the last column) is higher than the normality range of  $\pm 1.96$ , whereas the one belonging to Extroverts' reading scores is within the normality range. Thus, since the first assumption about a normal distribution was rejected, an independent t-test had to be used.

First, to see if there was any significant difference between the reading scores of introverts and extroverts, an independent t-test was run. As shown in table 6, the normality of the distribution as one assumption for a t-test is met, and it is shown that the introverts outperformed the extroverts in the reading test (46.80 vs. 43.15). But, a further statistical analysis was needed to show whether the difference was significant or not. Table 7 shows the results of the t-test:

**Table 7: Independent Samples t-test on the mean scores of reading tasks**

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
								95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Reading Equal variances assumed	3.605	.074	-1.348	88	.191	-2.64444	1.96216	-6.54382	1.25493
Equal variances not assumed			-1.438	82.795	.191	-2.64444	1.96216	-6.54724	1.25835

Since "the equal variances assumed" is the second condition for t-test ( $F=3.60$ ,  $p=.07>.05$ ), the t-test result shows that there was no significant difference between the two groups in their reading skill ( $t=1.43$ ,  $p=.191>.05$ ). So the research question regarding the existence of any significant differences between the performance of extrovert and introvert Iranian EFL learners' reading comprehension is answered: *there is no difference between the performance of extrovert and introvert Iranian EFL learners' reading comprehension.*

## 5. Conclusion

In this study, the researcher was eager to find out whether extrovert and introvert students were different with regard to their performance on reading tasks or not. It was shown that the introvert learners with the mean score of (46.80) outperformed extrovert learners with the mean score of (43.15). However, the difference between their performances was not statistically significant. One of the justifications that we can come up with might be that introverts have been known as studious and hard-working students compared to more extroverted and outgoing ones. It gives the impression that they are more alert and meticulous in reading. Therefore, this thorough personality type may contribute to their performance on the types of tasks needing concentration. Moreover as reflected in table 7, there is a trend in the difference between extroversion-introversion when it comes to reading tasks that is in general, both extroverts and introverts had almost the same performance on reading.

This finding is also in line with the findings of Astika et. al.(1996) who found no significant relationship between extroversion-introversion and reading section of the English language proficiency test and there was just a negative trend between extroversion and learners' performance on the reading section. Also Vehar (1968) found no such significant difference in reading test performance between extroverts and introverts. Brown

(1994) claims that "extroversion may be a factor in the development of general oral communicative competence, which require face to face interaction, but not in listening, reading, and writing" (p. 174).

## 6. Pedagogical implications

The findings of the present study can provide teachers and language centers with enough evidence to change or modify their outlook toward extravert or introvert students and the role of personality factors in language learning. The findings of the present study can also be useful and applicable for teachers and course designers in choosing good materials and relevant activities according to students' personality traits. Moreover, they can use the results of this research for implementing lessons which are more comfortable for students.

## 7. Limitations

Like many other studies, the present study suffered from some limitations.

1. The probable effect of some other variables related to learners such as previous learning backgrounds and age, which might have affected their performance in reading tasks, could not be controlled.
2. Because of shortage of time, the number of task-types which were chosen to apply was limited. And the researcher was not free to use a variety of tasks in tests.

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# THE IMPACT OF DYNAMIC ASSESSMENT ON THE IMPROVEMENT OF IRANIAN INTERMEDIATE EFL LEARNERS' LISTENING COMPREHENSION ABILITY

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## Abstract

This study focuses on theoretic and methodological outcomes at the intersection of foreign language learning, language teaching and sociocultural theory (SCT), that it is considered by Vygotsky. Moreover the research investigates to compensate the common lack of diagnostic assessment in language training and the improvement of listening proficiency. This study expands traditional knowledge of listening assessment in foreign language learning and uses dynamic assessment (DA) to the improvement of learners' listening proficiency. Dynamic assessment is rooted in the Vygotsky content of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and determines undirected tutor-student dialog within the assessment method, theoretically expanded and experimentally examined all over the world. This study discusses that assessment with mediation causes assessment and training simultaneously into an essential unity where through learning is effect of mediation, which is afterwards internalized and be available to be expanded later in other settings. The research surveys the impact of dynamic assessment on the improvement of Iranian intermediate EFL learners' listening comprehension ability, and compares the outcomes to a traditional exam of listening comprehension. The samples chosen for this study consist of 30 homogenized (female, male) learners for experimental group (EG) and 30 (female, male) homogenized learners as control group (CG) which are selected through administrating OPT test. The Control group was benefited from individual (traditional) learning model and experimental group was assigned to a treatment condition. The participants of the experimental group all consented to be audio and video recorded during each treatment session. The two groups were labeled as group A (n=30) control group, and group B (n=30) experimental group. Learners were Persian native speakers. All participants were in the age range of 14 -18.

**Key words:** Dynamic Assessment, listening comprehension, EFL, Intermediate learners, Zone of Proximal Development

## 1. Introduction

The research investigates the educational usage of dynamic assessment, an evaluation method proposed by Vygotsky's theory, to second language listening assessment and training. In spite of the fact that progression of listening proficiency has been distinguished as an extremely important part of foreign language learning and training, many researchers profess that listening comprehension is often concerned as a passive skill of second language teaching (e.g. Vandergrift, 1997; Nunan,1997) and that study in this field is "still in its infancy" (Omaggio-Hadley,2000:184). The concept of learning is used in language teaching to hint at a complicated

process that allows listeners to understand spoken language. Listening is the most important language skill that most of the time used in combination with other skill of speaking, reading & writing. Listening is not considered just as a skill in language performance or language teaching, rather it is also an essential means for second language learning (Rost, 2001). As respects, Vandergrift (2007) presents it: "[...] listening processes are complex and they interact with different knowledge sources, human characteristics and other contextual factors in complex ways. These processes and their interactions need to be explored using in-depth qualitative methods to better understand how L2 listeners attain successful comprehension" (p206).

It is known that listeners use a variety of mental processing to give meaning to the information they listen to. These mental processes that listeners use to understand spoken English can be broadly described as listening comprehension strategies. Listening comprehension is a very complex process, and if we want to measure it, we must first understand how that process works. The first known model has been provided by Anderson (as cited in Isaac Nimvary-2011). He divided the listening comprehension process into three stages. According to him, listeners comprehend a message in a linear order in three stages including: perceptual, parsing and utilization. In contrast to him, many claimed that a linear phase is not possible, and proposed a recursive model of processing. Based on capacity parallel distributed processing (PDP) model of cognition the listener can operate within more than one phase at a time with the help of parallel processing capacity (McClalland and Rumelhart, 1986).

## 2. Review of literature

In Vygotsky's work, he frequently states and disputes the difficulties of comprehension owing to its critical significance for the learning procedure (e.g. Vygotsky, 1987, 1996, and 1997). So as to have a better understanding of Sociocultural Theory on this complicated mental procedure, Leontiev (2003) first proposes remarking Vygotsky's opinion on reading comprehension. Leontiev (2003) mentions to three of Vygotsky's opinions which in his point of view are essential for the present disputation; he greates, however, that these opinions are not often mentioned.

First, Vygotsky (1997 a: 143) presents: "most think that understanding is greater with slower reading; however, actually with rapid reading, understanding is better [because] the different processes occur at different rates and the rate of understanding is more compatible with a rapid reading rate". Then, Vygotsky continues: "Unfortunately, experimental research has thus far studied reading as a sensory-motor habit and not as a mental process of a very complex order...To a certain degree, the work of the visual mechanism is subordinate to the processes of understanding" (ibidem). In Leontiev's idea, this declaration by Vygotsky still stays of critical significance today, particularly for educational psychology.

Second, Vygotsky specifies (1997 a: 143):

It is clear to us that understanding does not mean that in reading each sentence we generate pictures of all objects mentioned in it [sentence]. Understanding cannot be reduced to a graphic resurrection of the object or even to naming of the word; more likely, it consists in operating with the sign itself and referring it to meaning, to a rapid movement of attention, and isolating different points that are at the center of our attention.

"Concentration of attention, attaching it to each separate sign, inability to control attention and transfer it so as to be oriented in the complex internal space that might be called a system of relations are the imbecile's basic traits of understanding" the text. Conversely, *normal understanding is the process of establishing relations, selecting the important [ideas], in a transition from separate elements to the meaning of the whole* (Italics added).

Third, Vygotsky (1996: 209-211) concretizes that:

Reading is a complex process in which the higher mental functions operate in thinking, and the child's developed or underdeveloped reading is tightly connected to his/her development of thinking... Text comprehension presupposes the preservation of the necessary proportional weight of words or modification of these proportions, until they produce a result which satisfies the goal of reading. Text comprehension is similar to problem solving in mathematics. It consists in the selection of the correct elements related to the situation, in the appropriate combination of these elements and in their evaluation in order to determine their relevance for text comprehension... The process of reading and the teaching of reading are tightly linked to the development of inner speech. (as cited in Leontiev, 2003:141).

Inspired by the reviewed literature the researchers formulated the following research questions and hypotheses.

**RQ1:** Does DA process have any significant effects on the improvement of Iranian intermediate EFL learners' listening comprehension ability?

**RH 1:** DA process does not have any significant effects on the improvement of Iranian intermediate EFL learners' listening comprehension ability.

**RQ2:** Is there any significant difference between male and female learners in using DA procedure and their development of listening comprehension ability?

**RH2:** There is not any significant difference between male and female learners in using DA procedure and their development of listening comprehension ability.

### 3. Methodology

Present study was designed to investigate the effectiveness of dynamic assessment on Iranian EFL learners' listening comprehension ability in Ardabil, Iran. This research addresses the methodology of the quasi-experimental study that was conducted to investigate the research questions and research hypotheses presented before. In this research, an endeavor has been made to investigate the diagnostic capacities of DA as well as the efficacies of DA-based education on the improvement of listening comprehension proficiency in intermediate EFL learners.

#### 3.1 Participants

The population under study included EFL learners who enrolled at Kish institute, in Ardabil, Iran. The original number of participants for the study was 100 female and male students studying English as a foreign language in Kish language institute. Based on the students OPT scores, 60 (female, male) participants were randomly assigned to one experimental and one control group. The two groups were labeled as group A (n=30) control group, and group B (n=30) experimental group. Learners were Persian native speakers. All participants were in the age range of 14 -18.

#### 3.2 Instrumentation and Materials

A standardized proficiency test (OPT) was executed to determine student's knowledge of the key language as well as their receptive and productive skills. This provides possibilities for educators to have a greater understanding of what level their students are at. The test contains 50 multiple-choice questions, which assess students' knowledge of key grammar and vocabulary from elementary to intermediate levels, a reading test with 10-graded comprehension questions and an optional writing task that assesses students' ability to produce the language.

TOEFL iBT Listening Placement Test was administered to both groups (experimental and control groups) as a pre-test to ensure that both groups have the same listening knowledge. TOEFL iBT Listening Placement Test was selected as a pretest and posttest in this research.

The listening test tasks (LTT) as were selected from Top Notch Listening test tasks (Joan Saslow/Allen ascher) from the section containing TOEFL like test tasks measuring pragmatic understanding. The reason for choosing this book was authentic test tasks and the scores of the participants of both groups on the pretest which were in the range of 33-42. Each listening text was either a part of a longer conversation or a number of short conversations having conversational implicatures; i.e. the speakers' attitudes, opinions or goals were not stated directly in their utterance accompanied with multiple-choice questions. They were used for the mediation phase of the DA procedure.

#### 3.3 Procedure

This study is a quasi-experimental. The study lasted 24 sessions during the spring of 2015. In order to accomplish the purpose of the study and to collect the necessary data, several phases were followed. In order to ensure the homogeneity of 100 participants, a standardized proficiency test (OPT) was administered. According to their scores on OPT, the 60 homogeneous subjects were selected. The participants were at the same level of knowledge at the beginning of the study. They were all at intermediate level. The experimental group was treated with dynamic assessment (mediation task), and the control group with traditional learning model (individual learning), in order to enhance their listening knowledge. After completion of the treatment sessions, and after informing students about what they were going to do, nearly at the end of the semester and before their final exam of the institute, in twenty second or twenty third session, the researcher holds post-test procedure. The learners were not informed of the exam because the goal is to take the real result, not an artificial one.



### 3.4 Data Analysis

Considering this particular fact, that the research addressed one independent variable (mediation task in dynamic assessment) and one dependent variable (listening improvement). Independent Sample T-test and ANCOVA were run to determine the effect of dynamic assessment on listening improvement. All the data were processed using SPSS software. Details of the analyses are presented in chapter four.

## 4. Results

### 4.1 Descriptive Analysis of Data

Table 4.1. Descriptive Statistics for the Proficiency Test

N	Mean	SD
100	32	10.32

This table shows the result obtained from the proficiency test, OPT. The mean and standard deviation are presented.

Table (4-2) shows the number of students who took the pre-test and post-test. It should be mentioned that no one excluded.

Table 4.2. Number of Students Participated in Pre-test and Post-test Cases

Included		Excluded		Total		
N		Present	N	Present	N	Present
Pre-test*group	30	100%	0	0%	30	100%
Pre-test*group	30	100%	0	0%	30	100%

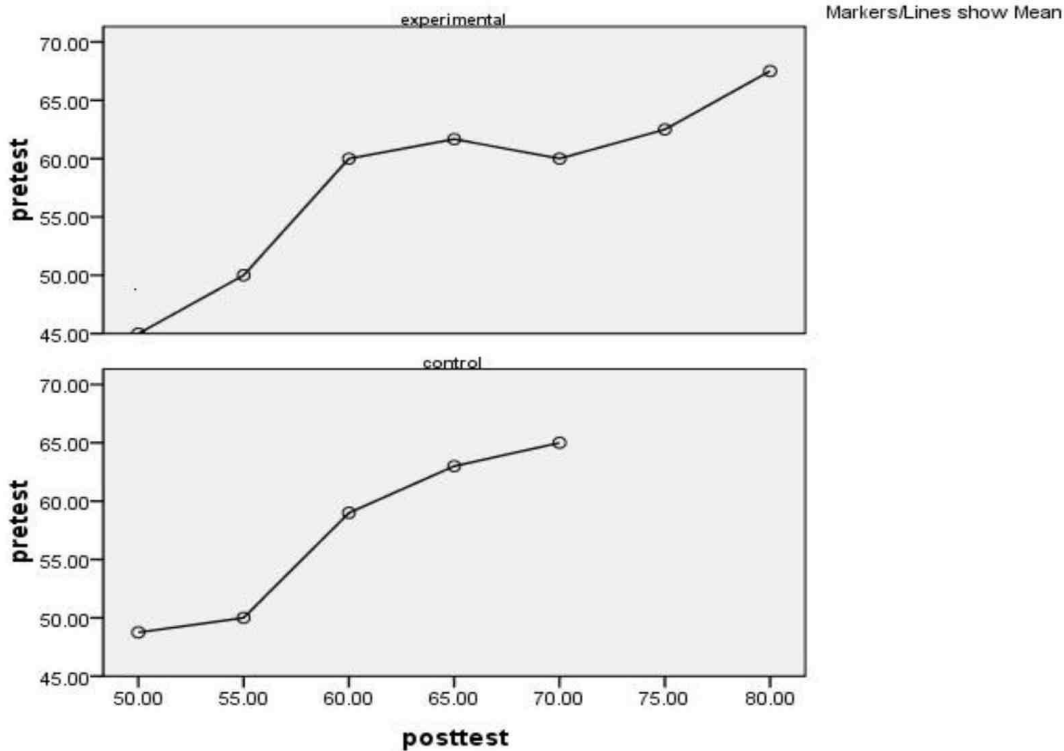
Sixty participants were selected for this study. They were divided into two groups, experimental and control. The descriptive statistical analysis done on the collected data of pre-test and post-test is shown in table (4-3).

Table 4.3. Descriptive statistical analysis done on the collected data of pre-test and post-test

Group		Pre-test	Post-test
Experimental	Mean	59.9	68.4
	N	30	30
	SD	4.8	4.7
Control	Mean	58.45	58.1
	N	30	30
	SD	5.64	5.2
Total	Mean	59.15	63.25
	N	60	60
	SD	5.216	7.121

#### 4.1.2) Inferential Statistics

In this study, in order to investigate the research hypothesis " DA process does not have any significant effects on the improvement of Iranian intermediate EFL learners' listening comprehension ability" , the differences between mean scores of pre-test and post-test of control and experimental group were calculated through ANCOVA.



As graph (4-1) shows, because the regression lines are parallel, so there is a linear relationship between the two variables, pre-test and post-test. It means that the relationship between the two variables in both groups is the same.

In order to examine the equality of variances, Levine's Test of Equality of Error Variances was run. It tests the null hypothesis that the error variance of the dependent variable is equal across groups.

Table (4-4): Levine's Test of Equality of Error Variance

F	df1	df2	Sig
.26	1	58	.61

According to table (4.4) the calculated F is not significant. So there is equality of variances and ANCOVA can be run.

The data in table (4.5) are related to test of homogeneity of regression. Before running covariance, between-subjects effects of pre-test-group should be investigated.

Table 4.5. Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Source	Type III Sum of Square	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Corrected Model	1879.82	3	626.61	230.93	.00
Group (a)	17.86	1	17.86	6.6	.015
Pretest (b)	802.97	1	802.97	295.95	.00
Group*pretest(a*b)	.41	1	.41	.15	.7
Error	97.68	36	2.71		
Total	46200	40			

As table (4.5) shows, between –subjects effect ( $a*b$ ) is not significant ( $F=0.15$ ,  $Sig=0.7$ ). It shows that the data supports homogeneity of regression. Therefore, covariance should be run just for between – subjects effect of post-test and group to show whether mean scores of two groups are the same or not. The results of this analysis are demonstrated in table (4.6).

Table 4-6: Mean and Corrected Mean of Listening Comprehension Ability

Source	Posttest		Corrected Mean	
	M	SD	M	SE
Experimental	38.4	4.7	37.77	.36
Control	28.1	5.11	28.72	.36

Table (4.6) shows the corrected means of dependent variable quality of pronunciation. The data demonstrate that the means of experimental group are upper than control group.

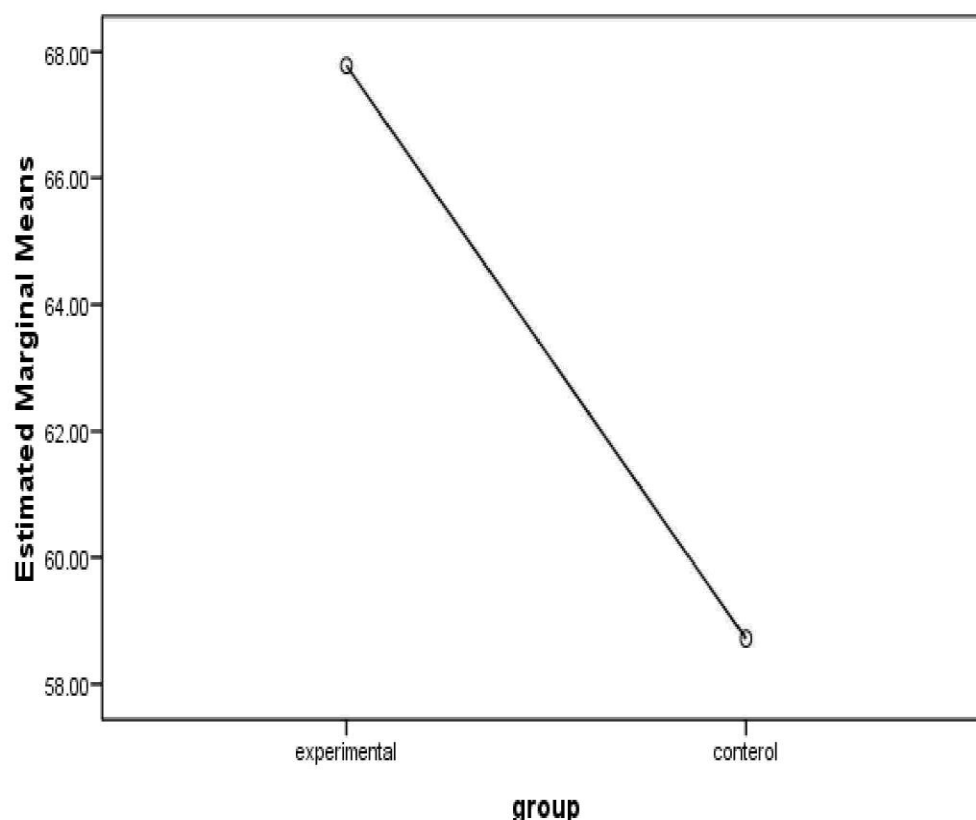
Sum of analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) of quality of pronunciation in experimental and control group after eliminating between-subjects effect is demonstrated in table (4.7):

Table 4-7: Sum of analysis of covariance

Source	Type III Sum of Square	df	Mean Square	F	Sig	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	1879.415	2	939.71	354.48	.00	.95
Pretest	818.52	1	818.52	308.76	.00	.89
Group	805.42	1	805.48	303.84	.00	.89
Error	98.08	37	2.65			
Total	46200	60				

As it can be seen, the corrected model ( $f=00$ ,  $F=354.48$ ) is statistically significant. The results ( $F=303.84$ ,  $Sig=.00$ ,  $Eta=.89$ ) shows that there is a difference between two groups. It means that there is significant difference between experimental and control group. As a result, the null hypothesis “DA process does not have any significant effects on the improvement of Iranian intermediate EFL learners' listening comprehension ability” will be rejected, so it can be concluded that the quality of students' pronunciation can be improved by using DA process.

To clarify the result, the data will be demonstrated in graph (4.2). The vertical axis represents the post-test and the horizontal axis represent experimental and control group.



The graph shows that there is a significant difference between the listening comprehension in experimental and control group. It clearly shows that the experimental group who received treatment on the basis of DA process had better scores on post-test.

Table 4.8. Independent t-test for male and female performance in listening

Levene's Test for Equality of Variances					t-test for Equality of Means		
F	Sig	t	df	sig (two-tailed)	mean difference	Std. Error	Difference
.243	.628	-.298	18	.769	-.28283		.94995
		-.306	17.973	.763	-.28283	.92561	

The results in this table indicate that there was not a significant difference between male and female performance in listening comprehension ability.

## 4.2 Discussion

The outcomes of this investigation indicated that all participants in the two groups acted differently. The students who worked in mediation task of dynamic assessment procedure (experimental group), performed significantly better than those in the control group (traditional learning model) on listening test. Students in a control group worked alone on listening materials; they lacked a mediator with whom to interact or share knowledge, which can be regarded as the most powerful and effective source of feedback (Chastain, 1998). The results of the present study also revealed that mediation phase over dynamic assessment prepared students better for the tests that are used and this led to higher overall scores than students in the control group. Therefore, the researcher can reject null hypothesis (1), and express that there is significant difference in listening development of students who use mediation task of dynamic assessment approach and those who use traditional learning model. Based on finding from the pretest and posttest of the experimental group indicated that although the learners of this group received a significant gain from the DA intervention, the standard

deviation of the posttest exhibited considerable variation, an indication that some learners were improving more, and some less than others. A finding which is in line with Ableeva and Lantolf (2011), Kozulin and Garb (2002), and Poehner and Lantolf (2013) signifying that the learners were not developmentally at the same ability level, considering that some responded more favorably to mediation than others.

### 5. Conclusion

Based on statistical analysis and finding from proficiency test, pre-test, and post-test the following conclusions were drawn in response to the research questions of the study. The analysis of DA interactions showed by applying these mediational strategies in the mediation phase and based on the responsiveness of the learners to each mediating move, the mediator could gain insights into the developmental changes and sources of difficulties the learners had in their comprehension of conversational implicatures. The impediments hampering the pragmatic understanding of the learners in the listening texts found in this study were lack of lexical knowledge of the L2 especially the L2 idiomatic expressions, limited knowledge of the L2 culture, and inferencing skills. The mediator attempted to redress this lack of knowledge in the learners by offering appropriate forms of mediation in the ZPD of the learners which to some extent led to the development of the pragmatic understanding of the learners in their listening comprehension ability. The results of the current study demonstrated that there were statistically significant differences between experimental and control groups on dependent variable of listening development. The result also revealed that mediation phase of dynamic assessment compared to traditional assessing model is more effective as a technique for language learning and testing. The mediation phase of DA procedure was a good way to involve all students in speaking, listening in the experimental classroom. This model was good to involve participation within class members.

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# RHETORICAL STRUCTURE OF BOOK REVIEWS: A CROSS-LINGUISTIC AND CROSS-DISCIPLINARY STUDY

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## Abstract

Book review genre is a pivotal part and parcel of academic discourse (Hyland, 2000). This is a part of academic discourse which has been overlooked until a decade ago and a lot of studies can be conducted to unveil the unknown aspects of this academic genre. This research reported in this paper explores a contrastive analysis of rhetorical structure of English and Persian book reviews taken from 10 online and printed journals. The study is done on 40 book reviews in both languages in the fields of literature and architecture. Four strata from each book review are included in this study are English literature, English architecture, Persian literature, and Persian architecture which are randomly assigned. These book reviews were analyzed by the scheme provided by Motta-Roth (1998) to see whether the same moves and stages are followed in the papers studied here. The findings led to the proposition of four new stages. The results of the study showed that in Persian book reviews, moves are mixed more frequently than in English ones while the latter were found to be stricter in following of the order of the moves. Other findings are also provided in the result section.

**Keywords:** Book reviews; contrastive analysis; contrastive rhetorical structure; cross-linguistic; cross-disciplinary

## Introduction

Different genres are related to the academic settings. Book review, research paper, recommendation letter, and annotated bibliography are just a few instances of genres which pertain to academic setting. Each type has its significant role in the process of negotiating ideas and opinions in the scholarly sphere. The presence of book reviews dates back to 2000 years ago (Ortega y Miranda, as cited in Hyland, 2000), but it is in the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century that the new form of book review is proposed.

Swales (1990) states that review genre as a genre which is of high importance in academic settings which "exhibits various patterns of similarity of structure, style, content, and intended audience." The audience of book reviews are usually scholars and members of academia who want to catch up with the latest publications, thus this genre is paid attention to extensively. Motta-Roth also states, in his dissertation, the purpose of review genre is to "introduce and evaluate new publications in the field". Hyland (2000) highlights the importance of book reviews and states this genre is a pivotal part and parcel of academic discourse. Hyland states that book review is of more-or less impersonal literature (p.41). The evaluative nature of book reviews is another feature of this academic genre. He, also, mentions that the main audience of the review is the writer of the book; thus, it might lead to a personal, direct and critical encounter between the author of the book and the reviewer.

Regarding the generic structure of book reviews, it is better to first elaborate on the concepts of the genre and genre analysis. The notion of genre which is from French and originated from Latin (Chandler, 1997) has been gained much more attention during the last decades since it has been known that all texts or literary

texts involve a genre or genres (Smith, 2007). Although the term is difficult to define, various definitions are given for this terminology. For instance, Hyland (2002) described genre as socially perceived ways of using language. According to Yates and Orlikowski (1992), genres are social kinds of communicative actions routinely performed by members of a community to understand special communicative purposes. As Nunan (1992) mentioned while genre was used to refer to various types of literary discourse like tragedies, sonnets and so forth, it has been recognized as different types of communicative actions recently. Biber and Corad (2009) explained that genre is a social process in which the members with the same culture use language in a predictable sequential structure to accomplish particular communicative purposes. But the most fundamental definition is given by Swales (1990) who considered genre as “a class of communicative events, the members of which share some set of communicative purposes which are recognized by the expert members of the parent discourse community”.

Having introduced the concept of genre, it is essential to provide a method for the appropriate description of the structure of any instance of communication. This can be done through genre analysis (Nodoushan, 2011). But what is genre analysis? Genre analysis is centered on the concrete uses of texts with all their possible consequences and it can be described on the basis of the features as: form, space, number, length, type, and framework (David, 2003; Valenskey, 2010).

Genre analysis deals with the description of the higher level organization and structure of both written and spoken texts. Its focus is on communicative purposes and strategies in using the language (Qin cited in Xu, 2005). According to Arhus (2005) genre analysis is concerned with analyzing a given text in a way that the analysts by knowing necessary information can determine which genre the text belongs to. The analysis is on the basis of features and conventions used which make the text akin to other texts.

Observing previous studies, adequate literature was found on the concept of genre and genre analysis. Although some researchers have surveyed the generic structure of book review (e.g., De Carvalho, 2001; Suarez & Moreno, 2011; Valensky, 2010), no study has been conducted on the contrastive analysis of the generic structure of book reviews of Persian and English languages. The present study tries to fill this gap in the literature. Present study is intended to investigate the generic structure of book reviews of two different majors, namely Architecture and Literature, and juxtapose them in order to find the similarities and differences.

### Methods

This contrastive study is in fact a content analysis research dealing with two disciplines and two languages which leads to four sets of content, namely, English and Persian literature and English and Persian architecture texts. Content analysis is defined as “Content analysis is a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use” (Krippendorff, 2004, p.18).

### Data

The present study is based on 40 book reviews, written in English and Persian. Four strata from which book reviews are included in this study are English literature, English architecture, Persian literature, and Persian architecture. These texts are published between 2000 and 2011 in 10 printed or online journals. Four book reviews are taken from each journal using a random sampling. These two disciplines are selected in order to have samples from two different fields of study to see whether book reviews related to different fields follow different rhetorical structures.

### Analysis

John Swales' (1990) model of moves and steps are used to show the generic structure of the reviews. He defines a move as “a discoursal or rhetorical unit that performs a coherent communicative function in a written or spoken discourse...a functional, not a formal, unit”. He also defines steps as “counterclaiming, raising a question, indicating a gap, and continuing a tradition”.

The following four theoretical moves and several steps are presented by Motta-Roth (1998). Here are the moves: a) introducing the book; b) outlining the book; c) highlighting parts of the book; d) providing closing evaluation of the book. Here is the table of moves and steps that he has found:

Table 2. Moves and steps presented by Motta-Roth (1998)

	Moves	Steps
1		1.1Defining the general topic of the book
		1.2Informing about potential readership

	Introducing the book	1.3Informing about the author
		1.4Making topic generalizations
		1.5Inserting book in the field
2	Outlining the book	2.1Providing general view of the organization of the book
		2.2Stating the topic of each chapter
		2.3Citing extra-text material
3	Highlighting parts of the book	3.1Providing focused evaluation
4	Providing closing evaluation of the book	4.1Definitely recommending/ disqualifying the book
		4.2Recommending the book despite indicated Shortcomings

Here is a very brief description of the moves and stages of book reviews provided by Motta-Roth (1998); introducing the book is the first move of the current scheme; the first stage is devoted to a general introduction of the content of the book. The second stage deals with the potential audience of the book. The third stage of the first move presents a set of information about the author of the book. The fourth stage is the section where the reviewer can provide information related to the book. The fifth section indicates those parts which try to show the way the book occupies the niche in the field.

Outlining the book under investigation is the second move of this scheme. The first stage of this move sketches the overall organization of the book; in this section, general information related to the presentation of the content of the book is provided. The second stage of this move states the topics of each chapter without referring to the content of the book. The third stage of this move deals with the extra-text information provided in the review such as maps, illustrations, etc.

The third and fourth moves are somehow evaluative. The third move is called highlighting parts of the book which encompasses the evaluations that the reviewer have done on each particular part of the book. The last move deals with the qualifying and disqualifying the book. The two stages of this move are qualifying or disqualifying the book and recommending the book despite indicated weaknesses.

Steps and moves are coded by the researchers, and another coder who is not involved in the current study. The coding is defined, by Krippendorff (2004, p.220), as “transcribing, recording, categorizing, or interpreting of given units of analysis into the terms of a data language so that they can be compared and analyzed.” In order to ensure the inter-coder reliability, thirty percent of book reviews are analyzed, and coded by an external coder to make sure that the analysis is reliable; Spearman correlation is used to check the inter-coder reliability of this process and the inter-coder reliability is found to be .847 which is a high correlation.

### Results and discussion

The application of move analysis of book reviews has resulted into the results which are provided here. The frequency of each move and each stage is calculated by SPSS 16 and are reported in this section. In the beginning, the frequencies of each move and stage of the entire sample corpus are calculated and presented in tables 2 and 3.

Table 2. Frequencies of four moves of all samples

Moves	F	%	Cumulative frequency
Introducing the book	131	38.6	38.6
Outlining the book	113	33.3	72
Highlighting parts of the book	70	20.6	92.6
Closing evaluation of the book	25	7.4	100
Total	339		



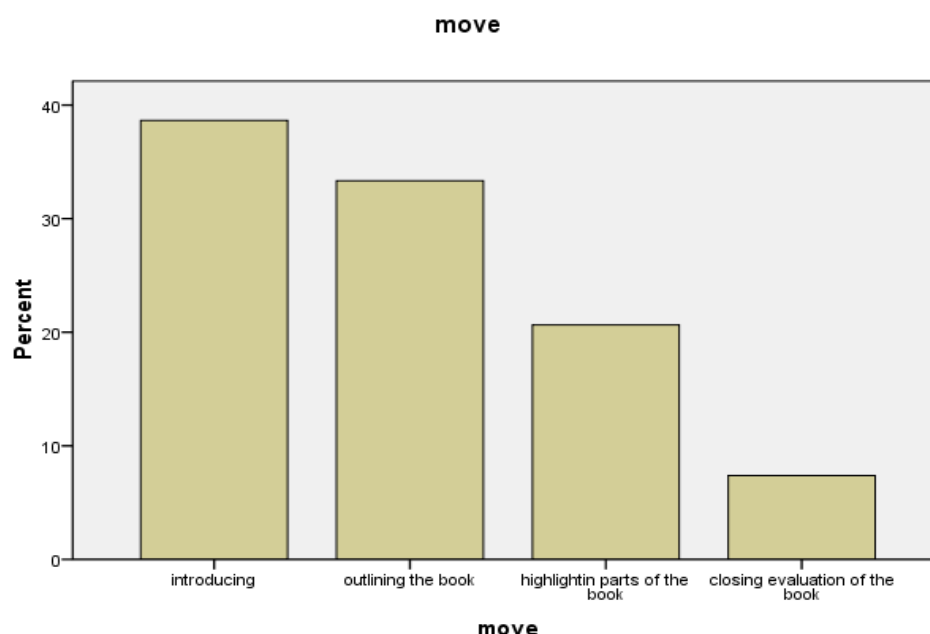


Figure 1. Frequencies of four moves of all samples

As Table 2 shows, the first move is the highest frequency ( $f=131$ ) with the percentage of 38.6. This move which is intended to establish the territory of the review is found to require more space to justify what it supposed to say. The second move deals with outlining the book. In this section the overall and specific parts of the book are elaborated. This move has a percentage of 33.3 of all moves. The third move which is the most prominent evaluative part of the review has the frequency of 70. And the last move is the concluding evaluation of book reviews which has gained a frequency of 25 and percentage of 7.4. Next table shows the frequency and the percentage of each stage.

Table 3. Frequencies of stages of all samples

Stages	F	%	Cumulative Percent
1.1	39	11.5	11.5
1.2	19	5.6	17.1
1.3	19	5.6	22.7
1.4	18	5.3	28.0
1.5	5	1.5	29.5
1.6	26	7.7	37.2
1.7	5	1.5	38.6
2.1	47	13.9	52.5
2.2	12	3.5	56.0
2.3	10	2.9	59.0
2.4	25	7.4	66.4
2.5	18	5.3	71.7

3.1	70	20.6	92.3
4.1	19	5.6	97.9
4.2	7	2.1	100.0
Total	339	100.0	

As the table indicates, the most frequent stage is the evaluative stage (3.1) with the frequency of 70. The second frequent stage is 2.1 which delineates the outline of the book. Scrutinizing the book reviews, researchers of the current study have reported the existence of four new stages which are absent in the model provided by Motta-Roth (1998). These four stages which are colored in red are as follows:

Table 4. Stages added to the previous schemes

Stage no.	Name of the stage	What is included	Example
1.6	General information about the book	Information on the publication, the place of publication, price, size of the book, etc.	The paper sized (11x 10.40) is quite large, numerous photographs, and other illustrations are included....
1.7	Reviewer's ideas	The reviewer's idea not on the book but on the content under study	If anybody should write a guidebook to contemporary architecture in London it is Ken Allinson
2.4	Extra-text information	Information in the review which is not related to the text and is extra	On my next trip to New Orleans I'll need to venture beyond downtown.....
2.5	A brief explanation of a specific part of the book	A part of the book, ranging from one sentence to one page, is explained and elaborated	The third chapter on Austen, .....presents an Austen able to absorb the contradictions of .....

These stages are observed in some book reviews and cannot be included in any of the stages provided by Motta-Roth (1998), so new classes should be allocated to them. In the next part of the results and discussion section, the results of six Chi-square procedures are shown and discussed.

In this section, two types of comparisons will be performed to see whether the book reviews of the same and different languages, on the one hand, and book reviews of the same and different disciplines, on the another hand, are of different rhetorical structures. Four comparisons are conducted by running Chi-square formulas. Table 5 shows the results of these comparisons.

Table 5. Results of Chi-square for cross-disciplinary and cross-language texts

	Persian Literature	Persian Architecture	English literature	English architecture
Persian Literature		16.360*	2.839	
Persian Architecture	16.360*			12.167*
English Literature	2.839			1.864
English architecture		12.167*	1.864	

As the table indicates, the frequencies of two comparisons are significantly different at the probability level of .05. The first insignificant comparison is between English literature and Persian literature. It seems that both groups are following, more or less, the same generic structure in terms of the frequency of their moves. The Chi-square conducted for their stages also shows an insignificant result (Chi-square= 14.181,  $p < .05$ ). The following the bar graph of the stages of these two cross-lingual groups.

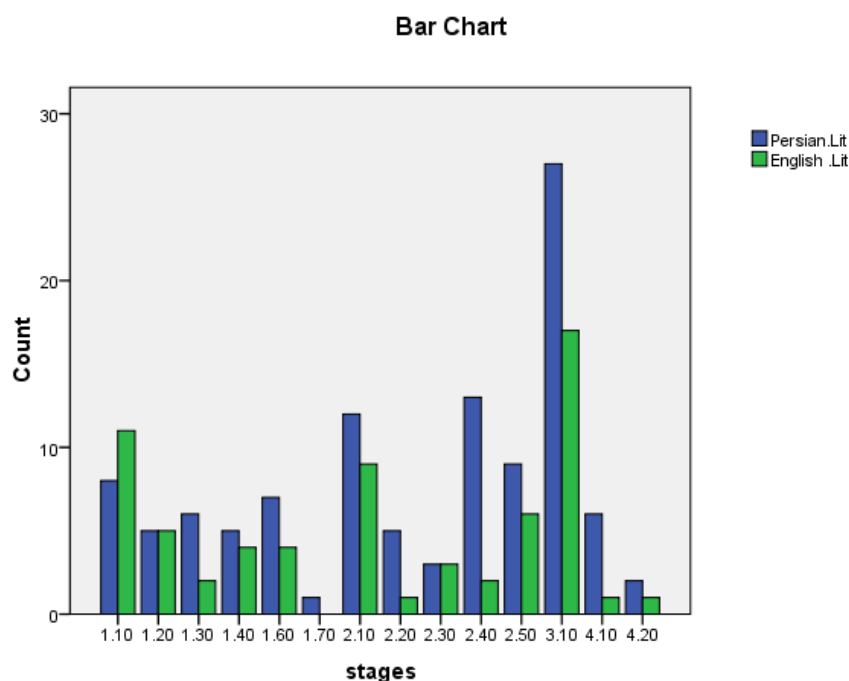
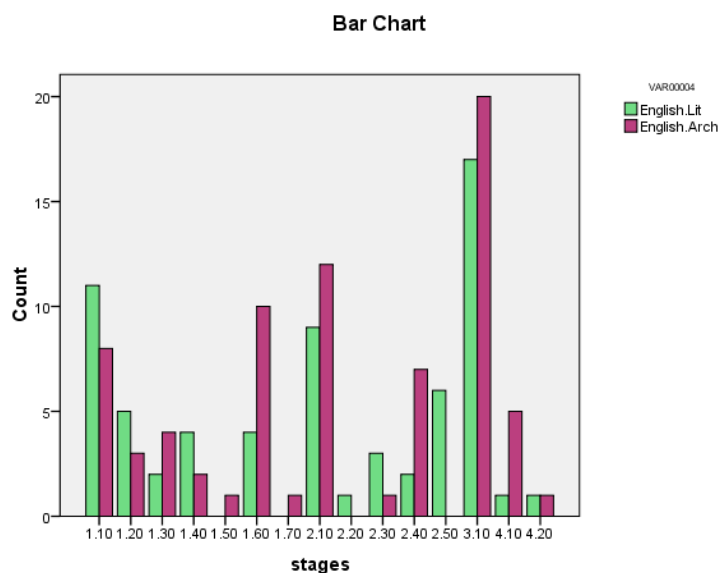


Figure 2. Cross-lingual move frequencies

As the bar chart shows, the number of evaluative move of Persian literature (3.1) is higher than that of English literature; the same story exists for the move 2.1 (organization of the book). On the other hand, the move 1.1 (defining the content of the book) is used more frequently in English literature texts. Another worth-mentioning point is the absence of the move 1.7 (reviewer's ideas) in the English book reviews; the findings show that in English book reviews it is just the writers' ideas which can be presented and evaluated, but in Persian there is a room for the reviewer to express his ideas.

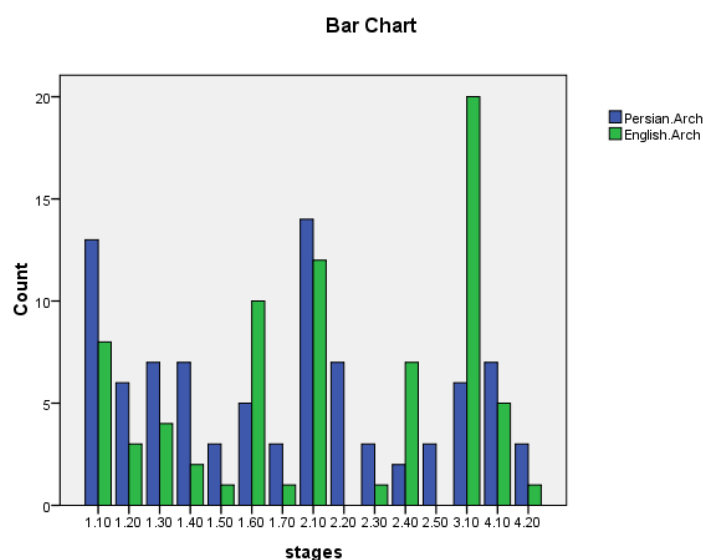
The second insignificant comparison is between English architecture and English literature (Chi-square= 1.864,  $p < .05$ ). The comparison of stages of these two disciplines in English has also been an insignificant one (Chi-square= 20.504,  $p < .05$ ). The following bar graph shows the way stages have distributed.



*Figure 3. Cross-lingual stage frequency*

As the bar graph informs, two stages have recurred in English literature which are absent in English architecture. Stages 2.2 (topic of each chapter) and 2.5 (explanation of each chapter) have occurred only in the English literature reviews. On the other hand, there are two stages in English architecture which are not included in the English literature book reviews. Stages 1.5 and 1.7 have no place in the studied English literature book reviews.

The third comparison is between English and Persian architecture texts. Unlike two previous comparisons, this one is significant (Chi-square= 12.167,  $p < .05$ ). The comparison of the frequencies of stages of these texts are also found to be significant (Chi-square=31.289,  $p < .05$ ). The following is the bar graph of stages in English and Persian architecture texts.



*Figure 4. Cross-lingual architecture stages*

The noticeable point in this graph is the magnitude of evaluation (3.1) in the English architecture book reviews. The absence of 2.5 (brief explanation of specific parts of the book) in English texts and the absence of 2.2 (topic of chapters) in the Persian texts are other features that are found in this comparison.

The comparison of Persian literature and Persian architecture is the fourth comparison. The result of Chi square shows that this comparison is significant (Chi-square= 16.360,  $p < .05$ ). Here is the bar graph of these two Persian texts.

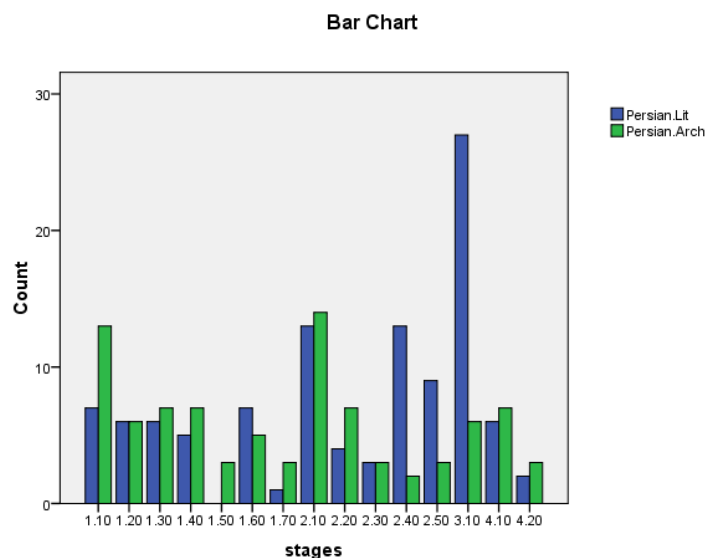
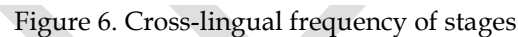


Figure 5. Cross-disciplinary- Persian texts (literature/ architecture)

The graph shows that evaluation has a pivotal role in the Persian literature book reviews, which is not the case in the Persian architecture book reviews. The magnitude of 2.4 (extra-text information) in the literature texts also shows that more information related to the content but taken from other texts is provided in book reviews of literary works.

The last comparison is of a cross-disciplinary nature. Book reviews on architecture are compared with the book reviews on literature to see whether there is a difference in the frequency of their moves and stages. The result of the Chi square shows that these two types are not significantly different in terms of their moves and stages (Chi-square= 5.923, and Chi-square= 17.049, respectively). The following is the graph of these two groups of book reviews.



The previous section indicated the way book reviews of different disciplines and languages are similar or different. Here, a set of concluding points will be added to shed more light on the findings. Reviewing the texts, it was found that in Persian book reviews moves are mixed more frequently than in English book reviews. Book reviews, written in English, were found to be stricter in the following of the order of the moves. In Persian texts, sometimes two moves were implemented in a long sentence, but no such a case was found in English texts.

Another point which is found is that in the majority of architecture book reviews studied, not only evaluation is provided, but also a set of suggestions are provided to be applied in the next editions, while these suggestions occurred less in the literature book reviews.

To sum up, it can be stated that both cross-lingual and cross-disciplinary differences can lead to different texts of the same genre, book review genre. This can justify the need of more studies on book reviews of different disciplines and languages to find the rhetorical patterns used in specific disciplines and languages. The results of this study, along with Suarez and Moreno (2011), show that no single pattern is followed by book reviewers, thus, book review writers should be cautious in using moves and stages in order not to produce a text which is not compatible with their discipline or language. Journals and websites which publish book reviews can use the

results of the current study and similar ones to inform their writers how to organize their book reviews. Academic writing classes of each major, especially in MA level, should encompass the instruction of different academic genres, including book reviews, in the form of working on moves and stages to unveil the pieces of texts for the students so that they, later, can follow the prominent patterns of followed in the academic texts of their majors.

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# THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ACADEMIC SELF-CONCEPT AND LEARNING ENGLISH IN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

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## Abstract

Based on research, academic self-concept and academic achievement are mutually interdependent. In this study, the aim was to find out if there is any relationship between the academic self-concept and learning English as a foreign language in students. The participants were 320 students studying in 4<sup>th</sup> grade of high school in west of Mazandaran province which were chosen by using intact sampling method. The data collection instrument for academic self-concept was Academic Self-Concept Questionnaire (ASCQ) (Liu & Wang, 2005) which consists of 20 items. For obtaining data regarding the students' achievement, an English test and a general test including three subjects of Arabic, Persian literature and Theology. The research findings showed a close relationship between academic self-concept and measures of academic achievement in both English and Grade Point Average. It is necessary to give sufficient and proper attention to self-concept and teachers should be offered methodological guidance in order to work on it through the educational process.

**Key words:** Academic self-concept, Academic achievement, English, General Subjects

## 1- Introduction

Self-concept research has attracted the interest of researchers in various disciplines because numerous research studies conducted over the past decades have suggested that academic self-concept and academic performance are interrelated.

Self-concept refers to the individual's self-beliefs, hypotheses and assumptions. In other words, self concept of an individual is the totality of opinions that each person holds to be true about his or her personal existence. It is multifaceted and influenced by contextual variables (Marsh, 1993). Academic self-concept refers to a person's "perception of self with respect to achievement in school" (Reyes, 1984). Bracken (2009) defines academic self-concept as how a person feels about himself or herself within a school or academic setting, or in relation to a student's academic progress (p. 92). Academic self-concept is hierarchically organized, and multifaceted in nature (Marsh & Shavelson, 1985). Academic self-concept, for example, is an individual's self-perception of competence and his/her evaluative judgments in the academic domain (Mercer, 2011, p. 14).

According to multidimensional models of self-concept, academic self-concept is one of several different facets of the self that contribute to an individual's general self-concept, together with social, emotional and physical self-concepts (Byrne & Shavelson, 1986; Marsh, 2005; Marsh, Byrne, & Shavelson, 1988). Hierarchical, multi-dimensional models make an important distinction between general self-concept, which refers to an individual's global self-perceptions, and academic facets of self-concept, which refer to an individual's perceptions of their academic competence. Considerable studies have been conducted to test and support the multidimensionality of this construct (Lau, Yeung, & Jin, 1998; Marsh, 1994; Marsh, Byrne, & Shavelson, 1988; Marsh & O'Neill, 1984; Marsh, Relich, & Smith, 1983; Marsh & Shavelson, 1985).

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A considerable amount of research has been dedicated to the influence of self-concept on people's lives. It is often asserted that individual' perceptions of themselves and of what is possible for the self are directly linked to 'feelings of efficacy, competence, control, or optimism, and that these provide the means by which these global constructs have their powerful impact on behavior' (Ruvolo & Markus, 1992, p. 96). That is, how we see ourselves also determines how possible and realistic we perceive our future purposes, and affects our motivation to act or give up (Dörnyei, 2009).

Many researchers have reported a positive correlation between student academic self-concept and performance in the language learning class (Liu, 2008). Researchers also found that academic self-concepts of students may be enhanced when they are placed in a high achieving group and "assimilation effects" occur in this case (Marsh, Kong, & Hau, 2000). Educational psychology research which has been devoted to studying the relationship between self-concept and academic achievement provided us with a substantial amount of data and helped the educators to answer the two major questions; whether self-concept is a cause or an outcome of academic achievement and whether correlations between both are positive, negative or insignificant. Research evidence proved that self-concept influences behavior and students' thoughts about themselves and it will determine the way they deal with the challenges of the learning experience and also their relationship with others (Arnold, 2007).

Some studies have shown that academic self-concept functions as a significant predictor of students' academic performance (Choi, 2005; Liu, 2008; Muijs, 1997). Other studies intended to examine the causal relationships between the two variables (Barker, Dowson, & McNerney, 2005; Helmke & Van Aken, 1995; Marsh, Trautwein, Lüdtke, Köller, & Baumert, 2005). Most studies have supported the contention that academic self-concept and achievement have a reciprocal relationship. Changes in one variable may lead to changes in the other.

The conclusion that a prosperous student possibly has a positive concept of himself has been proved by many studies like Gowan (1960), Brunken and Shen (1966). In a research on the factor which causes success in high school and university, Gowan (1960) reported that successful people have characteristics like self-confidence, self-belief and a positive self-concept. Brunken and Shen (1966) investigated the graduated students and found that efficient students knew some good features of themselves which this does not agree in students with high efficiency. Farls (1970) studied the average high school students and realized that in general both boys and girls with high levels of success tangibly have higher self concept than students with lower level of success. In their meta-analysis of 55 longitudinal studies, Valentine and colleagues (Valentine & DuBois, 2005; Valentine, DuBois, & Cooper, 2004) examined the relations between academic self-beliefs and academic achievement. After controlling for the effects of prior achievement, they found a highly significant positive effect of prior academic self-beliefs on subsequent achievement. The findings of meta-analysis provided empirical support for predictions based on the reciprocal effects model of academic self-concept over those derived from the other two models – self-enhancement and skill development models.

#### 1.1. The Shavelson, Hubner, and Stanton Model

Shavelson et al. (1976) posited that self-concept be formally defined by identifying seven critical features of the construct. According to Shavelson et al. (1976), self-concept is: organized or structured, multifaceted, hierarchically arranged, stable at the apex of the model, increasingly multifaceted with age, descriptive and evaluative, and differentiable from other constructs. Self-concept is organized or structured in such a way as to indicate the focal areas of one's experience, such as school, family, or social experiences. Shavelson et al. (1976) divided general self-concept into academic and non-academic self-concepts. They subdivided academic self-concept into particular school subjects: English, history, math, and science. The non-academic self concept was subdivided into social, emotional, and physical self-concepts. The authors further subdivided social self-concept into relations with peers and with significant others, and physical self concept into physical ability and physical appearance (Marsh & Hattie, 1996).

#### 1.2. Academic self-concept and foreign language learning

More than in any other subject, in foreign language learning our self-concept can be severely damaged (Arnold, 2007; Mercer, 2011). Language learning is much more "ego-involving" than other areas of study (Horwitz, 2007). Due to the intrinsically social nature of the language learning process (Jones, 2008; Williams & Burden, 1997), a very common problem in language learners is that they feel their ideas are not expressed properly in the target language and this may make them appear immature or foolish (Arnold & Brown, 1999;

Pellegrino, 2005). The use of a language of which the individual does not have full command, makes the self especially vulnerable (Tsui, 1996, p. 155). As Mercer (2011) accurately explains, it is that “visibility” characteristic of the language learning process, at least as regards the oral skill, that may turn it into an emotional ordeal. In Second Language Acquisition (SLA), various self-related beliefs have also been recognized as being central to successful language learning and are often a key variable in a range of studies and models of language acquisition (see, e.g., Cheng et al., 1999; Doʻrnyei, 2005; Gardner et al., 1997; MacIntyre et al., 1998; Williams and Burden, 1997; Woodrow, 2006; Yang, 1999).

### 1.3. Related research in the EFL setting of Iran

Due to the attractiveness of the self-concept in psychology and probing the inside of the human being, self-concept has been an interesting topic for Iranian scholars to study. A considerable amount of research has been carried out on self-concept and the impacts it might have on other variables. For example, a correlation between self-concept and academic achievement of 400 students in university has been investigated by Tamannayifar, Sedighi and Sakami (2011) in which they concluded that there was no correlation between self-concept and academic achievement of the students. Or in another research which was about the investigation of the comparison between athlete students and non-athlete students of Ahvaz in the level of their self-concept, Nourbakhsh (2005) concluded that there is a significant relationship between athlete students’ self concept and non-athlete students’ self-concept. In another research which is done by Latifian and Sheikholeslami (2003), the relationship between self-concept and general health of the students of the University of Shiraz was studied in which 182 girl and boy students were asked to answer the questionnaire. The research showed that those who show high level of self-concept are often more healthier and happier in their life than those who had low self-concept.

Although many different studies have been done in Iran to find the influences of self-concept on other variables specially academic achievement and performance, there can be seen only a few research which paid attention to the effects of academic self-concept in learning English as a foreign language in case of Iran. Even if we limit this circle more, we can see that no exact research has been done on English learning in high school. With respect to the great and infinite zone of English learning and self concept, it is necessary to find out about how self-concepts of learners affect their learning.

## 2. Method

### 2.1. Participants

The participants of this study were 320 students that studied in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade (pre-university) of high school in three cities in the west of Mazandaran including Noor, Nowshahr and Chaloos. Their age range is approximately 16-18 years with an average age of 17. A sample of 364 students participated in this study but when the questionnaires were completed and then gathered 44 participants (12%) of the questionnaires were excluded and discarded from the statistical analyses because they were incomplete. Therefore, a total of 320 complete questionnaires were gathered. It should also be noticed that the participants were all preparing themselves for the Konkur exam, the entrance exam of universities of Iran.

From this sample 141 students are male and 179 students are female. The gender distribution of the final sample of participants and the number of students in the three cities are presented in Table 1 below.

**Table 1 Gender of Participants and the number of students in each city**

Gender	Number	%	Noor	Nowshahr	Chaloos
Male	141	44.07	39	52	50
Female	179	55.93	79	35	65
Total	320	100	118	87	115

### 2.2. Instruments

In order to explore the students’ level in academic self-concept, the Academic Self-Concept Questionnaire (ASCQ) (Liu & Wang, 2005) which consists of 20 items (see Appendix 1) was used in this study. It was designed with reference to the Academic Self-Esteem subscale (Battle, 1981); the School Subjects Self-Concept (Marsh, Relich & Smith, 1983) and the General and Academic Status scale (Piers & Harris, 1964). Sixteen items were selected from the established instruments and four additional items were constructed, guided by a general understanding of the students and the cultural context in Singapore. Several items were reworded so that the

questionnaire contained both positive and negative items. Negatively worded items are included in questionnaires to disrupt a response set where subjects respond favorably or unfavorably to all items (Marsh, Barnes, Cairnes & Tidman, 1984). It should be noted that the Farsi version of the questionnaires was administrated in this study. In order for students to fully understand and comprehend the items in ASCQ, the questionnaire was translated into their mother tongue (i.e. Persian) and three professors of the English Board in Teacher Training university of Shahid Rajaei have also revised and checked the Persian translation of the questionnaire before the administration.

This questionnaire has 6 response options which are: Yes, mostly often, sometimes yes, sometimes no, not always and Never which are in the form of a 6-level Likert scale.

The participating students were asked to complete the questionnaire, based on their concepts of the self and their past experiences, each item on a six-point Likert Scale ranging from 'Yes' to 'Never' in terms of how they feel and think of themselves when encountering the mentioned situations especially in schools. The options that were given to participants to rate were assigned numerical values ranging from 1 to 6. As this study was more concerned with identifying the level of academic self-concept in three cities of Mazandaran, the participants were told to mention the cities they live in so the researcher would be able to find any cultural and other regional differences.

Also a general English test which was a test of English from book 4 of high school was used to measure the English achievement of the students in pre-university level. The test was first piloted the day before the administration between 30 students with the same conditions of the participants in one of the schools of Noor to measure the validity of the test which came up with 0.69. It should be mentioned that these students who participated in the pilot test were selected randomly and they were not allowed to take part in the main administration of the test on Friday.

The students were supposed to answer 25 questions with 4 responses in which only one response was correct. The students were supposed to choose the best answer for each question. The time allocated for the English test was 25 minutes for all participants. The English test is chosen from Ghalamchi Institution which holds weekly exams for preparation of students for Konkur. This test was held on the 23<sup>rd</sup> Khordad of 1393 on Friday. All of students answered the test with the same allocated time and at the same time.

### 3. Results

The first question was about the relationship between academic self-concept of the students and their academic achievement in general subjects which was the average point of three lessons of Persian, Arabic and Theology.

In order for us to find the relationship between academic self-concept of the students and their academic achievement in general subjects which was the average point of three lessons of Persian, Arabic and Theology, the data of the students' mark on academic self-concept questionnaire and their general achievement in three subjects were computed to obtain the final relationship between these two variables.

Table 2 shows a positive correlation between academic self-concept and achievement in general subjects ( $r=.023$  and,  $p<.05$ ). The value of correlation coefficient revealed a significant correlation between the two variables. This means that those students, who showed a high level of self-concept, got higher points in their general achievement tests.

**Table 2 the correlation between academic self-concept and achievement in general subjects**  
**Correlations**

		ASC	General
ASC	Pearson Correlation	1	.127*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.023
	N	320	320
General	Pearson Correlation	.127*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.023	
	N	320	320

Correlations			
		ASC	General
ASC	Pearson Correlation	1	.127*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.023
	N	320	320
General	Pearson Correlation	.127*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.023	
	N	320	320

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

As Table 2 shows, there has been a significant correlation between students' academic self-concept and achievement in their general subjects. The finding of this study is in line with many other studies done around the world which prove the level of academic self-concept has a direct relationship with the academic achievement. Many research findings (Gonida and colleagues, 2006; Dabbagh Ghazvini, 2011) showed a positive correlation between these two variables. Moreover, studies which have been done by Choi (2005), Liu (2008) and Mujis (1997) have shown that academic self-concept functions as a significant predictor of students' academic performance.

The second question was about the relationship between academic self-concept and learning English as a foreign language in students of 4<sup>th</sup> grade of high school.

To answer this question, correlations were computed between the student's academic self-concept and their achievement in learning English as a foreign language. The results of the Pearson Correlations and their Significance Values are shown in Table 3.2.

**Table 3 Pearson correlation Results between Academic Self-concept and English Achievement**

Correlations			
		ASC	English
ASC	Pearson Correlation	1	.145**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.010
	N	320	320
English	Pearson Correlation	.145**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.010	
	N	320	320

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

As is shown in Table 3 there is a significant relationship between the results of English achievement test and academic self-concept. It means that students' attitude toward their concept of the self has a strong impact on their achievement in learning English as a foreign language.

The results show that students' self-concept is one of the main factors in academic situations. Especially when learning a foreign language, the students need to have a high level of self-concept to afford the new situation and conditions in learning. Learning a new language and speaking it in a class needs a high level of self-esteem and self-confidence which all students can't reach. As mentioned in the literature review, more than any other subject, in foreign language learning our self-concept can be severely damaged. Language learning is much more ego-involving than other areas of study and it's because of the social nature of the language learning process.

Numerous research has been carried out on the effect of self-concept on language learning and the majority showed similar findings to this study a positive correlation between student academic self-concept and performance in the language learning class (Liu, 2008; Guay, Marsh, & Biovin, 2003; Marsh, Hau, & Kong, 2002; Relich, & Smith, 1983; Mujis, 1997).

#### 4. Conclusion

This study aimed to explore the relation between academic self-concept and academic achievement in English and general subjects of pre-university students. The second objective was to analyze the degree of association existing between academic self-concept and academic performance, taken in two aspects: English academic achievement and general academic achievement.

Based upon the findings and results presented, there is a strong case for concluding that both general and English achievement have a close association with academic self-concept of the students at high school. More specifically, this factor is likely to play a significant part in young Iranian students' success in learning English and other general subjects.

In the light of these results, there would appear to be strong justification for taking account of student's perspectives on their own learning and for using this information in working with students who are struggling with learning a new language.

Several studies ratify our results. Alexander (1997) studies the relationship between academic performance and intelligence, learning strategies and academic performance. Data from this study showed a degree of positive, significant association between academic performance and academic self-concept, as well as between total self-concept and academic self-concept. Another study similar to the previous one reports that academic self-concept proves itself favorably associated with academic performance (Castor, 1997). A study carried out by Mboya (1998) found significant differences as a function of the subject's age and his or her academic performance in English, sciences and history.

This study has involved the use of quantitative research tools. However, language learning is qualitative in nature and cannot be accounted for by purely numerical values. Such studies would be strengthened by the addition of qualitative data both from learners themselves and their teachers. Academic self-concept can be a dynamic construct. Focused case studies can be enlightening as to how the interaction between achievement and academic self-concept is constructed.

This study suggests a number of implications and recommendations for EFL instructors, EFL learners, general instructors and all students for future researchers in the field of L2 learning.

The most important implication concerns EFL educators in Iran since they are the main players in motivating students and increasing students' self-concept for encouraging them to learn the foreign language. Since individual differences have a small part in school curriculum in Iranian schools, teachers should pay more attention to the learners' sense of confidence and self-concept. They can encourage students to be more aware of how they feel and think of themselves.

Moreover, the above discussions on the research findings lead to several implications for parents and students. Efforts are needed to recognize specific problems of low self-concept in the child / adolescent, and to act effectively to negate low self-concept; see, also the discussions of Rosenberg (1965, 1979), Coopersmith (1967), and Andrews and Brown (1988, 1993) on the parental influences on self-concept and self-esteem. The works of Carl Rogers (1961) may be particularly relevant here, whereby specific qualities of the teacher or parent are indicated to benefit student self-concept, e.g. non-judgmental acceptance of the child and empathy. These qualities are likely to lead to a trusting and communicative environment for learning and

Academic self-concept as defined in this study represents general academic constructs. Learners are likely to have varying self-concepts in individual fields of study. Language is a special area for language learners to develop a multifaceted language learning self-concept concerning various language skills (e.g. writing vs. speaking; reading vs. listening) and sub-skills. One may feel highly competent in writing but not so successful in speaking. It is also possible to have different language learning self-concept(s) with different languages (Dörnyei & Chan, 2013; Henry, 2010, 2011). Therefore, future studies that will explore possible areas of language learning self-concept are likely to advance our understanding of the phenomenon.

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# ON THE EFFECT OF PEER AND TEACHER FEEDBACK ON IRANIAN UPPER-INTERMEDIATE EFL LEARNERS' WRITING PERFORMANCE

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## Abstract

The present study has devoted itself to investigate the effect of assessment (peer and teacher-assessment) on writing skill. Therefore, 40 EFL learners (at upper-intermediate level) in Pardis English Institute were selected in this study in two groups and each one was randomly assigned to one type of treatment (peer and teacher-assessment). Before treatment, a pretest was administered to make sure about the homogeneity of the learners. Then, while two groups were being taught writing, experimental group received treatment (peer-assessment) and but, in the control group (teacher-assessment) learners were taught writing without focusing on assessment. The result showed that peer-assessment of English writing improved the participants' performance on writing test better than teacher-assessment. The results imply that helping learners to develop the habits of peer-assessment, providing them with feedback students can get relatively autonomous. Since after each stage of self-correction and self-evaluation, the assessment indicators and the related elements can be internalized. So, this can be led to foster independent learners.

## Introduction

Developing a coherent and cohesive piece of writing that communicates effectively is probably the most demanding task to perform in a second/foreign language (Nunan, 1999). In fact, the difficulty of producing high-quality writing is up to a degree that even the majority of educated individuals do not master the skills of writing in their native language (Celce-Murcia, 2001). This difficulty is out there due to the fact that writing is a complicated and multifaceted skill, and it involves much more than just the language (Tsai & Lin, 2012). Thinking, reflecting, generating ideas, selection of ideas, arrangement of ideas, adhering of ideas, paraphrasing and summarizing ideas, grammar, structures, vocabulary, cohesion, coherence, and many other qualifications should collaborate effectively for a piece of writing to come to existence (Zamel, 1983). Besides various techniques that have been devised and implemented throughout years in order to develop the skills of writing in L2 learners, the area of assessment has come to the light in the recent years as a technique that could assist learners in developing writing.

In educational systems, assessment is an inevitable ingredient because it may influence learning, and when made authentic it provides feedback and revision to improve learning. Furthermore, through meaningful engagement of students in the learning process, assessment can affect motivation. Assessment would also enhance instruction by helping the teacher recognize students' weaknesses and strengths. Assessments can also be made valid, fair, ethical, feasible, and efficient tools for learning using multiple measures (Mousavi, 2012).

In a modern perspective on assessment, Orsmond, Merry, and Reiling (2000) remarked that assessment tends to be shaping each and every part of the student learning experience, and part of this experience is the learning that is derived from the heart of the assessment. Better put, in the light of alternative means of assessment that has received a lot of attention these days, assessment is looked at as a medium that could be engineered to lead to effective learning (Taras, 2002). Most certainly, writing is not an exception to this trend, and writing assessment could always be driven to play a part as a learning vehicle.

Although the traditional tests may be impressive to measure some of the skills (such as reading), they are not adequate to assess the productive skills of writing and speaking. As Huerta-Macías (1995) points out: "The nature of proficiency-oriented language learning asks for a variety of assessment options reflecting the numerous instructional strategies used in the classroom" (P.8).

Three kinds of assessments are discussed in this study, namely self, peer, and teacher-assessment. Sengupta (1998) asserts that many researchers have studied peer and self assessments in L1 and L2 writing (e.g. Mangelsdorf, 1992; Mendonea & Johnson, 1994). Correspondingly, the findings suggest that student writers take selective account of peer comment when they revise, preferring to depend more on their own knowledge. Mangelsdorf (1992) reports that peer assessments are always rated negatively by Asian students, and raises the question of the effect of teacher centered cultures on the way students regard peer comments.

However, there is a vital need to make a thorough, and more importantly simultaneous investigation through the impact of self, peer, and teacher assessment on the writing performance of the Iranian EFL learners as unfortunately, there hasn't been any adequate, efficient, and comprehensive research in this field in the related literatures.

To achieve the purpose of this study, the following main questions were formulated: "Do self, peer and teacher-assessment have any effect on the improvement of Iranian upper-intermediate EFL learners' writing performance?" And "which method of assessment (self, peer, and teacher-assessment) will have better effect on the improvement of Iranian upper-intermediate EFL learners' writing performance?"

### Statement of the Problem

Producing a fluent and coherent piece of writing is likely the most challenging thing in language learning. It is something most native speakers never master. The difficulties are enormous for ESL learners, especially for university students who study in a language that is not their mother tongue (Nunan, 1999).

Reilly (2005) believes since writing is accepted to be a rational activity and the most demanding language skill, there has been a surge in the presentation of new approaches for helping learners get better writers in the recent two decades. "Writing is a skill which most instructors find challenging to train and, consequently, not an enjoyable activity for language learners" (Reilly, 2005 cited in Khoii & Tabrizi, 2011).

The importance of assessment is clear for everyone, especially those who deal with teaching and learning in educational settings. The importance and reasons of assessment are stated by some authorities in the field. Assessments are at the core of the educational process because they have a direct impact on the learning processes of students. It is also emphasized that assessment of students' learning is an important task. It has a strong influence on students' approaches to learning and outcomes of their studies.

Due to the importance of assessment in teaching and learning process, instructors assess their students' learning regularly. One important characteristic of new assessment techniques is the involvement of students in evaluation of their own learning process and product. There are three main methods of assessing the students' writing performance, namely self- assessment, peer- assessment, and teacher- assessment.

Although a plenty of studies have been performed to inspect the effect of self and peer assessment in EFL writing, there is paucity in the studies that inspect self, peer, and teacher assessment on the writing performance. A thorough and more importantly simultaneous investigation through the impact of self, peer, and teacher assessment on the writing performance of the Iranian EFL learners are needed.

### The purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the effect of self, peer, and teacher-assessment on Iranian upper-intermediate EFL Learners' Writing Performance. In other words, this study inspects whether self, peer, and teacher-assessment have any effect on the improvement of Iranian upper-intermediate EFL learners' writing performance or not. On the other hand this study shows that which method of assessment (self, peer, and



teacher-assessment) will have better effect on the improvement of Iranian upper-intermediate EFL learners' writing performance.

### Significance of the study

Writing apprehension has proven to have a negative influence on EFL/ESL learners' writing performance and quality (Cheng, Horwitz&Shallert, 1999; Atay& Kurt, 2006). Tsui (1996) believes that learning to write in the foreign language involves as much anxiety as learning the other skills, because writing is predominantly product-oriented, and it requires individual work, i.e., students feel they are deprived of help, support and encouragement.

As a result, learners suffer from a "distress associated with writing" and develop "a profound distaste for the process" (Madigan, Linton & Johnson, 1996: 295). When teacher feedback includes inconsistent marking of errors or vague responses on content, it may even influence students' writing ability negatively making them confused, passive or frustrated (Williams, 2003). As a result, we can conclude that considering the teachers' feedback or teacher assessment alone can not be useful in EFL writing assessment. Other methods, like self-assessment and peer- assessment are also need to be taken to consideration.

Many studies have considered the self- assessment, peer- assessment, and teacher-assessment in EFLstudents' performance in the four skills, among them, very few studies have considered self, peer, and teacher assessment in EFL students' writing performance and non of them has. The main significance of this study that segregates this study from the others is that this study is a simultaneous investigation through the impact of self, peer, and teacher assessment on the writing performance of theEFL students.

### Literature review

There have been many works done about self, peer, and teacher-assessments from different perspectives. Some studies have focused on the specific benefits of self-assessments; some of them believe peer-assessment is the best method; however, some of them believe in teacher assessment.

Birjandi&Tamjid (2010) explored the role of journal writing as a self-assessment technique in promoting Iranian EFL learners' motivation. The participants were 60 intermediate students in two groups. The particular self-assessment technique used in the experimental group was journal writing. At the beginning and end of the semester, both groups took a language proficiency test to ensure their homogeneity, and completed a questionnaires regarding motivation. The results revealed that writing journals in a regular base had a role in promoting the learners' motivation.

Nezakatgoo (2011) investigated the development of EFL students' mechanics of writing in portfolio-based assessment. The results of the study confirmed that students whose work was evaluated by a portfolio system (portfolio-based assessment) had a significant reduction in their errors in mechanics of writing when compared to those students whose work was evaluated by the more traditional evaluation system (non-portfolio-based assessment).

Hasani&Rouhollahi (2012) investigate the effect of self-assessment on writing skills and proficiency of Iranian EFL learners. In this regard, prior to the study,60 participants who were at advanced level were given a standard pretest to be homogenized and some instructions on scoring compositions based on grammatical relationships, structural relationships, word choice and mechanics.

Then ten stages of writing, based on were given to the experimental group intermittently. After each stage, the participants of experimental group were supervised to be directed. They concluded that the experimental group members did much better than those of the control group and also the students can get fairly autonomous, in line with self-assessment and writing, gradually via ten stages of writing since after each stage of self-correction and self-evaluation, the assessment indicators and the related elements can be internalized which can be led to independence.

Abolfazli (2012) examined the Iranian EFL students' attitudes toward self-, peer-, and teacher-assessment experiences. She found that students show positive attitudes toward and beliefs about self-, peer-, and teacher-assessment practices, with the Peer-assessment group expressing significantly more positive than negative attitudes in this regard.

Abolfazli&Sadeghi (2012) found that when self-assessment is contrasted and peer-assessment regarding their impact on scholars' scores, it is the last that turns out to be more powerful. The same outcomes were found by Chang et al. (2012) on portfolio-assessment in which they found that had the highest mean scores followed with

least scores by self-assessment and teacher-assessment. Correspondingly, Chang et al. (2012) and Sadler and Good (2006) reported that peer-raters are stricter than self-raters. Peer-assessment of writing has additionally been found to have a beneficial effect on the student writers (Brown, 2001; Patri, 2002).

With respect to self-assessment Nugar(2004), and Birjandi (2010) agree on the positive effect of self-assessment on the students' writer performance. For example, Nugar (2004) believes that students should be familiar with principles of writing. Meanwhile, Rod (2004) is against self-assessment of writing. He believes that by self-assessment he would try to depict his thoughts in a clear way, but various ideas and grammatical mistake weaken his arguments.

Daigle (2004) believes that activities which enhance active participation of group, will lead to better understanding. On the contrary some scholars have no idea. For instance, Fury (2004) states that we spend a great deal of time during a semester on these activities but the result is not at desired level.

Aforementioned Studies were of high importance in an EFL classroom. All of them play a role in learners' success. However, the studies show a dearth of attention paid to the simultaneous effect of the use of self, peer, and teacher-assessment on the improvement of Iranian EFL learners' writing performance.

## METHODS

### A. Participants

A sample of 60 Iranian EFL learners (both male and female) was selected to participate in the study. They were studying English at Pardis Language institute. The participants were selected from the intermediate level of proficiency, and their age ranged from 18 to 22. After the administration of the Nelson Proficiency Test (NPT) of English language and taking the result into account, 20 participants were excluded from the study because of either a different language proficiency test score, or not writing their names on the papers. There remained 40 learners to take part in the study. They were divided into 2 groups, and each group was randomly assigned to one type of treatment condition as follows:

Group A: peer assessment

Group B: teacher's assessment

### Instruments and materials

#### A. Writing pretest and posttest

The pretest of this study was conducted through essay writing. The sample test was taken from IELTS sample tests published by Cambridge University Press. There were two tasks. The first task was about describing two charts in 20 minutes. The second one was about writing on a topic in 250 words in 40 minutes.

#### B. Writing tasks

The writing tasks of this study were taken from Mastering Skills in TOEFL iBT, advanced level, written by Moraig Macgillivray, Patrick Yancey and Casy Malarcher. It was published by Compass Publishing, 2002. This book consists of four parts according to four skills. This is a preparation course for TOEFL iBT. Four kinds of tasks were used during treatment. These tasks were chosen under four categories: paraphrasing, brainstorming, making connections and organizing information.

### Procedures

In order to achieve the aim of the study, the following procedures were followed. Initially, a total number of 60 participants were selected. To homogenize the participants, an Nelson Proficiency Test (NPT) was administered. As a result, 20 participants, who had scored more than one standard deviation away from (above or below) the mean, were excluded from subsequent statistical analyses, and there remained 40 approximately homogenous participants to take part in this study. The participants were divided into two groups. Each group was randomly assigned to one of the treatment conditions.

In the next phase, the treatment began. Each group of participants received their treatment under one of the following conditions.

Group A: peer assessment

Group B: teacher's assessment

In the first session of treatment in all the groups pretest was given. Then the teachers informed participants of all groups about the aims of the research and explain students how to score the essays through

Jacob's ESL Composition Profile. In group A (peer assessment) students score the classmates' papers. In group B (teacher's assessment), which was considered as control group in this study, teacher scored students' papers. The experimental period lasted for 12 weeks, of which 10 weeks were allocated to the treatment, two weeks to the Nelson Proficiency Test and the pretest, and one week to the posttests. It needs to be noted, however, that not all the class time was used for the treatment each session. At the end of the experimental period, two post-tests were administered.

## RESULTS

The research questions

1. Do peer and teacher-assessment have any significant effect on the improvement of Iranian upper-intermediate EFL learners' writing performance?
2. Which method of assessment (peer and teacher-assessment) will have better effect on the improvement of Iranian upper-intermediate EFL learners' writing performance?

The following null hypothesis was formulated:

H0= Peer and teacher-assessment have not any significant effect on the improvement of Iranian upper-intermediate EFL learners' writing performance.

To answer the research questions, One-Way ANOVA procedure produced a one-way analysis of variance for the quantitative dependent variable to be specific post-writing performance by the single independent variable (types of writing assessment). Analysis of variance was used to test the hypothesis that the means of the three groups were equal on writing post- test.

Since Analysis of variance is sensitive to deviation from normality, the equality of the variances for the three groups was examined for the results of the posttest, too. It was assumed that each group was an independent random sample from a normal population. To test this assumption, Levene's homogeneity of variance test was run for the results of the post-test.

**Table 1**  
*Test of Homogeneity of Variances for the Post Test Scores*

Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
2.216	2	57	.118

Thus, the important first step in the analysis of variance indicated that the variances of the three groups were equivalent for the post-test of writing ( $\text{sig}=.118 \geq 0.05$ ). After confirming the normality assumption, ANOVA was run to the results of the writing post-test. The descriptive statistics for the writing posttest is presented in the following table:

**Table 2**  
*Descriptive statistics for the posttest scores*

	N	Mean	SD	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
group A (peer-assessment)	20	16.85	1.23	.27	16.27	17.42	15.00	19.00
group B (teacher-assessment)	20	15.15	1.08	.24	14.64	15.65	12.00	17.00
Total	40	16.01	1.55	.20	15.61	16.41	12.00	19.00

The results of the post-test showed that the Mean (group A) = 16.85, and Mean (group B) = 15.15, differed significantly. The significance value of the F test in the ANOVA table was less than (.05). Thus, the hypothesis that average assessment scores of the writing test (post-test) were equal across the two groups was rejected ( $F_{2, 57} = 7.199$ ,  $\text{Sig.} = .002 \leq .05$ ).

**Table 3**  
*ANOVA for the Results of the Writing Test (Post-Test)*

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	28.933	2	14.467	7.199	.002
Within Groups	114.550	57	2.010		
Total	143.483	59			

In general, F statistics established that there was statistically a significant difference between the two groups' means, and means plots showed the location of these differences. Participants of the experimental group A (peer- assessment) outperformed group B (teacher-assessment).

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

There have been many works done about peer and teacher-assessments from different perspectives. Some studies have focused on the specific benefits of self-assessments; some of them believe peer-assessment is the best method; however, some of them believe in teacher assessment.

The results of this study shows that peer assessment group outperformed the other groups. Teacher's assessment group gained the lowest position among two groups. These findings are in compliance with Abolfazli (2012) in which he examined the Iranian EFL students' attitudes toward self-, peer-, and teacher-assessment experiences. She found that students show positive attitudes toward and beliefs about self-, peer-, and teacher-assessment practices, with the Peer-assessment group expressing significantly more positive than negative attitudes in this regard.

Abolfazli&Sadeghi (ibid) found that when self-assessment is contrasted and peer-assessment regarding their impact on scholars' scores, it is the last that turns out to be more powerful. The same outcomes were found by Chang et al. (2012) on portfolio-assessment in which they found that had the highest mean scores followed with least scores by self-assessment and teacher-assessment. Correspondingly, Chang et al. (2012) and Sadler and Good (2006) reported that peer-raters are stricter than self-raters. Peer-assessment of writing has additionally been found to have a beneficial effect on the student writers (Brown, 2001; Patri, 2002).

Although the results of this study confirmed the prominent role of peer assessment but there is an improvement in writing performance of self- assessment group too. This finding is in line with Birjandi&Tamjid (2010) in which they explored the role of journal writing as a self-assessment technique in promoting Iranian EFL learners' motivation. The participants were 60 intermediate students in two groups. The particular self-assessment technique used in the experimental group was journal writing. At the beginning and end of the semester, both groups took a language proficiency test to ensure their homogeneity, and completed a questionnaires regarding motivation. The results revealed that writing journals in a regular base had a role in promoting the learners' motivation.

In another study, Hasani&Rouhollahi (2012) investigated the effect of self-assessment on writing skills and proficiency of Iranian EFL learners. In this regard, prior to the study, 60 participants who were at advanced level were given a standard pretest to be homogenized and some instructions on scoring compositions based on grammatical relationships, structural relationships, word choice and mechanics.

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Aforementioned Studies were of high importance in an EFL classroom. All of them play a role in learners' success. However, the studies show a dearth of attention paid to the simultaneous effect of the use of self, peer, and teacher-assessment on the improvement of Iranian EFL learners' writing performance.

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# A STUDY ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THESAURUS ON IRANIAN UPPER INTERMEDIATE EFL LEARNERS' LISTENING COMPREHENSION ABILITY

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## ABSTRACT

This study aimed to explore the relation between the effect of Thesaurus learning by EFL learners and their listening comprehension ability. To do it, the researcher considers the importance of thesaurus knowledge and how it could possibly affect Iranian EFL learners' listening comprehension. The research questions were whether teaching students with thesaurus knowledge might have any effect on Iranian EFL learners' listening comprehension ability as well as if sex difference affects Iranian EFL learners' listening comprehension via teaching thesaurus. The subjects were randomly assigned into two groups (experimental and control). The significance of this study was to identify if Thesaurus learning leads to effective listening comprehension ability and to help Iranian EFL learners to improve their listening abilities as receptive knowledge to improve their EFL skills. The purpose was to observe any probable progress with regard to EFL learners' listening comprehension from the beginning towards the end of the program. The subjects took a standard OPT test, through it the researcher could check their proficiency level appropriately, chosen correctly for the listening test. The participants in experimental group received a list of Thesaurus used in the listening test and passages given, before the pre-test. The control group received no treatment. The former group was going to receive the list of difficult words and their Thesauruses two weeks before taking the test. Since the researcher wanted to avoid any risk of the so-called "testing Phenomenon", which refers to exposure in the immediate test positively affecting participants' scores (Glover-1989), they were taught in 2 individual 1-hour sessions in accordance with the list given. The questions designed were in the form of Multiple-choice. The data analyzed using Independent sample T-test. The results showed that EFL learners' listening comprehension ability improved as a result of learning thesaurus-based knowledge.

**KEYWORDS:** expand; process; thesaurus; vocabulary

## 1. Introduction

Before 1970s, listening was only considered as a receptive skill (Johnson, 2008, p.299) where "students just listened to repeat and develop a better pronunciation"(Vandergrift 2011). Although the literature base in listening strategy instruction has not received enough attention, strategy instruction for listening task has been increasingly focused by listening experts such as Goh (2000, 2002), Hasan (2000), Mareschal (2002) and Vandergrift (2003b) during the past few decades. Initially, most of the listening strategy studies have been

investigating patterns and strategies used by successful versus less successful learners. Then gradually the line of research shifted to focus on effective strategies -based and process oriented approaches to teaching listening skill in order to guide the students "learn to listen" so that they can better "listen to learn" (Vandergrift, 2004). Therefore, listening instructors have the responsibility of teaching students to take advantage of strategies rather than merely providing students with oral passages and testing them (Mendelsohn, 1995).

Despite the wide range of areas investigated in listening strategy research, there is a lack of research looking specifically at how listening strategy use develops or changes over time in the absence of explicit strategy training. An understanding of this pattern of development would seem vital for the planning of listening strategy instruction in particular, and for the teaching of listening in general. Studies that do touch upon strategy development have taken one of three approaches: (1) Comparing cross-sectionally the strategy use of learners at different levels of proficiency; (2) Identifying development within the framework of a program of strategy instruction and (3) Tracing strategy development over time for a single cohort of learners. Therefore, to help language learners to improve their listening comprehension ability, special attention must be gained towards vocabulary expansion. With regard to the relationship between one's knowledge of words in a second or foreign language and one's listening comprehension ability, there are also some studies, though few in number, which show that having good lexical knowledge can have a positive effect on one's listening comprehension. In fact, researching spoken vocabulary has always been more difficult than written vocabulary. That is due to two important features which differentiate spoken language from written language. These two features are permanence and processing time. In fact, as Brown (2001,p.303) states, spoken language is fleeting. When a person says something, it disappears and the hearer has to make immediate perceptions and immediate storage, whereas written language is permanent and, as a result, the reader can return to a word or phrase or sentence, or even to a whole text to understand it better.

The result is that we have a large number of studies providing information about the written form of lexical items, but the amount of research on oral vocabulary is relatively small. One key issue which has not been adequately addressed is how much spoken vocabulary is required to operate in English. For decades, based on the analysis of a half-million word corpus, it was believed that around 2000 word families were sufficient for this (Schonell et al., 1956). Other studies such as Adolph and Schmitt (2003), Staehr (2003) and Nation (2006) have suggested a range of 3000-7000 words as vocabulary size needed to understand spoken language.

As for the research which directly deals with the effect of explicit teaching of vocabulary on listening comprehension, mention can be made of a few studies. For example, Chung and Huang (1998) explored the effects of three advanced organizers (main characters, vocabulary, and main characters of vocabulary) on student comprehension of L2 video-taped material. The results of the study revealed that when provided with vocabulary items as a type of advance organizer, students performed better at comprehension than under the other two conditions. In a series of studies, Chun, Plass, and their associates found that students who selected both pictorial and written annotations of words, whether it be in reading (Plass et al., 1998) or listening (Jones and Plass, 2002) tasks on computer, retained more of the vocabulary than students who accessed only one type of gloss or none at all. The researchers argue that the two types of lexical information led to richer mental representations of the words, making them easier to retrieve from memory and as a result enabling the students to have a better reading and listening comprehension performance. The results of the study indicated that glossing did not significantly affect recall for the participants on the whole, but that those with upper intermediate and advanced proficiency recalled more if they had read a glossed version of the text. In two other similar studies involving the manipulation of glossing in different treatment conditions, Kostetal (2008) and Rott (2007) found that glossing had an effect both on the development of knowledge of vocabulary and reading comprehension performance of L2 learners.

Among these glossing treatments, teaching thesaurus knowledge could possibly help L2 learners to expand their vocabulary knowledge on the side of synonyms and antonyms and totally thesaurus knowledge which it helps the learners' comprehension ability, especially listening comprehension, which is focused in the study. In general usage, a thesaurus is a reference work that lists words grouped together according to similarity of meaning (containing synonyms and sometimes antonyms), in contrast to a dictionary, which provides definitions for words, and generally lists them in alphabetical order. The main purpose of such reference works is to help the user "to find the word, or words, by which [an] idea may be most fitly and aptly expressed" - to quote Peter Mark Roget, architect of the best known thesaurus in the English language.

The general aim of the study is to understand the effect of thesaurus knowledge on foreign language learners' listening comprehension ability. In fact, it is a rich pack of vocabulary information on the side of synonyms, antonyms, also recognizing this fact that which words can be used together, or in what situations, they can be used appropriately. Thesaurus knowledge can be a treasure, actually, to soar language learners' ability and help them to expand more specifically their vocabulary knowledge.

On the other hand, the researcher tried to investigate if there are any Sex differences in listening comprehension on the side of teaching thesauri?

A prevalent finding in the literature is that men and women are not evaluated equally, even they produce objectively the same results. Sex role stereotypes appear consistently, and these traditional beliefs of appropriate sex role behavior are maintained by both men and women. Typical of the results is that men are often considered to be more intelligent, sincere and competent than are women (Spence & Helmreich, 1972).

## 2. Review of Literature

### 2.1 Acquiring "Ownership" of words

Here is how the process of acquiring words knowledge appears to occur, based on the research of Nagy, Anderson, and Herman (1987). Developing understandings of word meanings is a long-term process, one that involves many encounters with both spoken and written words in varying contexts. Here is how one group of researchers describes this process: On the first encounter with a new word, a student stores in memory some information about how the word fits into what s/he is reading or hearing. This information is reinforced each time s/he sees or hears the word. With each new encounter, the student picks up more information about the word from its use in various contexts. As a result, the student gradually acquires "ownership" of the word.

Nagy and Scott (2000) identify several dimensions that describe the complexity of what it means to know a word. First, word knowledge is incremental, which means that readers need to have many exposures to a word in different contexts before they "know" it. Second, word knowledge is multidimensional. This is because many words have multiple meanings (e.g., sage: a wise person; an herb) and serve different functions in different sentences, texts and even conversations. Third, word knowledge is interrelated in that knowledge of one word (e.g., urban) connects to knowledge of other words (e.g., suburban, urbanite, urbane).

What all of this means is that "knowing" a word is a matter of degree rather than an all-or-nothing proposition (Beck & McKeown, 1991; Nagy & Scott, 2000). The degrees of knowing a word are reflected in the precision with which we use a word, how quickly we understand a word, and how well we understand and use words in different modes (e.g., receptive or productive) and for different purposes (e.g., formal vs. informal occasions).

Also, knowing a word implies knowing how that word relates to other knowledge (sometimes called word schema). Therefore, the more we know about a specific concept, the more words we bring to our understanding of that concept. Whereas we have individual interests and backgrounds, each of us brings different words to shape that understanding. Finally, knowing a word means being able to appreciate its connotations and subtleties. When we know a word at this level, we can use and recognize it in idioms, jokes, slangs, and puns (Johnson, Johnson, & Schlicting, 2004).

### 2.2 Incidental word learning through oral language

Logic suggests that the more oral language experiences children have in their early years, the more words and word meanings they acquire. It is the kind and extent of these early oral language experiences that profoundly affect children's later success in school. Young children whose experiences include hearing a lot of language and being encouraged to use and experiment with language themselves tend to achieve early reading success; children who have limited experiences with language often have trouble learning to read, and as they progress through school, they remain at risk for reading and learning problems (Dickinson & Tabors, 2001; Storch & Whitehurst, 2002).

#### 2.2.1 Making word learning part of Daily Routines

Researchers have suggested numerous procedures to create opportunities for interactive classroom talk as well as to expose students to new words throughout the school days. For example, rather than reminding a student that s/he did not quite close the door, the teacher might tell the student to close the door because it is a gar. Rather than asking a student to water a drooping plant, the teacher might say that the plant is becoming



dehydrated. Rather than telling students to line up faster, the teacher might ask them to stop dawdling (Dickinson & Tabors, 2001; Graves, Juel, & Graves, 2004; Johnson et al., 2004; Stahl, 1999).

### 2.3 Vocabulary instruction needs to be Long-term and comprehensive

Noticing the benefits of having a large vocabulary, is the contribution of its size to comprehension. Therefore, one of the main goals of vocabulary instruction is to help students to improve their comprehension. If the goal were to teach words in a way that would improve students' performance on multiple choice vocabulary test, the goal could be achieved through many simple methods. However, if the goal is to teach words in a way that will improve students' comprehension of text that contains these words, the methods become more labor- and time-intensive (McKeown, Beck, Omanson, & Pople, 1985).

Speakers must respond quickly and fluently in order to maintain the flow of dialogue, as a result speakers must access words very quickly. Access to words in our productive and receptive vocabularies is largely dependent on the word's relative frequency. The less common the word, the longer it takes to retrieve the word from memory (Marshalek, Lohman, & Snow, 1981). As a result, conversation relies on the use of common words, however, in writing there is far more time to search one's vocabulary (or thesaurus or dictionary) for the most appropriate and precise words.

Another difference between oral and written language is the amount of contextual information available to the communications. It is known that speech is a more contextualized form of communication than writing. Speech often relies on a variety of nonverbal and contextual clues.

When a person encounters a new word, its morphology is one of the main sources of information available. Morphemes are the smallest units of meaning. Knowledge of morphology plays a valuable role in word learning from context because the students can use the knowledge of a word's morphological structure to guess the meaning of a new word.

The ability to figure out a word's meaning by analyzing its component parts has been found to be significantly related to the achievement of word-reading (Carlisle, 1995, 2003; Champion, 1997), although instruction in morphological and contextual analysis does not necessarily lead to improved reading comprehension (Baumann et al., 2002).

A second within word factor is a word's part of speech. It seems that learning nouns would be easier than learning verbs. Instead, the ease with which one learns nouns, verbs, adjectives or adverbs from context seems to depend on the word chosen to represent each category.

The fourth factor-that of frequency- is one that has not been well researched in vocabulary learning from context. When word frequency has been considered, the effects of substituting rare words with more common ones has been the focus (e.g., Marks, Doctorow, & Wittrock, 1974; Wittrock, Marks, & Doctorow, 1975).

### 2.4 Developing word Consciousness

Word consciousness is an awareness of and interest in words, their meanings, and their power (Anderson & Nagy, 1992; Nagy & Scott, 2000; Graves & Watts-Taffe, 2002). Word consciousness involves knowing that some words and phrases can simultaneously feel good on the tongue and sound good to the ear. Students who are word conscious enjoy words and are eager to learn new words. Curiosity about words includes learning the histories of words such as knowing that words have come into English from many different languages including Hindi (e.g., dungaree, pundit, khaki), Russian (e.g., tundra), as well as from the better known sources of Latin and Greek. Word consciousness also refers to the knowledge and dispositions necessary for students to learn, appreciate and effectively use words. Word consciousness involves several types of metalinguistic awareness, including sensitivity to word parts and word order. Hence as Baumann, Kame'enui and Ash (2003) point out, teaching specific words is only one of three important instructional objectives in a comprehensive program of vocabulary instruction. The other two objectives are to "teach students to learn words independently" and to "help students to develop an appreciation for words and to experience enjoyment and satisfaction in their use".

#### 2.4.1 Word consciousness as metalinguistic awareness

Word consciousness is first of all a type of metalinguistic awareness, that is, the ability to reflect on and manipulate the units of language- in this case, words. However, the most basic discussion may be the concept of word as a term referring to identifiable units in written and spoken language.

There are several specific types of metalinguistic awareness that may contribute to word consciousness. One is morphological awareness: Awareness of word parts and how they contribute to the overall meaning of a word (Scott, & Nagy, 2009).

Syntactic awareness is the ability to reflect on and manipulate the order of words in a sentence. One way syntactic awareness may contribute to vocabulary growth is through its contribution to the process of inferring the meanings of new words from context (Scott, & Nagy, 2009).

## 2.5 Thesaurus reconciliation and integration

### 2.5.1 The need for reconciliation

Over the last 30 or more years many controlled languages, whether thesauri, classification schemes or subject heading lists, have been published, entirely independent of one another and, even within the same subject field, differing in structure, viewpoint and specialization. This lack of compatibility hampers the transfer of records between systems and searching across data bases. Reconciliation or integration of thesauri is a means of overcoming this incompatibility barrier.

The availability of standards for thesaurus construction can only help in a limited way to reduce incompatibilities between controlled languages. The main differences in controlled languages in the same field are as follows:

**Specificity:** One thesaurus may contain detailed and precise terminology, while another may consist mainly of broad terms to describe the same subjects.

**Exhaustivity:** One thesaurus may omit some areas of the subject field, while another thesaurus may cover all aspects.

**Compound terms:** One system may use pre-coordinated (i.e., compound) terms where another will express the same concepts by the combination of separate terms. If the thesaurus construction rules were followed closely on this point, the problem of compatibility would not be so common.

**Synonyms:** The choice of preferred forms among synonyms or quasi-synonymous concepts differs from thesaurus to thesaurus.

**Inter-relationships:** The hierarchies in thesauri may differ in structure and in emphasis. Hierarchical levels occurring in one thesaurus may be absent from another. Associatively-related terms are even more subject to change from one thesaurus to another, since inclusion of a relationship may be influenced by the subject interest or viewpoint of the particular organization for which the thesaurus is compiled. The pressing need for reconciliation was recognized in September 1995, when the International Society for Knowledge Organization (ISKO) addressed the problem by holding a Research Seminar on compatibility and integration (international, 1996). A number of recommendations were made at the seminar and subsequently published. It was recommended that there should be research into the principles and methodology of establishing concordances between controlled languages and into the benefits from, and requirements of, compatibility; that there should be emphasis on knowledge organization in the education of information specialists; that there should be international exchange on the principles of knowledge organization, with particular emphasis on cross-cultural comparison of ordering systems; and that an international inventory on software packages and other tools should be compiled for the maintenance of order systems and correspondence among them. It was also recommended that there should be long-range development of an open, multifunctional, multilingual integrated knowledge base of concepts and terminology that would preserve the integrity of the many sources on which it drew. This open system should allow many contributors and be available for end-users searching on the internet and other online services in multiple languages, independent of the language used in each database; it would also serve as a dictionary and as a source for the development of specialized controlled languages. Another recommendation was that auxiliary thesauri for geographic names, bibliographic forms and languages, and for names of persons and organizations should be developed. Finally it was recommended that criteria, methodologies, tools and software should be developed for the establishing, maintaining and harmonizing of monolingual and multilingual controlled languages. Soergel proposes a blueprint for SemWeb (Soergel, 1996b), a multifunctional, multilingual conceptual infrastructure for the internet, which would serve as a common integrated distributed knowledge base, through which there would be access to information about the concepts and terminology in the constituent controlled vocabularies and dictionaries.

## 2.6 Macrothesauri and Microthesauri

A situation where there is built-in compatibility between controlled languages occurs when a microthesaurus, a specialized thesaurus, is mapped onto, and is entirely integrated within, the hierarchical structure of some broader thesaurus, the macrothesaurus. For example, a specialized thesaurus on Pumps may be included within the fluid-engineering section of a general thesaurus on technology. Indexers in the pumps field would be able to draw on the macrothesaurus for broader fluid engineering and technology terms and for relevant terms in other specialized microthesauri integrated into the macrothesaurus. A macrothesaurus and its microthesauri may exist as one integrated system, or the macrothesaurus may exist as a separate entity.

## 2.7 Unified thesaurus

An alphabetically-merged vocabulary has limitations, in that it may overlook inexact and partial equivalences between terms if these are not indicated by the cross-reference structure of the merged vocabularies. For example, the term "Heat resistance" in language A may be close in meaning to "Thermal resistance" in language B, but this will go undetected if there are no relationships recorded in the synonym or related term fields. A method of discovering these equivalences is to plot the merged thesauri against a well-structured master classification. This will bring terms with similar meanings together at the same classmark, where the links between them will become apparent. The use of a master classification was suggested in a design study for the "integrated thesaurus of the social sciences" in 1981(Aitchison,1981b), but due to lack of funding the project was never implemented.

The method adopted for integration was first to create a classified structure for both thesauri, into which terms from each thesaurus would be slotted on reorganization.

This would facilitate comparison and analysis on a systematic basis. A high-level classification outline was agreed in September 1991 and later, in 1993, the classification was extended to a structure of about 500 concepts. The form of the classification was a systematic, polyhierarchical thesaurus in the English language.

By the end of 1994, the unification project was by no means but the terms of both thesauri had been reorganized according to the classification scheme. Initial efforts had concentrated on the preferred terms and their main hierarchical relationships. The validation of RT relationships of each pair of terms in the context of the new generic hierarchies were left until the next stage. At the higher levels the indexing terms and their BT/NT relationships had been harmonized to the point of becoming identical. At the lower levels considerable differences were still to be resolved. Once a unified thesaurus is completed and available for use in current indexing, the problem arises of how to deal with back files, which will not be fully retrievable by the new thesaurus. However there are a number of options to remove this problem. Some of them would be costly to apply, including re-indexing the back files and devising switching algorithms between old and new classmarks. A less expensive solution would be to abandon work on a fully integrated thesaurus, continue to index the databases as before with the two separate thesauri, and to switch search statements from one thesaurus to the other, using algorithms facilitated by the powerful master classification.

Through the reviewed literature, the researcher formulated the following research questions and hypotheses.

**RQ1.** Does teaching thesaurus have an effect on Iranian upper intermediate EFL Learners' listening comprehension ability?

**H01.** Teaching thesaurus has no significant effect on Iranian upper intermediate EFL learners' listening comprehension ability.

**RQ2.** Does sex difference have a significant effect on Iranian upper intermediate EFL Learners' listening comprehension ability via teaching thesaurus?

**H02.** Sex difference has no significant effect on Iranian upper intermediate EFL learners' listening comprehension ability via teaching thesaurus.

## 3. Methodology

The design of this study is quasi experimental. In fact, all approaches involve the control group and the manipulation of three basic characteristics: 1) the pre-test; 2) a treatment during the course of the study; and 3) a final measurement of the treatment (Post-test). In this research, there are two groups picked: the experimental group which receives the specific treatment and the control group who does not. The researcher chose randomly 40 students through a pool of 50, then divided them into two groups: experimental and control. An OPT test was implemented to check both groups proficiency levels. Then they took pre-test. During a two-week design, in two

individual 1-hour sessions, the researcher gave the experimental group, a list of prepared thesauri, and taught them during two individual sessions. Two weeks later a post-test was implemented. The scores of both exams were compared to see if the prepared hypotheses could be accepted or rejected. In this study, the data were gathered through a listening test. All data analyses were conducted by using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) to test the study's hypotheses, as this statistical tool has been utilized in numerous studies. The data was processed through ANCOVA to look at the impact of one independent variable on the dependent variable. An independent sample t-test was also done to see if there is a significant difference between male and female participants. Meanwhile, no one excluded during taking both pre- and post-tests. Through ANCOVA differences in the initial status of the groups can be removed statistically so that they can be compared as though their initial status had been equated. In this study, in order to investigate the research hypothesis "Teaching thesaurus has no significant effect on Iranian upper intermediate EFL learners' listening comprehension ability, the differences between mean scores of pre-test and post-test of control and experimental group were calculated through ANCOVA.

Analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) is particularly appropriate when subjects in two or more groups are found to differ on a pre-test or other initial variable. In this case, the effects of the pre-test and/or other relevant variables are investigated, and the resulting adjusted means of the post-test scores are compared. Through ANCOVA differences in the initial status of the groups can be removed statistically so that they can be compared as though their initial status had been equated. In this study, in order to investigate the research hypothesis "Teaching thesaurus has no significant effect on Iranian upper intermediate EFL learners' listening comprehension ability, the differences between mean scores of pre-test and post-test of control and experimental group were calculated through ANCOVA. The standard deviation for experimental group taken pre-test was less than that taken by control group, however in post-test, the standard deviation interval in two groups (experimental and control) was less than that in pre-test.

In order to examine the equality of variances, Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances was run. It tests the null hypothesis that the error variance of the dependent variable is equal across groups.

### 3.1 Participants

In the present study, the researcher is going to investigate the two different variables: the effectiveness of thesaurus and the listening comprehension ability in Iranian EFL learners. The pool of the study consists of 50 students totally that finally among them 40 upper intermediate students, both males and females are picked up as sample in this study. All are going to be upper intermediate EFL learners at Novin Goftehan, an English Institute placed in Tonekabon, Mazandaran, Iran. The participants were different in the range age from 20-35. First of all, they are assigned to take an OPT test, through it the researcher could check their proficiency levels appropriately, chosen correctly for the listening test. The participant pool is divided into two groups. 20 participants as the experimental group received a list of Thesaurus as a pre-test activity, used in the listening test and passages given, before the test. The other group (N=20) which is control group receives no treatment before taking the listening test. The former group is going to receive the list of difficult words and their Thesaurus lists two weeks before taking a listening test, since the researcher wants to avoid any risk of the so-called "testing Phenomenon", which refers to exposure in the immediate test positively affecting participants' scores (Glover-1989). They are going to be taught in 2 individual 1-hour sessions in accordance with the list given.

### 3.2 Instrumentation and Materials

Three research instruments used in the study included:

-OPT test: The first instrument used in the study was OPT (Oxford Placement Test) to assign the proficiency levels in participants of the study. The test includes 60 questions, in two parts, part one consists of questions 1-40 in the form of sign recognition, 3 close tests, and incomplete sentences, all the answers must be picked up through multiple-choices. In the second part which consists questions 41-60, there were displayed two close tests with multiple choice options to pick up the best answer fit in the blanks, and ten uncompleted sentences that the prepared blanks must be filled.

Pre-test: The second instrument was pre-test picked through IELTS Sets, Listen Here, it consists of three parts: A includes 5 matching question-answers, in B1 the participant was asked to match the conversations to the descriptions after hearing the three phone conversations, and in part B2, some given blanks in 8 incomplete sentences must be filled in.

Post-test: The third used instrument in the study was post-test, both groups were taken some other questions chosen from Listen Here, the test divided into 5 parts, A includes matching phrases with symbols, in B1, participants must listen to a weather forecast to use given symbols on the page next to the appropriate places on the map, then in part B2, they have to answer 7 questions, C1 holds 5 questions that the participants should write the answers after hearing the conversation held between two neighbors, and finally in C2, the students have to listen carefully and then choose the correct phrase from each pair in the box.

### 3.3 Procedure

On the first step, an OPT test was administered to 40 upper intermediate EFL Iranian learners. Next, they were randomly divided into two groups. Later, a treatment imposed during a two-week interval, between performing pre-test and post-test, two individual 1-hour sessions were set, in which the experimental group was given a list of thesauri chosen intentionally in Longman dictionary or other internet sources. Through teaching the prepared list contained thesaurus information in accordance with the chosen vocabularies, the researcher tried to have the experimental group with more and specific information related to the vocabularies in post-test taken. The researcher intended to investigate the effectiveness of thesaurus knowledge on Iranian Upper-intermediate learners' listening comprehension ability.

To test students' listening comprehension ability in two groups (experimental & control), there was used a book so-called "Listen Here", from IELTS series. The book includes 28 lessons, however for this study just the questions of two lessons were used which are affixed in Appendixes B & C. The researcher intentionally used these two lessons (12 & 27) which contain some key vocabularies with thesauri entries in Longman Dictionary. The researcher intended to test the introduced hypotheses, therefore by preparing a list of these vocabularies and teaching them to the participants (experimental group), the two offered hypotheses would be tested, if approved or rejected.

### 3.4 Data Analysis

All data analyses were conducted by using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) to test the study's hypotheses, as this statistical tool has been utilized in numerous studies. The data was processed through ANCOVA to look at the impact of one independent variable on the dependent variable. An independent sample t-test was also done to see if there is a significant difference between male and female participants. A descriptive statistical analysis was done on the collected data of OPT (Oxford Placement Test) test. The mean gained through OPT test implementation was 32. The mean scores gained through pre-test in both experimental and control group were alike, however after performing post-test, the interval revealed in experimental group who got the higher marks than control group.

## 4. Results

### 4.1 Descriptive analysis of the Data

A descriptive statistical analysis was done on the collected data of OPT (Oxford Placement Test) test. The results are shown in Table (4-1).

**Table 1:** Descriptive Statistics for the Proficiency Test

N	Mean	SD
90	32	10.32

This table shows the result obtained from the proficiency test, OPT. The mean and standard deviation are presented.

Table (4-2) shows the number of students who took the pre-test and post-test. It should be mentioned that no one excluded.

**Table 2:** Number of Students Participated in Pre-test and Post-test Cases

Included	Excluded	Total
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	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Pre-test*group	40	100%	0	0%	40	100%
Post-test*group	40	100%	0	0%	40	100%

Forty participants were selected for this study. They were divided into two groups, experimental and control. The descriptive statistical analysis done on the collected data of pre-test and post-test is shown in table (4-3).

**Table 3:** Descriptive statistical analysis done on the collected data of pre-test and post-test

Group		Pre-test	Post-test
Experimental	Mean	58.9	68.65
	N	20	20
	SD	4.8	4.7
Control	Mean	58.35	58.12
	N	20	20
	SD	5.64	5.2
Total	Mean	58.15	63.30
	N	40	40
	SD	5.216	7.121

#### 4.1.2 Inferential Analysis of the Data

Analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) is particularly appropriate when subjects in two or more groups are found to differ on a pre-test or other initial variable. In this case, the effects of the pre-test and/or other relevant variables are partialled out, and the resulting adjusted means of the post-test scores are compared. Through ANCOVA differences in the initial status of the groups can be removed statistically so that they can be compared as though their initial status had been equated. In this study, in order to investigate the research hypothesis "Teaching thesaurus has no significant effect on Iranian upper intermediate EFL learners' listening comprehension ability, the differences between mean scores of pre-test and post-test of control and experimental group were calculated through ANCOVA.

In order to examine the equality of variances, Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances was run. It tests the null hypothesis that the error variance of the dependent variable is equal across groups.

**Table 4:** Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variance

F	df1	df2	Sig
.25	1	38	.63

According to table (4.5) the calculated F is not significant. So there is equality of variances and ANCOVA can be run.

The data in table (4.6) are related to test of homogeneity of regression. Before running covariance, between-subjects effects of pre-test-group should be investigated.

**Table 5:** Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Source	Type III Sum of Square	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
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Corrected Model	1879.82	3	626.61	230.93	.00
Group (a)	17.86	1	17.86	6.6	.015
Pretest (b)	802.97	1	802	295.95	.00
Group*pretest(a*b)	.41	1	.41	.15	.7
Error	97.68	36	2.71		
Total	46200	40			

As table (4.5) shows, between –subjects effect (a\*b) is not significant ( $F=0.15$  ,  $Sig=0.7$ ). It shows that the data supports homogeneity of regression. Therefore, covariance should be run just for between – subjects effect of post-test and group to show whether mean scores of two groups are the same or not. The results of this analysis are demonstrated in table (4.7).

**Table 6:** Mean and Corrected Mean of listening Ability

Source	Posttest		Corrected Mean	
	M	SD	M	SE
Experimental	39.4	4.7	38.77	.36
Control	27.1	5.11	26.72	.36

Table (4.6) shows the corrected means of dependent variable listening ability. The data demonstrate that the means of the experimental group are upper than the control group.

Sum of analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) of listening ability in the experimental and the control group after eliminating between-subjects effect is demonstrated in table (4.7):

**Table 7:** Sum of analysis of covariance

Source	Type III Sum of Square	df	Mean Score	F	Sig	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	1879.415	2	939.71	354.48	.00	.95
Pretest	818.52	1	818.52	308.76	.00	.89
Group	805.42	1	805.48	303.84	.00	.89
Error	98.08	37	2.65			
Total	46200	40				

As it can be seen, the corrected model ( $f=00$ ,  $F=354.48$ ) is statistically significant. The results ( $F=303.84$  ,  $Sig=.00$ ,  $Eta=.89$ ) shows that there is a difference between two groups. It means that there is significant difference between experimental and control group. As a result the null hypothesis "Teaching thesaurus has no significant effect on Iranian upper intermediate EFL learners' listening comprehension ability" will be rejected, so it can be concluded that the students' listening ability can be improved by teaching thesaurus.

**Table 8:** independent t-test for male and female performance in listening

Levene's Test for Equality of Variances					t-test for Equality of Means	
F	Sig	t	df	sig (two-tailed)	mean difference Std.	Error Difference

.243	.628	-.298	18	.769	-.28283	.94995
		-.306	17.973	.763	-.28283	.92561

The results in this table indicate that there was not a significant difference between male and female performance in conversation.

## 4.2 Discussion

In the present study, there were introduced two hypotheses. The first hypothesis of this study was that teaching thesaurus has no significant effect on Iranian upper intermediate EFL learners' listening comprehension ability.

Based on the findings of this study, the results of ANCOVA analysis revealed that teaching thesaurus had significant impacts on Iranian EFL learners' listening ability. Those participants for whom thesaurus was taught performed better, and therefore the null hypothesis is rejected.

The second hypothesis of this study was Sex difference has no significant effect on Iranian upper intermediate EFL learners' listening comprehension ability via teaching thesaurus.

The results indicate that there is no significant difference between male and female participants in their performance. Therefore the second hypothesis was accepted.

The mean and standard deviation related to OPT test were revealed in table 4-1, in table 4-3 descriptive statistical analysis is done on the collected data of pre-test and post-test, it was shown in this table that the standard deviation difference between pre-test and post-test in experimental group was insignificant, however the comparison between two SDs in control group revealed a significant difference.

As table (4.5) shows, between -subjects effect ( $a*b$ ) is not significant ( $F=0.15$ ,  $Sig=0.7$ ). It shows that the data supports homogeneity of regression. Therefore, covariance should be run just for between - subjects effect of post-test and group to show whether mean scores of two groups are the same or not. The results of this analysis are demonstrated in table (4.7). As it can be seen in table 4.7, the corrected model ( $f=00$ ,  $F=354.48$ ) is statistically significant. The results ( $F=303.84$ ,  $Sig=.00$ ,  $Eta=.89$ ) shows that there is a difference between two groups. It means that there is significant difference between experimental and control group. As a result the null hypothesis "Teaching thesaurus has no significant effect on Iranian upper intermediate EFL learners' listening comprehension ability" will be rejected, so it can be concluded that the students' listening ability can be improved by teaching thesaurus.

Table 4.8 reveals the results of independent t-test for male and female performance in listening. The results in this table indicate that there was not a significant difference between male and female performance in conversation.

As Anna-ching showed in her studying titled as "The impact of vocabulary preparation on L2 listening comprehension, confidence and strategy use", regarding strategy use, when learners had more time to prepare the vocabulary, they tended to use parallel processing, meaning they used both bottom-up and top-down processing. When students had little time to commit the listed words to memory, they focused on global information, using top-down processing more frequently. In reality, it is difficult to make a clear-cut distinction between top-down and bottom-up processing. As Buck notes, "listening comprehension is the result of an interaction between a number of information sources . . . and listeners use whatever information they have available, or whatever information seems relevant to help them interpret what the speaker is saying" (Buck, 2001:3).

She also cited a quotation that "Providing students with sufficient time may help them become familiar with the pronunciation, relate the lexical items to the aural text, and have time to think about what strategies to use. As Underwood (1989:30) notes, "it is unfair to plunge students straight into the listening text . . . as this makes it extremely difficult for them to use the natural listening skills of matching what they hear with what they expect to hear and using their previous knowledge to make sense of it. So before listening, students should be 'tuned in' so they know what to expect, both in general and for particular tasks". With all these considerations, we have to bear in mind that our ultimate goal is to give learners the experience of success and to help them achieve the competence to understand spoken English.

Therefore, the result related to the first hypothesis of the study is in line with that one gained by Anna-ching.



## 5. Conclusion

While this study dealt specifically with the impact of thesaurus knowledge on EFL listening comprehension ability, the researcher tried to investigate the vocabulary knowledge, especially thesauri, as a vital input that affects listening comprehension. Through broadening vocabulary domain, learning more specific synonym and antonym sets, one can develop his/her vocabulary knowledge, which in learning listening skill as a receptive one, is effectively important. To strengthen listening comprehension, there are some effective factors that should be considered seriously, as it is explained in introduction of chapter one, but in accordance with this study, enlargement of vocabulary domain, especially on the side of Thesauri knowledge, can be an effective help for EFL Iranian learners to learn this vital skill amongst the other three, more effectively. Since listening comprehension as a receptive skill can be a very important input source to improve three other skills: speaking and writing as the productive skills as well as gaining more effective reading comprehension ability, as the sub-division in reading skill. As Saeed Mehrpour & Mohammad Rahimi (2010) revealed: based on the findings, it can be contended that knowledge of specific vocabulary plays a very important role in EFL learners' reading and listening comprehension, though it has a greater effect on reading comprehension than on listening comprehension.

Regarding pedagogical implications of the present study, the findings suggest that specific attention should be paid to teaching and learning specific vocabulary. In fact, although teaching general vocabulary would increase the likelihood of covering words which would show up in later texts, teaching specific vocabulary by topic, text, and discipline not only will add to the general vocabulary knowledge of the students but it will also help them in effective comprehension of the specific texts they are reading. This fact would underline the importance of direct approaches to teaching vocabulary, particularly in EFL contexts where learners do not usually have enough exposure to the language to learn words incidentally. Another pedagogical implication is that it is better to associate vocabulary teaching and learning with reading and listening comprehension tasks to make it more meaningful. Still another implication of the findings of the study concerns the validity of the reading and listening comprehension tests. In fact, in some cases what determines students' performance on such tests is knowledge of some key words appearing in the texts. This might threaten the validity of the results obtained from the listening and reading comprehension tests since the major goal of these tests is tapping learners' general comprehension, rather than measuring their knowledge of key words. Hence, it sounds logical to provide students with the meaning of such words in one way or another. Based on the findings of this study, the results of ANCOVA analysis revealed that teaching thesaurus had significant impacts on Iranian EFL learners' listening ability. Those participants for whom thesaurus was taught performed better. The results also indicate that there is no significant difference between male and female participants in their performance.

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# THE STUDY OF CORRELATION BETWEEN FLUENCY AND ACCURACY IN WRITING SKILL OF IRANIAN INTERMEDIATE AND ADVANCED EFL LEARNERS

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## ABSTRACT

This research studied the correlation between fluency and accuracy in writing skill of Iranian intermediate and advanced EFL learners. The purpose of the research was to investigate if someone has a high accuracy in L2 writing she or he has necessarily a high fluency too or not. Fifty participants were selected by assigning a WPT test. All participants took part in composition writing tests and examined their fluency, accuracy and overall writing score are measured. Pearson product moment correlation test was performed using SPSS 22 to answer the research questions to find the possible correlations between accuracy and fluency in writing skill of Iranian intermediate and advanced foreign language learners. Moreover, the possible relationship between overall writing scores and fluency scores was examined through running Pearson correlation test. The results of the research revealed that as the students grow in proficiency there is a better correlation between these two constructs. Therefore, it is better for teachers do not emphasize just accuracy for EFL writing; rather let the students write more, as much as they want. Consequently, the accuracy of learners will improve with their gradual progress in fluency. The study could have implications for English language teachers, learners and text book writers.

**KEYWORDS:** fluency, accuracy, writing skil, intermediate and advancedlevels, efllearners

## 1. Introduction

Writing is a very complex area that causes problems to the majority of students in both the native and the foreign language. Richards (1990) affirms: "the process of moving from concepts, thoughts and ideas to written text is complex; a written text represents the product of a series of complicated mental operations" (p.101). Many English teachers believe grammar and translation are the most important components in English education. In 1960, the books and materials for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) writing instruction were based on audio-lingual principles. In Iran, even to these days, the English classroom relies on the grammar translation and audio-lingual method. Writing is not just writing down the ideas but is how these ideas are presented or expressed effectively. This requires a number of skills like organization in the development of ideas and information; a high degree of accuracy in choosing the right words so that there is no ambiguity of meaning, and

also the right use of complex grammatical devices to focus and emphasize ideas. Besides, writing demands the writer to have careful choice of vocabulary and understand grammatical patterns.

Writing is one of the most difficult skills to test because of its complex nature. Many scholars including Harris (1996), Farhady (1980), McDonough (1985), Sako (1972), and Wilkinson (1989), assert that there are many elements to be considered in measuring the writing ability. These elements include form, content, grammar, vocabulary, mechanics (including spelling and punctuation), handwriting, accuracy, style, diction, relevance, originality, layout, coherence, cohesion, unity, organization, and logic. By its nature, writing is often a solo activity, done silently, involving physical effort and taking a lot of time. This may not make it attractive to students or teachers as a classroom activity. In addition to this, writing is difficult, even in the first language. There are linguistic, psychological and cognitive problems involved, making teaching and learning it a considerable challenge. Over the years writing skills have been divided to two approaches, direct assessment and indirect assessment. Direct assessments are those in which a composition is evaluated as a whole. Indirect assessments are based on the specific skills in writing through observation of different parts of writing such as grammar and structure and punctuation and so on (Cohen, 1994). With regard to communication activities, writing is also regarded as an act of communication which takes place between the writer and the reader in form of text, and if grammatical ability is viewed as an essential component in communicative competence which interacts with other components, then writing is one of the ways of persuading communicative competence to convey thought via text (Olshtain, 1991).

### 1.1 Review of the related literature

In the 1970s controlled approach to L2 writing was in its heyday. EFL writing classes adopted the audio-lingual method, though which students copied drills and made changes solely in person and tense, and teachers constantly correct grammar mistakes made by students (Reid, 2001). In the early 1980, the guided structural approach emerged in composition instruction. Writing was still language-based, structuring and combining sentences to produce a short piece of discourse (Reid, 2001).

The term audio-lingual approach is used to denote a specific pedagogical orientation which grew out of language-teaching programs for United States military personnel during the Second World War. Its basic distinction from the traditional approaches is that language is to be taught as speech rather than as writing and grammar as a living vehicle of communication rather than as a fossilized set of printed rules and paradigms.

Communicative Language Teaching as a broad approach to teaching, rather than as a teaching method with a clearly defined set of classroom practices. Historically, Communicative Language Teaching has been as a response to the Audio-lingual method and as an extension or development of the Notional-Functional syllabus unlike the Audio-lingual method, its primary focus is on helping learners create meaning rather than helping them develop perfectly grammatical structures or acquire native-like pronunciation. This means that successfully learning a foreign language is assessed in terms of how well learners have developed their communicative competence, which can loosely be defined as their ability to apply knowledge of a language with adequate proficiency to communicate. (Birds, Tirban, Milancoric, 2010, 46).

Since Selinker (1972) first introduced it, the concept of inter language has played an important role in helping us understand second language acquisition. More recently, (Larsen-Freeman, 2006) researchers have begun to view inter language as a system composed of sub-system, including, but not limited to, syntactic complexity, grammatical accuracy, fluency, and lexical variation, over the years, research has been done on these different sub-system to clarify what dimensions are important in inter language development.

Studies of second language L2 learner writing have used various measures of linguistic accuracy (which can include morphological, syntactic and lexical accuracy) to answer a variety of research questions. Several studies have suggested that holistic of written products are not a reliable indicator of language development or change. For Hyland (2002), however, a detector of using analytical metrics in assessing writing is that there is a little evidence to show that syntactic complexity or grammatical accuracy are either the principal features of writing development or the best measure of good writing. The greatest amount of research in developmental process seems to revolve sentence complexity: Hillocks (1986) argues that clause length is more indicative of maturing than sentence length, as immediate writers will often string together short, immature clauses. As writers mature, they are more likely to use more adjective clauses, more modifiers, and more complex nominal, as well as making more use of gerunds and infinitives. Thoughts tend to get consolidated into gradually fewer clauses and sentences, as writers increase their abilities to incorporate more ideas into a single clause. Focusing on accuracy

is exactly the wrong place to look for writing important as there is little evidence to show that either syntactic complexity or grammatical accuracy is the best measures of good writing. Many students can construct syntactically accurate sentences and yet are unable to produce appropriate written texts Hyland, (2002). Many researchers have focused on the execution of writing process in relation to the quality of writing. Over the last two decades, researchers have increasingly acknowledged that quality of writing process is reflected by the moment at which cognitive activities (such as planning, formulating, structuring, and revising) are applied during the writing process (Breetvelt, Van den Bergh, 1994).

Measures of fluency reported in literature are speed of production, length and time. Writing fluency has even been defined as “the rate of production of text” (Chenoweth & Hayes 2001: 94). The underlying idea is that the more proficient a writer is the faster he or she can retrieve vocabulary and linguistic chunks, which in turn decides the speed of transforming idea into text. The same point is also found in Wolf\_Quintero et al. (1998: 4). “Second language learners write more fluently, or write more in the same amount of time, as they become more proficient”. Based on the idea of speed as a crucial parameter, traditional offline measure fluency is to divide the number of words occurring in the final text by the total time spent on the task (i.e. words per minute). The same principle of length and speed apply to studies where writing fluency has been measured on the basis of text products only. Fluency is “the processing of language in real time” (Schmidt, 1992 p. 358), with a focus on “the primary of meaning” (Foster & Skehan, 1996, p. 304). Fillmore (1979) discussed fluent speakers in terms of how fast they talk, how coherent and complex their speech is, whether the speech is appropriate and how creative it is. The same can be said for second language writer, who may be considered fluent if they can produce written language rapidly, coherently, appropriately, and creatively. According to Wolf\_Quintero (1998) “fluency means that more words and more structures are accessed in a limited time, whereas a lack of fluency means that only a few words or structures are accessed”. As Larsen\_Freeman (1978) pointed: “subjects with a higher proficiency tended to write longer compositions\_ perhaps because of their fluency” (p.444). Another way to measure fluency is to consider the rate of production, which in writing is the number of words per minute (Arthur, 1979). Accuracy measures as Foster and Skehan (1996) defined accuracy as “freedom from error”, which can be measured by an analysis of target-like use, taking into account both the contexts and uses of the structure in question (Pica, 1983). Thus, accuracy is the ability to be free from errors while using language to communicate in either writing or speech. However, Thomas (1994, p. 328) criticized measures that are based on a comparison with the target language, preferring measures that analyze the inter language as a system. We feel that grammatical and lexical complexity measure do analyze the inter language system, and that the purpose of accuracy measure is precisely the comparison with target-like use.

Some researchers argue that holistic scoring focuses on what the writer does well rather than on the writer’s specific areas of weakness which is of more importance for decisions concerning promotion (Chaney, 1984). Researchers in both L1 and L2 writing generally agree that holistic scoring is reliable, provided guideline pertaining to rater training and rating session administration adhered to (Perkins, 1983; White, 1994).

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1 Materials

In this study the participants were composed of 50 female students studying in an intermediate and advanced levels in Kish institution. In order to select a homogenous group the researcher used a proficiency test (written proficiency test). This test is included in appendix A. Among these, 50 students who had one SD below the mean and one SD above the mean were selected, 25 students in intermediate level and 25 students in advanced level.

A WPT test was administered to determine the language proficiency of the learners. A WPT test allows test taker to show how well learners can write in a language. Data collection is conducted with two essays, the first essay at a limited time (30 minutes) for measuring fluency. And the second essay at a free time (50 minutes) for measuring accuracy.

A pilot study was administered to 17 students a few weeks before administration of the survey to check the reliability of the questionnaire items. To score participants' writing performance, two independent raters were assigned for the scoring process. Inter-rater reliability measured by the Pearson correlation was (.61), which was considered to be acceptable ( $P \leq .05$ ). In all cases Correlation Coefficient between the evaluation of the teacher and the researcher is higher than 0.05. Because the Correlation Coefficient is more than standard of 0.05, we can conclude that the raters agreed over the achievements of the participant.

## 2.2 Procedure

Participants in the study are 50 Iranian English language learners who are studying in private Institutes. They are randomly selected and taken a proficiency test to decide on their level and group homogeneity. The English language proficiency test is used to assess whether applicants to the undergraduate degree programmers possess a satisfactory level of writing proficiency in English. Test results will be taken into consideration by individual faculties before offers of entry are made. The study intends to investigate the correlation between accuracy and fluency in writing of Iranian Intermediate and advanced EFL learners. . In this study the participants were composed of 50 students studying in an intermediate and advanced levels in Kish institution. They were from three different classes. These students shared the same national and socio-cultural background whose mother tongue was Persian. The first class had 19 students and the second 20 and the third 18. Total number of the students in these three classes 57. In order to select a homogenous group the researcher used a proficiency test (written proficiency test). This test is included in appendix A. Among these, 25 students who had writing score of (3-4) are in intermediate level and 25 students who had writing score of (5-6) are in advanced level, So 50 students who had one SD below the mean and one SD above the mean were selected, 25 students in intermediate level and 25 students in advanced level. Their ages ranged between 18 to 25 years old. They were members of English classroom that have studied English for about 10 terms. Candidates wrote 250 words essays in which they will provide information and ideas on a topic of general interest. This section assesses the candidates' ability to express them fluently and accurately in writing an essay of 250 words in length on a topic of general and current interest. The learners who are intermediate and advanced levels were given one composition subject in a limited time about 30 minutes for measuring fluency and the second composition subject in a free time about 50 minutes for measuring accuracy.

## 3. Results

To score participants' writing performance, two independent raters were assigned for the scoring process. The measure of inter-rater reliability for the two raters, which was Pearson product-moment correlation, is reported in table 4.2. The Pearson correlation provided the overall agreement of the two primary raters. Inter-rater reliability measured by the Pearson correlation was (.61), which was considered to be acceptable ( $P \leq .05$ ).

**Table 1**  
*Descriptive Statistics for the Scores Given By the Two Raters*

Descriptive Statistics			
	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Rater A	14.7500	1.06904	15
Rater B	14.9167	1.07183	15

Table 4.1 represented the results of descriptive statistics for rater A and rater B with respect to the writing scores assigned by each rater. Values of the means and standard deviations for the two raters on writing test were given. The mean score of rater A (mean<sub>rater A</sub> = 14.75) was (.16) points lower than that of the rater's B (mean<sub>rater B</sub> = 14.91). Moreover, the degree of dispersion of the scores given by rater A (SD=1.06) was almost the same as the disparity of the scores given by rater B (SD= 1.07).

**Table 2**  
*Correlations between the two raters (inter-rater reliability)*

Correlations		
Rater A	Rater B	
	Pearson Correlation	.612*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.015
	N	15
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).		

**Table 3**  
*Descriptive Statistics for the Fluency and Accuracy Scores of the Intermediate Group*

Descriptive Statistics	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
(Intermediate group)accuracy	3.9700	.54160	25
(Intermediate group)fluency	4.4700	.73711	25

The descriptive table illustrated the sample size, mean, and standard deviation for both accuracy and fluency of the intermediate group. Accuracy and fluency scores of the intermediate group were (3.97) and (4.47) respectively. The two sets of scores varied some points around their average. The mean score for fluency scores was (.5) points higher than that of the accuracy scores.

In addition, the degree of dissimilarity of the scores for the accuracy scores (SD= .54) was slightly lower than the degree of scattering of scores around the mean score for the fluency scores (SD=.73).

**Table 4**  
*Correlations for the Accuracy and Fluency Scores of the Intermediate Group*

Correlations		(Intermediate group)fluency
(Intermediate group)accuracy	Pearson Correlation	.650**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	25

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

Pearson Correlation value indicated the strength of the relationship between the two variables (fluency and accuracy). Cohen's (1988) guidelines were employed to interpret the findings of the Pearson test .Cohen (1988, pp. 79–81) suggests the following guidelines:

**Table 5**  
*Cohen's (1988) Guidelines for Interpreting the Correlation Coefficient*

Interpretation	Correlation value
Small r	.10 to .29
Medium r	.30 to .49
Large r	.50 to 1.0

The above guidelines were applied to interpret the obtained ( $r=.65$ ) value. There was a large correlation between the two variables (above .5), suggesting quite a strong relationship between fluency and accuracy scores for the intermediate participants.

**Table 6**  
*Descriptive Statistics for the Fluency and Accuracy Scores of the Advanced Group*

Descriptive Statistics	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
(Advanced group) accuracy	4.7800	.86699	25
(Advanced group)fluency	5.0300	.60519	25

Table 4.6 depicted the values of means and standard deviations for the fluency and accuracy scores of the advanced group. The mean score of the accuracy (mean<sub>accuracy</sub> = 4.78) is (.25) points lower than that of the fluency scores (mean<sub>fluency</sub> = 5.03).

However, the standard deviation for the accuracy scores was slightly higher than that of the fluency scores (SD<sub>accuracy score</sub> = .86, SD<sub>control group</sub> = .60).

**Table 7**  
*Correlations for the Accuracy and Fluency Scores of the Advanced Group*



Correlations		
(Advanced group)accuracy		(Advanced group) fluency
	Pearson Correlation	.743**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	25

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

There was a strong, positive correlation between the two variables, ( $r = +.743$ ,  $n = 25$ ,  $p \leq .01$ ), with high scores of fluency associated with higher scores of accuracy for the advanced group.

**Table 8**  
*One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test*

One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test			Intermediate Overall	intermediate fluency	advance overall	advanced fluency
N			25	25	25	25
Normal Parameters a, b	Mean		14.9100	4.4700	17.2400	5.0300
	Std. Deviation		1.38233	.73711	1.09087	.60519
	Absolute		.163	.146	.157	.169
Most Extreme Differences	Positive		.163	.146	.152	.169
	Negative		-.105	-.124	-.157	-.141
Test Statistic			<b>.163</b>	<b>.146</b>	<b>.157</b>	<b>.169</b>
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)			.083	.179	.114	.062
a. Test distribution is Normal.						
b. Calculated from data.						

The distributions were based on data from 50 randomly sampled Iranian EFL learners. The normal distribution was indexed by the sample mean and sample standard deviation in Table 4.8. This sample of EFL learners averaged about ( $X=14.91$ ) for overall writing scores of the intermediate group and ( $X=17.24$ ) for the overall writing scores of the advanced group. Furthermore, the average score for the fluency of intermediate group equaled ( $X=4.47$ ) and that for the advanced group amounted to ( $X=5.03$ ).

The probability of the Z statistics ( $Z_{\text{overall writing test scores (intermediate)}} = .163$ , and  $Z_{\text{overall writing test scores (advanced)}} = .157$ ,  $Z_{\text{fluency of intermediate}} = .146$ ,  $Z_{\text{fluency of advanced}} = .169$ ) were all above (0.05), meaning that the normality of the sample distributions were met.

**Table 9**  
*Descriptive Statistics for the Overall Writing Test Scores and Fluency Scores of the Intermediate Group*

Descriptive Statistics	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
(Intermediate group)fluency	4.4700	.73711	25
(Intermediate group) Overall writing scores	14.9100	1.38233	25

For the composition test administered to the intermediate group, the mean scores for the fluency scores and overall writing scores were ( $X_{\text{fluency scores}} = 4.47$ ) and ( $X_{\text{overall writing scores}} = 14.91$ ) respectively. However, the standard deviation for the overall writing test scores was slightly higher than that of the fluency scores ( $SD_{\text{overall writing test scores}} = 1.38$ ,  $SD_{\text{fluency scores}} = .73$ ).

**Table 10**  
*Correlations for the Fluency and Overall Writing Scores of the Intermediate Group*

Correlations	Overall writing scores(Intermediate group)

(Intermediate group) fluency Scores	Pearson Correlation	.529**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.007
	N	25

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

**Table 11**  
*Descriptive Statistics for the Overall Writing Test Scores and Fluency Scores of the Advanced Group*

Descriptive Statistics			
	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
(Advanced group) fluency scores	5.0300	.60519	25
(Advance group) overall writing scores	17.2400	1.09087	25

For the composition test administered to the advanced group, the mean scores for the fluency scores and overall writing scores were ( $X_{\text{fluency scores}} = 5.03$ ) and ( $X_{\text{overall writing scores}} = 17.24$ ) respectively. Moreover, the degree of dispersion for the overall writing test scores was greater than that of the fluency scores ( $SD_{\text{overall writing test scores}} = 1.09$ ,  $SD_{\text{fluency scores}} = .60$ ).

**Table 12**  
*Correlations for the Fluency and Overall Writing Scores of the Advanced Group*

Correlations		
		Advance overall
Advance fluency	Pearson Correlation	.793**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	25

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

#### 4. Discussion

Many studies have been conducted to determine the relationship between accuracy and writing and the relationship between fluency and writing. The main concern of this research is the correlation between fluency and accuracy in writing skill of Iranian intermediate and advance EFL learners, covering the five components of structure, mechanics, vocabulary, fluency, and holistic scales.

Since the scores of writing skills of participants were given by two raters (the teacher and the researcher), estimating the inter-rater reliability was necessary to determine whether or not their given scores were reliable. The results in table 4.2 represents that the raters were in agreement over the achievements of the participants. This table shows the correlation between the scores of the raters and shows that these scores are reliable. in Wolf\_Quintero et al. (1998: 4). "Second language learners write more fluently, or write more me the same amount of time, as they become more proficient".

Concerning the first question, Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient test was run. Table 4.4 shows the results. The findings show that it is safe to conclude that there is a strong relationship between fluency and accuracy scores for the intermediate participants.

With regard to the second hypothesis there is not a significant correlation between accuracy and fluency in writing skill of Iranian' advance EFL learners. The results in table 4.7 show that there was a strong, positive correlation between the two variables, ( $r = +.743$ ,  $n = 25$ ,  $p \leq .01$ ), with high scores of fluency associated with higher scores of accuracy for the advanced participants, too. These findings are consistent with Larsen\_Freeman (1978) findings that "subjects with a higher proficiency tended to write longer compositions\_ perhaps because of their fluency". As the table 4.4 shows, Pearson Correlation value indicated the strength of the relationship between the two variables (fluency and accuracy).

With regard to the third hypothesis, a K-S test was run to the results of fluency scores and overall writing scores of the two groups (intermediate and advanced). The results in table 4.10 show that there was a small, positive correlation between the two variables, ( $r = +.529$ ,  $n = 25$ ,  $p \leq .01$ ), with high scores of fluency associated with higher scores of overall writing scores for the intermediate participants.

The results in table 4.12 show that there was a strong, positive correlation between the two variables, ( $r = +.793$ ,  $n = 25$ ,  $p \leq .01$ ), with high scores of fluency associated with higher scores of the overall writing scores for the advanced participants.

The concept of linguistic accuracy in the learners' language dominated as an important aim in teaching right up to the 1960s, the gradual working of this concept therefore paved the way for other aims, such as fluency. However, it was not until the second half of the 1970s that a communicative concept of proficiency gradually replaced the more restricted linguistic concept. Nearly and very influential debate about the conflict between the concepts 'accuracy' and 'fluency' as aims in teaching was started by Christopher Brumfit in 1984 (Brumfit 1984). The idea is that components of knowledge of various kinds have to go through the box 'fluency' to become performance or language in use Farch, Haastруп and Phillipson 1984, p.69).

Overall, as the students grow in proficiency there is a better correlation between these two constructs. Therefore, it is better for teachers do not emphasize just accuracy for EFL writing; rather let the students write more, as much as they want. Consequently, the accuracy of learners will improve with their gradual progress in fluency.

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## Appendix A

### English language written proficiency test

**Candidate name:**

**Date:**

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? With the help of technology Life is easier today than in the past. Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer.

## Appendix B

### English language written proficiency test

**Candidate name:**

**Date:**

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Telephones and email have made communication between people less personal. Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer".

## Appendix C

**Candidate name:**

**Date:**

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Watching television is bad for children. Use specific details and examples to support your answer.

# THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS OF LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

## "A LIBRARY RESEARCH"

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### ABSTRACT

Language development is a process starting early in human life. Infants start without language, yet by 4 months of age, babies can distinguish speech sounds and engage in babbling. Some research has shown that the earliest learning begins in utero when the fetus starts to recognize the sounds and speech patterns of its mother's voice. Usually, productive language is considered to begin with a stage of preverbal communications in which infants use gestures and vocalizations to make their intents known to others. According to a general principle of development, new forms then take over old functions, so that children learn words to express the same communicative functions which they had already expressed by preverbal means (Kennison, 2013).

Language acquisition is the process by which humans acquire the capacity to perceive and comprehend language, as well as to produce and use words and sentences to communicate. Language acquisition is one of the quintessential human traits (Friederici, 2011), because non-humans do not communicate by using language (Kosslyn, Osherson, Daniel, 1995). Language acquisition usually refers to first-language acquisition, which studies infants' acquisition of their native language. This is distinguished from second-language acquisition, which deals with the acquisition in both children and adults of additional languages.

**KEYWORDS:** Child language, First language acquisition, Language Development, Theoretical framework

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Language development is thought to proceed by ordinary processes of learning in which children acquire the forms, meanings and uses of words and utterances from the linguistic input. The method in which we develop language skills is universal. However, the major debate is how the rules of *syntax* are acquired. There are two major approaches to syntactic development, an empiricist account by which children learn all syntactic rules from the linguistic input, and a *nativist* approach by which some principles of syntax are innate and are transmitted through the human genome.

#### 1.1 *Nativist theory*

The *nativist theory*, proposed by Noam Chomsky, argues that language is a unique human accomplishment. Chomsky says that all children have what is called an innate language acquisition device (LAD). Theoretically, the LAD is an area of the brain that has a set of universal syntactic rules for all languages. This device provides

children with the ability to construct novel sentences using learned vocabulary. Chomsky's claim is based upon the view that what children hear - their linguistic input - is insufficient to explain how they come to learn language. He argues that linguistic input from the environment is limited and full of errors. Therefore, nativists assume that it is impossible for children to learn linguistic information solely from their environment. However, because children possess this LAD, they are in fact, able to learn language despite incomplete information from their environment. This view has dominated linguistic theory for over fifty years and remains highly influential, as witnessed by the number of articles in journals and books.

### 1.2 Empiricist theory

The empiricist theory suggests, contra Chomsky, that there is enough information in the linguistic input children receive and therefore, there is no need to assume an innate language acquisition device exists (see above). Rather than a LAD which evolved specifically for language, empiricists believe that general brain processes are sufficient enough for language acquisition. During this process, it is necessary for the child to be actively engaged with their environment. In order for a child to learn language, the parent or caregiver adopts a particular way of appropriately communicating with the child; this is known as child-directed speech (CDS). CDS is used so that children are given the necessary linguistic information needed for their language. Empiricism is a general approach and sometimes goes along with the interactionist approach. Statistical language acquisition, which falls under empiricist theory, suggests that infants acquire language by means of pattern perception.

#### 1.2.1 Social interactionist theory

Social interactionist theory is an explanation of language development emphasizing the role of social interaction between the developing child and linguistically knowledgeable adults. It is based largely on the socio-cultural theories of Soviet psychologist Lev Vygotsky, and made prominent in the Western world by Jerome Bruner.

Unlike other approaches, it emphasizes the role of feedback and reinforcement in language acquisition. Specifically, it asserts that much of a child's linguistic growth stems from modeling of and interaction with parents and other adults, who very frequently provide instructive correction (Moerk, 1994). It is thus somewhat similar to behaviorist accounts of language, though it differs substantially in that it posits the existence of a social-cognitive model and other mental structures within children (a sharp contrast to the "black box" approach of classical behaviorism).

Another key idea within the theory of social interactionism is that of the zone of proximal development. Briefly, this is a theoretical construct denoting the set of tasks a child is capable of performing with guidance, but not alone (Vygotskii, 1935). As applied to language, it describes the set of linguistic tasks (proper syntax, suitable vocabulary usage, etc.) a child cannot carry out on their own at a given time, but can learn to carry out if assisted by an able adult.

#### 1.2.2 Behaviorist theory

An older empiricist theory, the behaviorist theory proposed by B. F. Skinner suggested that language is learned through operant conditioning, namely, by imitation of stimuli and by reinforcement of correct responses. This perspective has not been widely accepted at any time, but by some accounts, is experiencing resurgence. New studies use this theory now to treat individuals diagnosed with autism spectrum disorders. Additionally, Relational Frame Theory is growing from the behaviorist theory which is important for Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (Roediger, 2004). Some empiricist theory accounts today use behaviorist models (Ramscar, Yarlett, 2007).

### 1.3 Relational frame theory

The relational frame theory (RFT) (Hayes, Barnes-Holmes, Roche, 2001), provides a wholly selectionist/learning account of the origin and development of language competence and complexity. Based upon the principles of Skinnerian behaviorism, RFT posits that children acquire language purely through interacting with the environment. RFT theorists introduced the concept of functional contextualism in language learning, which emphasizes the importance of predicting and influencing psychological events, such as thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, by focusing on manipulable variables in their context. RFT distinguishes itself from Skinner's work by identifying and defining a particular type of operant conditioning known as *derived relational responding*, a learning

process that, to date, appears to occur only in humans possessing a capacity for language. Empirical studies supporting the predictions of RFT suggest that children learn language via a system of inherent reinforcements, challenging the view that language acquisition is based upon innate, language-specific cognitive capacities.

#### 1.4 Emergentist theory

Emergentist theories, such as MacWhinney's competition model, posit that language acquisition is a cognitive process that emerges from the interaction of biological pressures and the environment. According to these theories, neither nature nor nurture alone is sufficient to trigger language learning; both of these influences must work together in order to allow children to acquire a language. The proponents of these theories argue that general cognitive processes subserve language acquisition and that the end result of these processes is language-specific phenomena, such as word learning and grammar acquisition. The findings of many empirical studies support the predictions of these theories, suggesting that language acquisition is a more complex process than many believe (MacWhinney, ed. 1999).

#### 1.5 Piaget's theory of cognitive development

Other relevant theories about language development include Piaget's theory of cognitive development, which considers the development of language as a continuation of general cognitive development (Clibbens, 1993), and Vygotsky's social theories that attribute the development of language to an individual's social interactions and growth (Schneider, Watkins, 1996).

#### 1.6 Language Acquisition Device (LAD)

Evolutionary biologists are skeptical of the claim that syntactic knowledge is transmitted in the human genome. However, many researchers claim that the ability to acquire such a complicated system is unique to the human species. Non-biologists also tend to believe that our ability to learn spoken language may have been developed through the evolutionary process and that the foundation for language may be passed down genetically. The ability to speak and understand human language requires speech production skills and abilities as well as multisensory integration of sensory processing abilities.

One hotly debated issue is whether the biological contribution includes capacities specific to language acquisition, often referred to as universal grammar. For fifty years, linguist Noam Chomsky has argued for the hypothesis that children have innate, language-specific abilities that facilitate and constrain language learning. In particular, he has proposed that humans are biologically prewired to learn language at a certain time and in a certain way, arguing that children are born with a Language Acquisition Device (LAD), (Santrock, 2007). However, since he developed the Minimalist Program, his latest version of theory of syntactic structure, Chomsky has reduced the elements of universal grammar which are in his opinion to be prewired in humans to just the principle of recursion, thus voiding most of the nativist endeavor (Hauser, Chomsky, Fitch, 2002).

Researchers who believe that grammar is learned rather than innate, have hypothesized that language learning results from general cognitive abilities and the interaction between learners and their human interactants. It has also recently been suggested that the relatively slow development of the prefrontal cortex in humans may be one reason that humans are able to learn language, whereas other species are not (Thompson-Schill, Ramscar, Chrysikou 2009) and (Ramscar, Gitcho, 2007). Further research has indicated the influence of the FOXP2 gene (Scharff, Petri, 2011).

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Language development

Language development and processing begins before birth. When children are still in utero, evidence has shown that there is language development occurring antepartum. DeCasper and Spence, had performed a study in 1986 by having mothers read aloud during the last few weeks of pregnancy. When the infants were born, they were then tested. They were read aloud a story while sucking on a pacifier; the story was either the story read by the mother when the infant was in utero or the infants were read a new story. The pacifier used was able to determine the rate of sucking that the infant was performing. When the story that the mother had read before was heard, the sucking of the pacifier was modified. This did not occur during the story that the infant had not heard before. The results for this experiment had shown that the infants were able to recognize what they had

heard in utero, providing insight that language development had been occurring in the last six weeks of pregnancy. Throughout the first year of life, infants are unable to communicate with language. Instead during this time, infants communicate with gestures. This phenomenon is known as prelinguistic gestures, which are nonverbal ways that infants communicate that also had a plan backed with the gesture. Examples of these could be pointing at an object, tugging on the shirt of a parent to get the parent's attention, etc. (Harding, Bruner, 1983) devised the major criteria that come along with the behavior of prelinguistic gestures and their intent to communicate. There are three major criteria that go along with a prelinguistic gesture and they are waiting, persistence, and ultimately, development of alternative plans. This process usually occurs around 8 months of age, where an appropriate scenario may be of a child tugging on the shirt of a parent to wait for the attention of the parent who would then notice the infant, which causes the infant to point to something they desire. This would describe the first two criteria. The development of alternative plans may arise if the parent does not acknowledge what the infant wants; the infant may entertain itself to satisfy the previous desire.

When children reach about 15–18 months of age, language acquisition takes off. There is a surge in word production and this comes from the growth of the cortex during this stage in life. Infants are beginning to learn the words that form a sentence and within the sentence, the word endings can be interpreted. Elissa Newport and colleagues (1999) found that humans learn first about the sounds of a language, and then move on to how to speak the language. This shows how infants learn the end of a word and know that a new word is being spoken. From this step, infants are then able to determine the structure of a language and word.

It seems as if during the early years of language development females exhibit an advantage over males of the same age. When infants between the ages of 16 to 22 months were observed interacting with their mothers, a female advantage was obvious. The females in this age range showed more spontaneous speech production than the males and this finding was not due to mothers speaking more with daughters than sons (Huttenlocher, Haight, Bryk, Seltzer, Lyons, 1991). In addition, boys between 2 and 6 years as a group did not show higher performance in language development over their girl counterparts on experimental assessments. In studies using adult populations, 18 and over, it seems that the female advantage may be task dependent. Depending on the task provided, a female advantage may or may not be present (Bornstein, 2004).

The capacity to successfully use language requires one to acquire a range of tools including *phonology*, *morphology*, *syntax*, *semantics*, and an extensive *vocabulary*. Language can be vocalized as in *speech* or manual as in *sign*. The human language capacity is represented in the brain. Even though the human language capacity is finite, one can say and understand an infinite number of sentences, which is based on a syntactic principle called *recursion*. Evidence suggests that every individual has three recursive mechanisms that allow sentences to go indeterminately. These three mechanisms are: *relativization*, *complementation* and *coordination* (Lightfoot, 2010). Furthermore, there are actually two main guiding principles in first-language acquisition, that is, *speech perception* always precedes *speech production* and the gradually evolving system by which a child learns a language is built up one step at a time, beginning with the distinction between individual *phonemes* (Fry, 1977).

In a more modern context, empiricists, like *Hobbes* and *Locke*, argued that knowledge (and, for Locke, language) emerge ultimately from abstracted sense impressions. These arguments lean towards the "nurture" side of the argument - that language is acquired through sensory experience. This led to *Carnap's* *Aufbau*, an attempt to learn all knowledge from sense datum, using the notion of "remembered as similar" to bind these into clusters, which would eventually map into language (Palmer 2009).

Proponents of *Behaviorism* argued that language may be learned through a form of *operant conditioning*. In *B. F. Skinner's Verbal Behaviour* (1957), he suggested that the successful use of a sign, such as a word or *lexical unit*, given a certain stimulus, *reinforces* its "momentary" or contextual probability. Since *operant conditioning* is contingent on reinforcement by rewards, a child would learn that a specific combination of sounds stands for a specific thing through repeated successful associations made between the two. A "successful" use of a sign would be one in which the child is understood (for example, a child saying "up" when he or she wants to be picked up) and rewarded with the desired response from another person, thereby reinforcing the child's understanding of the meaning of that word and making it more likely that he or she will use that word in a similar situation in the future. Some *Empiricist* theories of language acquisition include the *statistical learning theory*, Charles F. Hockett of language acquisition, *Relational Frame Theory*, *functionalist linguistics*, *social interactionist theory*, and *usage-based language acquisition*.

Skinner's behaviourist idea was strongly attacked by *Noam Chomsky* in a review article in 1959, calling it "largely mythology" and a "serious delusion" (Chomsky, Skinner, 1959). Arguments against Skinner's idea of



language acquisition through operant conditioning include the fact that children often ignore language corrections from adults. Instead, children typically follow a pattern of using an irregular form of a word correctly, making errors later on, and eventually returning to the proper use of the word. For example, a child may correctly learn the word "gave" (past tense of "give"), and later on use the word "gived". Eventually, the child will typically go back to learning the correct word, "gave". This pattern is difficult to attribute to Skinner's idea of operant conditioning as the primary way that children acquire language. Chomsky argued that if language were solely acquired through behavioral conditioning, children would not likely learn the proper use of a word and suddenly use the word incorrectly (Harley, 2010). Chomsky believed Skinner failed to account for the central role of syntactic knowledge in language competence. Chomsky also rejected the term "learning," which Skinner used to claim that children "learn" language through operant conditioning (Harris, 1992). Instead, Chomsky argued for a mathematical approach to language acquisition, based on a study of syntax.

A major debate in understanding language acquisition is how these capacities are picked up by infants from the linguistic input (Kennison, 2013). Input in the linguistic context is defined as "All words, contexts, and other forms of language to which a learner is exposed, relative to acquired proficiency in first or second languages". Nativists such as Noam Chomsky have focused on the hugely complex nature of human grammars, the finiteness and ambiguity of the input that children receive, and the relatively limited cognitive abilities of an infant. From these characteristics, they conclude that the process of language acquisition in infants must be tightly constrained and guided by the biologically given characteristics of the human brain. Otherwise, they argue, it is extremely difficult to explain how children, within the first five years of life, routinely master the complex, largely tacit grammatical rules of their native language (Sakai, 2005).

Other scholars, however, have resisted the possibility that infants' routine success at acquiring the grammar of their native language requires anything more than the forms of learning seen with other cognitive skills, including such mundane motor skills as learning to ride a bike. In particular, there has been resistance to the possibility that human biology includes any form of specialization for language. This conflict is often referred to as the "nature and nurture" debate. Of course, most scholars acknowledge that certain aspects of language acquisition must result from the specific ways in which the human brain is "wired" (a "nature" component, which accounts for the failure of non-human species to acquire human languages) and that certain others are shaped by the particular language environment in which a person is raised (a "nurture" component, which accounts for the fact that humans raised in different societies acquire different languages). The as-yet unresolved question is the extent to which the specific cognitive capacities in the "nature" component are also used outside of language.

## 2.2 brain lateralization

It is currently believed that in regards to brain lateralization males are left lateralized, while females are bilateralized. Studies on patients with unilateral lesions have provided evidence that females are in fact more bilateralized with their verbal abilities. It seems that when a female has experienced a lesion to the left hemisphere she is better able to compensate for this damage than a male can. If a male has a lesion in the left hemisphere his verbal abilities are greatly impaired in comparison to a control male of the same age without that damage (Frith, Uta, Vargha-Khadem, Faraneh, 2001). However, these results may also be task dependent as well as time dependent (Kansaku, Kitazawa, 2001).

## 2.3 Environmental influences

The environment a child develops in has influences on language development. The environment provides language input for the child to process. Speech by adults to children helps provide the child with correct language usage repetitively. Environmental influences on language development are explored in the tradition of social interactionist theory by such researchers as Bruner, Gopnik, Meltzoff, Ninio, Pea, Snow, Moerk and Tomasello. Bruner who laid the foundations of this approach in the 1970s emphasized that adult "scaffolding" of the child's attempts to master linguistic communication is an important factor in the developmental process.

One component of the young child's linguistic environment is child-directed speech (also known as baby talk or motherese), which is language spoken in a higher pitch than normal with simple words and sentences. Although the importance of its role in developing language has been debated, many linguists think that it may aid in capturing the infant's attention and maintaining communication (Mani, Plunkett, 2010). When children begin to communicate with adults, this motherese speech allows the child the ability to discern the patterns in language and to experiment with language.

Throughout research done, it is concluded that children exposed to extensive vocabulary and complex grammatical structures more quickly develop language and also have a more accurate syntax than children raised in environments without complex grammar exposed to them. With motherese, the mother talks to the child and responds back to the child, whether it be a babble the child made or a short sentence. While doing this, the adult is prompting the child to continue communicating which may help a child develop language sooner than children raised in environments where communication is not fostered.

Child-directed speech will concentrate on small core vocabulary, here and now topics, exaggerated facial expressions and gestures, frequent questioning, paralinguistic changes, and verbal rituals (Owens, Robert, 2012). An infant is least likely to produce vocalizations when changed, fed, or rocked. The infant will more likely produce vocalizations when a nonverbal behavior such as touching or smiling is directed at the infant.

Child-directed speech will also catch the child's attention and in situations where words for new objects are being expressed to the child this form of speech may help the child recognize the speech cues and the new information provided. Data shows that children raised in highly verbal families had higher language scores than those children raised in low verbal families. Continuously hearing complicated sentences throughout language development increases the child's ability to understand these sentences and then to use complicated sentences as they develop. Studies have shown that students enrolled in high language classrooms have two times the growth in complex sentences usage than students in classrooms where teachers do not frequently use complex sentences.

Adults use strategies other than child-directed speech like recasting, expanding, and labeling:

- **Recasting** is rephrasing something the child has said, perhaps turning it into a question or restating the child's immature utterance in the form of a fully grammatical sentence. For example, a child saying "cookie now" a parent may respond with "Would you like a cookie now?"
- **Expanding** is restating, in a linguistically sophisticated form, what a child has said. For example, a child may say "car move road" and the parent may respond "A car drives on the road."
- **Labeling** is identifying the names of objects (Santrock, 2007). If a child points to an object such as a couch the mother may say "couch" in response. Labeling can also be characterized as referencing (Owens, Robert, 2012).

Some language development experts have characterized child directed speech in stages. Primarily, the parents will use repetition and also variation to maintain the infant's attention. Secondly, the parent will simplify speech to help in language learning. Third, any modifications in speech will maintain the responsiveness of the child. These modifications develop into a conversation that provides context for the development (Owens, Robert, 2012).

#### 2.4 Cultural and socioeconomic influences

While most children throughout the world develop language at similar rates and without difficulty, cultural and socioeconomic differences have been shown to influence development. An example of cultural differences in language development can be seen when comparing the interactions of mothers in the United States with their infants with mothers in Japan. Mothers in the United States use more questions, are more information-oriented, and use more grammatically correct utterances with their 3-month-olds. Mothers in Japan, on the other hand, use more physical contact with their infants and more emotion-oriented, nonsense, and environmental sounds, as well as baby talk, with their infants. These differences in interaction techniques reflect differences in "each society's assumptions about infants and adult-to-adult cultural styles of talking." (Owens, Robert, 2012).

Specifically in North American culture, maternal race, education, and socioeconomic class influence parent-child interactions in the early linguistic environment. When speaking to their infants, mothers from middle class "incorporate language goals more frequently in their play with their infants," and in turn, their infants produce twice as many vocalizations as lower class infants (Owens, Robert, 2012). Mothers from higher social classes who are better educated also tend to be more verbal, and have more time to spend engaging with their infants in language. Additionally, lower class infants may receive more language input from their siblings and peers than from their mothers.

## 2.5 Social developments

It is crucial that children are allowed to socially interact with other people who can vocalize and respond to questions. For language acquisition to develop successfully, children must be in an environment that allows them to communicate socially in that language.

There are a few different theories as to why and how children develop language. The most popular – and yet heavily debated – explanation is that language is acquired through imitation. The two most accepted theories in language development are *psychological* and *functional*. Psychological explanations focus on the mental processes involved in childhood language learning. Functional explanations look at the social processes involved in learning the first language.

There are four main components of language:

- **Phonology** involves the rules about the structure and sequence of speech sounds.
- **Semantics** consists of vocabulary and how concepts are expressed through words.
- **Grammar** involves two parts.
  - The first, **syntax**, is the rules in which words are arranged into sentences.
  - The second, **morphology**, is the use of grammatical markers (indicating tense, active or passive voice etc.).
- **Pragmatics** involves the rules for appropriate and effective communication. Pragmatics involves three skills:
  - using language for greeting, demanding etc.,
  - changing language for talking differently depending on who it is you are talking to;
  - following rules such as turn taking, staying on topic.

Each component has its own appropriate developmental periods.

### 2.5.1 Phonological development

From shortly after birth to around one year, the baby starts to make speech sounds. At around two months, the baby will engage in cooing, which mostly consists of vowel sounds. At around four months, cooing turns into babbling which is the repetitive consonant-vowel combination. Babies understand more than they are able to say. In this **0-8 months** range, the child is engaged in vocal play of vegetative sounds, laughing, and cooing.

Once the child hits the **8-12 month** range the child engages in canonical babbling i.e. dada as well as variegated babbling. This jargon babbling with intonation contours the language being learned.

From **12-24 months**, babies can recognize the correct pronunciation of familiar words. Babies will also use phonological strategies to simplify word pronunciation. Some strategies include repeating the first consonant-vowel in a multi-syllable word ('TV'--> 'didi') or deleting unstressed syllables in a multi-syllable word ('banana'--> 'nana'). Within this first year, two word utterances and two syllable words emerge. This period is often called the **holophrastic** stage of development, because one word conveys as much meaning as an entire phrase. For instance, the simple word "milk" can imply that the child is requesting milk, noting spilled milk, sees a cat drinking milk, etc (Fernandez, 2011).

By **24-30 months** awareness of rhyme emerges as well as rising intonation.

By **36-60 months**, phonological awareness continues to improve as well as pronunciation.

By **6-10 years**, children can master syllable stress patterns which helps distinguish slight differences between similar words.

### 2.5.2 Semantic development

From birth to one year, comprehension (the language we understand) develops before production (the language we use). There is about a 5 month lag in between the two. Babies have an innate preference to listen to their mother's voice. Babies can recognize familiar words and use preverbal gestures.

Within the first **12-18 months** semantic roles are expressed in one word speech including agent, object, location, possession, nonexistence and denial. Words are understood outside of routine games but the child still needs contextual support for lexical comprehension (Brandone, Salkind, Golinkoff, Michnick, Hirsh-Pasek, 2006).

**18-24 months** Prevalent relations are expressed such as agent-action, agent-object, and action-location. Also, there is a vocabulary spurt between 18-24 months, which includes fast mapping. Fast mapping is the babies' ability to learn a lot of new things quickly. The majority of the babies' new vocabulary consists of object words (nouns) and action words (verbs).

**30-36 months** The child is able to use and understand why question and basic spatial terms such as in, on or under.

**36-42 months** There is an understanding of basic color words and kinship terms. Also, the child has an understanding of the semantic relationship between adjacent and conjoined sentences, including casual and contrastive.

**42-48 months** When and how questions are comprehended as well as basic shape words such as circle, square and triangle.

**48-60 months** Knowledge of letter names and sounds emerges, as well as numbers.

By **3-5 years**, children usually have difficulty using words correctly. Children experience many problems such as under-extensions, taking a general word and applying it specifically (for example, 'blankie') and overextensions, taking a specific word and applying it too generally (example, 'car' for 'van'). However, children coin words to fill in for words not yet learned (for example, someone is a cooker rather than a chef because a child will not know what a chef is). Children can also understand metaphors.

From **6-10 years**, children can understand meanings of words based on their definitions. They also are able to appreciate the multiple meanings of words and use words precisely through metaphors and puns. Fast mapping continues. Within these years, children are now able to acquire new information from written texts and can explain relationships between multiple meaning words. Common idioms are also understood.

### 2.5.3 Grammatical development

From **1-2 years**, children start using telegraphic speeches, which are two word combinations, for example 'wet diaper'. Brown (1973) observed that 75% of children's two-word utterances could be summarized in the existence of 11 semantic relations:

- Attributive: 'Big house'
- Agent-action: 'Daddy hit'
- Action-object: 'Hit ball'
- Agent-object: 'Daddy ball'
- Nominative: 'That ball'
- Demonstrative: 'There ball'
- Recurrence: 'More ball'
- Non-existence: 'All-gone ball'
- Possessive: 'Daddy chair'
- Entity + Locative: 'book table'
- Action + Locative: 'go store'

### Eleven important early semantic relations and examples based on Brown 1973

At around **3 years**, children engage in simple sentences, which are 3 word sentences. Simple sentences follow adult rules and get refined gradually. Grammatical morphemes get added as these simple sentences start to emerge.

By **3-5 years**, children continue to add grammatical morphemes and gradually produce complex grammatical structures.

By **6-10 years**, children refine the complex grammatical structures such as passive voice.

### 2.5.4 Pragmatics development

From birth to one year, babies can engage in joint attention (sharing the attention of something with someone else). Babies also can engage in turn taking activities.

- By **1-2 years**, they can engage in conversational turn taking and topic maintenance.

- By **age 3–5**, children can master illocutionary intent, knowing what you meant to say even though you might not have said it and turnabout, which is turning the conversation over to another person.
- By **age 6–10**, shading occurs, which is changing the conversation topic gradually. Children are able to communicate effectively in demanding settings, such as on the telephone.

### 2.6 Bilingualism and language development

There is a large debate regarding whether or not bilingualism is truly beneficial to children. Parents of children often view learning a second language throughout elementary and high school education beneficial to the child (Bialystok, Craik, Luk, 2012). Another perspective dictates that the second language will just confuse the child and prevent them from mastering their primary language. (Blumenfeld, Faroqi-Shah, 2009). Studies have shown that American bilingual children have greater cognitive flexibility, better perceptual skills and tend to be divergent thinkers than monolingual children between the ages of five to ten. Better executive functioning skills are likely because bilingual children have to choose one language to speak while actively suppressing the other. This builds stronger selective attention and cognitive flexibility because these skills are being exercised more (Poulin-Dubois, Blayne, Coutya, Bialystok, 2011). In addition, bilingual children have a better understanding of universal language concepts, such as grammar, because these concepts are applied in multiple languages. However, studies comparing Swedish-Finnish bilingual children and Swedish monolingual children between the ages of five to seven have also shown that the bilingual children have a smaller vocabulary than monolingual children. (Korkman, Stenroos, Mickos, Westman, Ekholm, Byring, 2012). In another study throughout America, elementary school English-monolingual children performed better in mathematics and reading activities than their non-English-dominant bilingual and non-English monolingual peers from kindergarten to grade five (Han, 2012). Learning two languages simultaneously can be beneficial or a hindrance to a child's language and intellectual development. Further research is necessary to continue to shed light on this debate.

In addition to the study of bilingualism in children, similar research is being conducted in adults. Research findings show that although bilingual benefits are muted in middle adulthood, (Bialystok, Craik, Luk, 2012), they are more profound in older age when those who develop dementia experience onset about 4.5 years later in bilingual subjects. (Alladi, Bak, Duggirala, Surampudi, Shailaja, Shukla, Kaul, 2013). The increased attentional control, inhibition, and conflict resolution developed from bilingualism may be accountable for the later onset of dementia. (Bialystok, Craik, Luk, 2012).

### 3. CONCLUSION

However, finding a solid answer to the problem of language acquisition is far from being over. Our current understanding of the developmental process is still immature. Investigators of Universal Grammar are still trying to convince that language is a task too demanding to acquire without specific innate equipment, whereas the constructivist researchers are fiercely arguing for the importance of linguistic input.

The biggest questions, however, are yet unanswered. What is the exact process that transforms the child's utterances into grammatically correct, adult-like speech? How much does the child need to be exposed to language to achieve the adult-like state?

What account can explain variation between languages and the language acquisition process in children acquiring very different languages to English? The mystery of language acquisition is granted to keep psychologists and linguists alike astonished a decade after decade.

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# LEARNING MANDARIN CHINESE AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE: EVIDENCE-BASED STRATEGIES FOR TEACHING STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

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## Abstract

Mandarin Chinese is increasingly popular as a foreign language in American schools. The number of primary and secondary school students enrolling in Mandarin Chinese classes has increased drastically since 2000. Learning a foreign language is no longer a privilege for typically developing students in general education. The National Council of State Supervisors for Foreign Languages advocates for the inclusion of foreign language education in the school curriculum for ALL students, asserting that students with special needs also be provided the opportunity to learn a foreign language. In this paper, several effective instructional strategies are recommended for foreign language teachers who teach Mandarin Chinese language including choral responding, response cards, and class-wide peer tutoring. These strategies are empirically based, demonstrating their effectiveness in providing measurably superior gains in academic achievement across different curricula. Moreover, each strategy has been employed successfully in both special education and general education classrooms.

**Keywords:** Mandarin Chinese, foreign language, disability, inclusion

Learning Mandarin Chinese as a Foreign Language:

Evidence-based Strategies for Teaching Students with Disabilities

"GET AHEAD! LEARN MANDARIN!" was the headline appearing on the cover of TIME magazine (Ramzy, 2006) reporting that, because of China's remarkable economic boom--from the classrooms in the United



States of America (USA) to the boardrooms of Tokyo, Japan--the world has been awakening to the importance of learning Mandarin, the national language of the People's Republic of China. Fluent Mandarin Chinese has become a must-have asset for many students' future and professionals hoping to benefit from China's booming economy. In Britain, a poll of business executives rated Mandarin Chinese as the third most useful language for their employees to learn after French and German. The Schools Secretary proposed all secondary schools should offer classes in Mandarin and provide opportunities to learn Mandarin Chinese to primary school students (Shepherd, 2010). In the USA, not only do many universities offer Mandarin Chinese courses as a foreign language, many local school districts have also launched English-Chinese dual-language immersion programs for their secondary and primary school students (Bonacci, 2013; Dillon, 2010; Robelen, 2011; Rubello, 2013; Ruethling, 2005; Tran, 2008). The increased interest in Mandarin Chinese in the USA is evident by a 51 percent increase from 2002 in the number of students studying Mandarin in colleges and universities across the country (Robelen, 2011). Although thousands of public schools across the USA have stopped teaching foreign languages since 2000, many schools have expedited offering instruction in Mandarin Chinese due to student demand (e.g., Bonacci, 2013; Robelen, 2011). For example, according to Robelen (2011), between 2004-2005 and 2007-2008 enrollment in Mandarin Chinese classes increased 195 percent. In the USA, Mandarin Chinese instruction is no longer limited to port entry cities such as New York, Los Angeles, and San Francisco. In recent years, schools throughout the USA have started Mandarin Chinese programs in mid-western states (e.g., Ohio, Illinois), southern states (e.g., Texas, Georgia), and Mountain West states (e.g., Colorado, Utah). In many cases, Mandarin is available for students from preschool through high school.

#### *Inclusive Education*

In the USA, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA; 2004) and its predecessor, IDEA (1997), supports previous legislation regarding the inclusion of children with disabilities in general education classrooms. An inclusive classroom is an instructional setting where students with disabilities are included in a general education classroom and where both a general education teacher and a special education teacher provide instruction. IDEA 1997 and 2004 mandate that an individualized education plan (IEP) must be developed for each student with disabilities which includes provisions to ensure that the student be meaningfully involved and given the opportunity to make progress in the general education curriculum. Because of federal legislation, many children with special needs are able to study together with their typical peers in the same instructional settings. Like their typical peers, students with disabilities should have the same rights and opportunities to learn a foreign language. Participation in inclusive programs have a beneficial impact on students with and without special needs, resulting in positive gains such as increased and more meaningful social interactions (Purcell, Horn, & Palmer, 2007). For example, in inclusive classrooms, young children with special needs demonstrate higher levels of social play and show gains in cognitive and motor skills, meanwhile, their more typically developing peers are better able to accept differences and become more aware of the needs of others.

Students with disabilities have been diagnosed and classified as having a certain type(s) of disabilities which requires specialized services in order to maximize learning. Disabilities may be evident as cognitive, physical/motor, behavior, social/emotional, and combinations of these disabilities. The learning characteristics of students with disabilities vary: (a) low achievement in most or all academic areas, (b) preference for concrete rather than abstract lessons, (c) weak listening skills, (d) deficits in memory, (e) inattentive and easily distractible, (f) low interest in school work, (g) high anxiety, (h) deficits in adaptive behavior, (i) behavior problems, and (j) poor social skills (Henley, Ramsey, & Algozzine, 2008; Rosenberg, Westling, & McLeskey, 2010). The academic and social learning needs of many students with disabilities present great challenges for teachers.

#### *Foreign Language Education for All Children*

A position paper published by The National Council of State Supervisors for Foreign Languages (NCSSFL) asserted that NCSSFL "firmly advocates for the inclusion of foreign language education in the school curriculum for ALL students, pre-kindergarten through grade twelve and beyond" (NCSSFL, n.d., para. 1). Including statements from the *Standards for Foreign Language Learning Preparing for the in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, NCSSFL further states that :

The United States must educate students who are equipped linguistically and culturally to communicate successfully in a pluralistic American society and abroad. This imperative envisions a

future in which ALL students will develop and maintain proficiency in English and at least one other language, modern or classical. (NCSSFL, n.d., para. 4).

Providing opportunities for children with disabilities to learn foreign languages require that teachers have the ability to teach in inclusive classrooms so that all learners can benefit. However, learning a foreign language can be a very frustrating and discouraging process for students with disabilities as often their disabilities manifest themselves in language-related areas such as reading, writing, and memory (Abrams, 2008; Arries, 1999). Foreign language teachers must be equipped with the knowledge and skills that can enable them to be effective teachers in inclusive educational programs. There are three general approaches to teaching of a foreign language based on different learning theories: (a) the oral-situational approach (Pasia, n.d.), (b) the notional-functional approach (Finocchiaro & Brumfit, 1983) and (c) the task-based approach (Leaver & Willis, 2004). Other approaches include various humanistic approaches, content-based language teaching, and the lexical approach (Ellis, 2005). There have been, however, gaps in knowledge about what transpires in foreign language classrooms and what effect it has on learning (Duff & Li, 2004; Ellis, 2005), in particular in the case of non-European language classrooms (Duff & Li, 2004). Moreover, relatively little research has been conducted on classroom instruction or interaction in Asian foreign classes, nor are there many specialized textbooks on classroom or teaching methods for Asian languages (Duff & Li, 2004).

In a similar vein, there has been little research on foreign language learning and students with disabilities (Abrams, 2008). A small number of studies investigated second language acquisition of students with learning disabilities (e.g., Ganschow & Sparks, 1995; Raynor, 1991; Sparks, Ganschow, Artzer, & Patton, 1997; Sparks, Ganschow, Kenneweg, & Miller, 1991) and most of these studies focused on university students. Students with cognitive, behavioral, and emotional disorders, however, have seldom been addressed in foreign language-based research. Thus, there is no consensus regarding a single method or approach for teaching a foreign language to students with disabilities.

In the special and general education professional literature, there is growing recognition of the need for explicit and systematic instruction of content information as an effective pedagogy for ALL learners. Researchers have found that effective instruction includes student engagement with the instructional materials, high levels of accurate response, immediate feedback on the quality of the student response, on-going assessment of student performance, and teaching to a pre-determined mastery level (Machand-Martella, Slocum, & Martella, 2004). These elements of effective instruction also apply to the teaching of foreign languages (Arries, 1999; Duff & Li, 2004; Ellis, 2005).

The authors of this paper are teacher educators in the areas of special, inclusive, and foreign language education. They have extensive experience working with students with and without disabilities. In this paper, several data-based instructional strategies used to deliver the language curriculum are recommended for foreign language teachers who teach Mandarin Chinese.

#### *Evidence-Based Instructional Strategies for Teaching Mandarin Chinese*

Evidence-based strategies are those that have been proven to produce positive educational outcomes for learners (Tankersley, Harjusola-Webb, & Landrum, 2008). Implementation of a curriculum using evidence-based strategies is more likely to produce the desired academic effects. Effective academic instruction is essential for students' achievement. Mandarin Chinese language teachers should utilize an effective instructional sequence such as, "I- do-We- do-You- do model," that will maximize instructional effectiveness. In other words, the teacher first models the target skill, then the teacher and children do the target skill simultaneously (the teacher provides children with feedback on the quality of their responses), and the teacher directs students to perform the target skill independently. For beginning learners of Mandarin, modeling and demonstration during acquisition stage and extensive supervised practice during proficiency stage are vital to improving learners' response accuracy and proficiency. The Mandarin Chinese curriculum proposed in this paper is best taught employing direct instruction (Howard, n.d.).

Researchers have found that active student engagement during instructional activities is positively correlated with student achievement (Bodovski & Farkas, 2007; Carini, Kuh, & Klein, 2006; Marks, 2000). Direct instruction strategies promote academic student engagement (Christenson et al., 2008). The more opportunities students have to respond to a particular content or practice a skill, the better their acquisition of the material or skill (Blackwell & McLaughlin, 2005; Greenwood, Delquadri, & Hall, 1984; Skibo, Mims, & Spooner, 2011). Moreover, increasing opportunities for responding tends to increase the amount of material covered and does not result in negative attitudes toward school or learning. Research has also suggested that active engagement

behavior of students with disabilities is the single best indicator of their academic gains (Reschly & Christenson, 2006; Sutherland & Snyder, 2007).

*Active student response.* Heward (1994) defined the interaction between instructional stimuli and students as active student response (ASR). ASR is "an observable response to an instructional antecedent," (p. 10) and is based on the concept of the learning trial as the basic unit of instruction. A learning trial consists of three elements: an instructional antecedent (e.g., a teacher's question or prompt), a student response (e.g., an answer to the question), and teacher feedback (e.g., "Yes, that is correct!"). The time periods between the three elements and the time between trials control how many learning trials can be delivered in a given time period. Research has shown that the number of learning trials correlates with academic achievement of students (Rosenshine & Berliner, 1978). A functional relationship between increased active student responding and improved academic performance of students has been demonstrated in various research studies (e.g., Clayton & Woodward, 2007; George, 2010; Gettinger & Seibert, 2002; Logan, Bakeman, & Keefe, 1997). Therefore, Mandarin language teachers must ensure that a high level of opportunity for students to actively respond to instructional antecedents is part of the Mandarin lessons.

Choral responding (CR), response cards (RC; Blackwell & McLaughlin, 2005) and class-wide peer tutoring (CWPT; Institute of Education Sciences, 2007; Terry, n.d.) are examples of evidence-based instructional strategies that can provide increased opportunities for students to respond to curriculum materials. Similar strategies are commonly used by general education language teachers in vocabulary instruction and to check comprehension. These student-centered strategies have been found to be effective with students with and without disabilities (Greenwood, Delquadri, & Hall, 1989; Heward (1994); McMaster & Fuchs, 2002). Each of the strategies promotes high levels of active student response, high rates of accurate response, and immediate feedback. These strategies can be powerful in providing successful learning for all students in an inclusive environment (Hardin & Hardin, 2002). The strategies also allow each student's response to instruction(s) to be monitored for accuracy.

#### *Choral Responding and Response Cards Strategies*

Choral responding and response cards are two "low tech" teaching strategies for increasing active student response. These strategies are called "low-tech" because they are low cost, easy to make, durable, hands-on, and require only limited instruction before implementation. Also, these strategies exponentially increase the number of complete learning trials that can occur during large group instruction compared to calling on one student at a time to respond to a teacher's question.

CR requires all students in the class to orally respond in unison to teacher-posed questions. The strategy also allows all students to respond to every question posed by the teacher. The use of CR results in very high rates of active student response because it involves a quick oral question (or a signal), and a short (two- or three-word) oral response. CR is appropriate for any content that can be delivered in a fast-paced presentation, has short answers, and has only one correct answer. Signal (e.g., sounding out, snap) and thinking pause are necessary to control student response. After a few CR trials, the teacher needs to randomly select an individual student, preferably a low-achieving student, to respond to the question. The teacher asks a question first, provides thinking pause to students, and then calls a student's name, making certain the student is able to answer the question. In some cases, it may be necessary for the teacher to provide individual private prompts to ensure a student can respond appropriately.

RC are cards, signs, or items that are held up simultaneously by all students to display their responses to a teacher-posed question. There are two types of RC: (a) cards with pre-printed response choices (e.g., "YES/NO", numbers, colors, Chinese characters) and (b) cards on which students write their responses. Preprinted cards may also include those with multiple responses, allowing students to indicate their chosen response. With write-on response cards, each student marks or writes an answer to each instructional item on blank cards or boards that are erased between learning trials.

Previous studies have reported that the use of RC during instruction increased participation of students, decreased students' off-task behavior, and reduced inappropriate behaviors displayed by the students (Godfrey, Grisham-Brown, Schuster, & Hemmeter, 2003; Wood, Mabry, Kretlow, Lo, & Galloway, 2009). These studies suggested that RC can be used during a lesson warm up, interspersed throughout a lesson, or used as an end-of-lesson review. RC can be an ideal strategy for young children with a range of diverse learning needs. With RC, low-achieving students are less likely to be intimidated or embarrassed for making an incorrect response in front of classmates. RC requires that the teacher uses a clear-cut signal or cue to indicate when students are to respond

and then use a “get ready” signal if thinking pause is more than a couple of seconds. The teacher must provide thinking pause and let the complexity of problems/questions determine the timeframe. Students could give a signal when ready (e.g., thumb-up). The teacher gives feedback regarding correct answers. If a question/problem results in many errors, the teacher intersperses it for several trials. With RC, the teacher should let students look at classmates’ response cards after responding or if they are uncertain how to respond.

Mandarin Chinese language teachers can use CR and RC to teach new materials. The procedure includes immediate feedback and positive practice required for shaping correct responding. Both CR and RC are commonly used to review materials that have been previously taught. Reviews help reinforce what students have learned and increase fluency.

Mandarin language teachers can use both CR and RC to check for students’ ability to accurately respond to teacher questions. CR and RC allow the teacher to quickly assess students’ knowledge in relation to the target skill(s). Having this information prevents the teacher from moving on before students have learned content or wasting time by presenting material students have already mastered. Teachers may use the information to modify their instruction as needed. Both CR and RC provide teachers immediate feedback on the effectiveness of their instruction.

CR and RC can help manage student behavior, as they produce high rates of student academic response that is practically incompatible with disruptive behavior (Armendariz & Umbreit, 1999). They can also be used in situations in which there is a high probability of disruptive behavior (e.g., down-times, transition from one instructional activity to another).

#### *Class-wide Peer Tutoring*

CWPT refers to a class of instructional strategies in which students are taught by peers who are trained and supervised by the classroom teacher (Greenwood, Maheady, & Delquadri, 2002). Extensive professional literature has reported that CWPT has been effective for increasing academic achievement, improving the classroom behaviors of students with different needs in both special and general education (e.g., Buzhardt, Greenwood, Abbott, & Tapia, 2007; Hardin & Hardin, 2002; Maheady & Gard, 2010; Xu, Gelfer, Sileob, Filler, & Perkins, 2008), and enhancing interpersonal interactions among students from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds (e.g., Madrid, Canas, & Ortega-Medina, 2007). Moreover, teachers have used CWPT in a variety of academic content (e.g., spelling, reading, English as a second language) and in different grade levels (Buzhardt et al, 2007; Maheady & Gard, 2010; Xu et al., 2008). Teachers have found peer tutoring valuable because it is (a) adaptable to any teaching style and curriculum, (b) does not create extra work for the teacher, (c) easy to implement, (d) cost effective, (e) time efficient, and (f) effective with all ability levels of students (Gardner, Noble, Hessler, Yawn, & Heron, 2007; Greenwood, Delquadri, & Carta, 1997). Both tutors and tutees evidence academic gains and experience more positive social interactions (Greenwood, Carta, & Maheady, 1991; Greenwood, Delquadri, & Hall, 1989; Greenwood, Terry, Utley, Montagna, & Walker, 1993). Additionally, CWPT improves the self-esteem and self-knowledge of both tutor and tutee.

In general, a CWPT program has four primary components: (a) weekly competing teams; (b) highly structured, reciprocal tutoring procedures; (c) daily point earning, public posting, and contingent rewards; and (d) direct practice in functional instructional activities (Maheady & Gard, 2010). In most subject areas, CWPT requires about 30 minutes in which each student receives 10 minutes of tutoring (i.e., 10 minutes for each student to serve as a tutor and another 10 minutes to be the tutee). The dyad tests each other to see if they “learn” the words/problems (✓ or X). Students then graph their testing results on their progress charts. Students are assigned to a team every Monday, and they remain on this team for the entire week. Students who serve as peer tutors may need ongoing training to become skillful helpers in order to assist other students in the classroom. Once the tutors fully understand their responsibilities for the lesson, they can work with students with special needs to provide more attention and feedback they need in order to learn. However, the teacher should not overlook opportunities to offer students with special needs the chance to tutor their nondisabled classmates. CWPT can be used as an alternative practice activity during independent work time. It should not be done with new material, but rather used with content that was taught previously through direct instruction.

#### *Conclusion*

In order to create a supportive and caring sense of learning environment and the feeling of belonging that is conducive to students with and without special needs, a special instructional context must be carved out of the day for formal collaborative efforts and opportunities to participate by all students. The use of low-tech strategies and CWPT can be structured in ways that build in the power of active student learning for young

children with and without special needs. Learning a foreign language together can be a fun experience for most students!

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# CULTURE-BOUND MATERIALS, LISTENING PERFORMANCE OF IRANIAN INTERMEDIATE EFL LEARNERS, AND THEIR EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

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## Abstract

The concept of emotional intelligence (EQ or EI) has been offered to supplement general intelligence. Educators, professional teachers, syllabus designers, and psycholinguists have for a long time been concerned with making an appropriate match between intelligence and the ability to learn foreign languages. The present study was an attempt to investigate the possible role that emotional intelligence may have on listening comprehension of intermediate Iranian EFL male and female learners when culture-bound materials are used in listening classes. To this end, 50 Iranian male and female intermediate EFL learners were chosen through the Oxford Quick placement test (OQPT). Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire – Adolescent Short Form (TEIQue-ASF, 2006) was also used to identify the level of emotional intelligence of the participants. At the outset of the study a listening pre-test was run. The participants were divided into two groups. In the treatment phase of the study, the students of one group were exposed to listening to the American idioms, superstitions, their holiday customs, and their daily behaviors and they were exposed to some excerpts of listening materials including some idioms, special expressions, some conversations in specific situations and so on about these issues. After 10 sessions the participants sat for a listening post-test. The results of an independent samples t-test revealed a statistically significant difference between the performance of the two groups. In addition, the results of a one way analysis of variances (ANOVA) and a post-hoc showed that gender has a significant effect on mastering listening comprehension by intermediate EFL learners with different levels of emotional intelligence when culturally-bound materials were used in listening classes.

**Keywords:** Emotional intelligence, listening comprehension, Culture, Culture-bound materials

## 1. Introduction

One of the determining factors in mastering a second or foreign language is the level of learners' intelligence. Some scientists such as Yamauchi (2005) believe that emotional Intelligence or emotional quotient "EQ" is a new model in human behavior. Goleman (1995) suggested that emotional intelligence includes "abilities such as being able to motivate oneself and persist in the face of frustrations to control impulses and delay gratification; to regulate one's moods and keep distress from swamping the ability to think; to emphasize and to hope" (p.34). The relationship between the ability to learn a new language and the level of intelligence has been the focus of study for language teachers and syllabus designers. On the other hand, the nature and identity of language seems to be different among different nations of the world. In this arena many factors play crucial role, one of the most important of which is culture. Culture is the way people of any community see the world around them- their way of thinking, their lifestyle, and their reaction to the world and to other people. Language teachers must be well aware of the knowledge of how learning is shaped by culture.



Among the four skills in English language learning, listening plays the most important role in communication in real life: According to Feyten (1991), listening provides more than 45% of our total communication ability, followed by speaking (30%), reading (16%), and writing (9%). However, in a foreign language (FL) context, where English is not commonly spoken in the society, learners are not sufficiently observing to this foreign language. It has therefore become crucial that English should be taught effectively in school classrooms. For many EFL learners, listening poses a grave challenge. On the other hand EFL learners usually live in countries with different cultural norms. In order to comprehend an excerpt of listening, the learner must immediately process and segment an ongoing stream of sounds in to smaller, understandable sections.

Written text, by contrast, allows readers to rely on word boundaries to segment a stream of speech. What makes the field even muddier for EFL learners to master the listening comprehension is the differences that exist in the discourse of English and the mother tongue of the learners. As it is crystal clear, there are a lot of dissimilarities between English and Iranian culture. This distinction makes a lot of problems for EFL learners. Besides, not being familiar with the target culture leads to confusion on the part of language learners. Therefore if the EFL learners know the cultural rules of the English language they will be able to overcome the difficulty successfully. In order for this to happen one important issue seems to be the level of the learners' emotional intelligence. Downey, Mountstephen, Lloyd, Hansen and Stough (2008) found that high EI contributes to increased motivation, planning, and decision making, which positively influence academic performance.

To continue the line of research in the field of emotional intelligence and foreign language learning, this study sought to shed light on emotional intelligence, and its relationship with culture bound materials in teaching listening comprehension, and wanted to find out if higher level of emotional intelligence (as measured by Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire - Adolescent Short Form TEIQue-ASF) among Iranian adolescent EFL learners led to better outcomes in listening comprehension tests, when the teaching materials were selected from the culture bound materials of the target language. In fact this study set out to answer the following questions:

**RQ1-** Does using culture bound materials have any significant impact on listening performance of Iranian intermediate EFL learners considering their level of emotional intelligence as measured by TEIQue-ASF?

**RQ2-** Is there any significant relationship between the gender of EFL learners and their listening achievement in light of their level of emotional intelligence when culture bound materials are used in listening classes?

The following null hypotheses were formulated based on the above research questions:

**H01-** Using culture bound materials has no significant impact on listening performance of Iranian intermediate EFL learners considering their level of emotional intelligence as measured by TEIQue-ASF.

**H02-** There is no significant relationship between the gender of EFL learners and their listening achievement in light of their level of emotional intelligence when culture bound materials are used in listening classes?

## 2. Literature review

Some studies have so far been conducted on the relationship between emotional intelligence and language learning, here a glimpse is taken to some of them. Jahandar, Khodabandehlou, Seyedi, and DolatAbadi (2012) studied the impact of emotional intelligence components on listening proficiency together with gender differences in some of the significant emotional competencies. The Bar-On EQ-I was used to obtain the emotional scores of the learners and then they took a listening comprehension test. They found that EI components have significant impact on listening in males and females. Additionally, by considering the gender through the influence of EI components this impact on female learners is greater than male.

Alavinia (2012) tried to find the possible impact of schooling with a particular major on the learners' emotional betterment. The participants of this study were 371 male and female Iranian academic EFL learners who studied in five different majors, and the main instrument utilized for data collection was Bar-On's EQ-i. Making use of two-way ANOVA, Post Hoc analysis (Scheffe test), as well as simple and repeated contrast tests, the researcher claimed that though a few areas of emotional intelligence were found to be affected by differences in learners' majors, none were influenced by differences in their grades of study.

In an attempt organized to find the potential relationship between Iranian EFL learners' emotional intelligence and their writing performance in terms of lexico-semantic errors, Alavinia and Behyar (2012) worked with 100 academic learners. The required data were tapped through administering Bar-On's EQ-i and drawing on the learners' written paragraphs. As the results of the study helped reveal, a significant amount of correlation existed between the learners' emotional intelligence and their lexico-semantic errors. Yet, the participants' gender didn't have any significant role to play in this regard. Furthermore, all subscales of Bar-On's

questionnaire were found to have a high predictive value with respect to the learners' errors, with the scale of happiness having the highest degree of predictive value.

Hasanzadeh and Shahmohamadi (2011) studied the relationship between emotional intelligent and foreign language learners' achievement in Iranian context. The participants completed Bar-On questionnaire in half an hour and learners' language achievement (LA) was computed based on the average score of the final examinations of the learners' scores in two successive terms. The results indicated no relationship between total emotional intelligence and language achievement, but some of the main components of emotional intelligence, i.e. self-assertion, independence, and optimism have statistically meaningful relationship with language achievement. Moreover, regression analysis demonstrated two of the main components of emotional intelligence, interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligence, can predict language achievement. The results also indicated emotional intelligence and age are positively correlated.

Pishghadam (2009) explored the relationship between emotional intelligence and foreign language learning. Participants were asked to complete the Bar-On Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-I). Also their scores in listening, speaking, reading, writing, and GPA were obtained. The results revealed that although total EQ and its subscales were poor predictors of second language learning, several subscales were significant predictors of reading (stress management, adaptability, general mood), GPA (all subscales), writing (stress management), and speaking (intrapersonal, interpersonal, stress management, general mood).

In a study Ghaniabadi, and Alavi(2008) investigated whether teaching culture in EFL classes and EFL students' knowledge of target culture influence their understanding of vocabulary and their reading comprehension. All the participants in this study were given a pre- and a post- test on vocabulary and reading comprehension, though the treatment process was used only for one of the groups (the experimental group). The main finding of this study was that incorporating cultural aspects of English-speaking countries into teaching process is essential for improving the students' understanding of the language and reading comprehension. T-tests determined that the treatment group, who were exposed to the cultural schemata during the process of teaching vocabulary and reading, outperformed the other group.

The literature reviewed above, indicates that the field needs further research, since no study has so far considered the role of emotional intelligence in listening comprehension of EFL learners when culture bound materials are used in language classes. Accordingly, this study wanted to put the issue under empirical study.

### *3- Methodology*

#### *3.1 participants*

The participants of this study were 50 Iranian male and female intermediate EFL learners, in the age range of 14-18, studying English at a language institute in Isfahan who were chosen through questionnaires, the Oxford Quick Placement Test (OQPT), and listening test. This sample consisted of both male and female students. The participants were divided into two groups, in a way that the number of male and female learners in both groups were approximately the same. The groups were called (Culture-bound Group A; CBGA hereafter) and (Culture-bound Group B; CBGB hereafter).

#### *3.2 Instrumentation*

The Oxford Quick Placement Test (OQPT) was used to measure the participants' language proficiency and to determine if they were all intermediate level EFL learners and second to establish the homogeneity of the participants. Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire - Adolescent Short Form (TEIQue-ASF, 2006) which comprises 30 short statements, two for each of the 15 trait EI facets, designed to measure global trait EI was used, too. A general listening comprehension test (the Listening section of TOEFL) was used as the pre and post-test.

#### *3.3 procedures*

From among English learners studying English at a language institute in Isfahan, 50 (male and female students) were chosen according to their performance in the OQPT. To find out if these participants were at the same level of listening ability, a listening comprehension test which is the listening section of the TOEFL PBT test was given to them. The participants were then asked to complete Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire - Adolescent Short Form (TEIQue-ASF, 2006). A cut-off score of 105 was defined, since the whole point of this questionnaire was 210. Therefore, the participants were divided into two groups, namely high and low group with those students who scored higher than 105 being in one group (CBGA) and the others in the other group (CBGB). Although the participants had different levels of EQ, they all were taught culture bound materials in classroom. In the treatment phase of the study, the students of the experimental group were guided and informed about the

American idioms, superstitions, their holiday customs, and their daily behaviors and they were exposed to some excerpts of listening materials including some idioms, special expressions, some conversations in specific situations and so on about these issues. After 10 sessions the participants sat for another listening comprehension test which served as the post-test.

#### 4. Results and findings

In order to find answer to the first research question, a listening pre-test was administered on the participants of the two groups. Then an independent samples t-test was run among the scores of the two groups. This way it was concluded that there was no significant difference between the performance of CBGA and CBGB at the beginning of the study (.144>.05). After the treatment was conducted, the participants sat for a listening post-test, then the results were compared. Tables 4.1 and 4.2 show the results.

**Table 4.1. Descriptive Statistics Of The Listening Post-Test Of CBGA And CBGB**

	Group s	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Scores	CBGA	25	62.8800	9.01998	1.80400
	CBGB	25	55.9600	7.30571	1.46114

As it can be seen in table 4.1, the mean difference of the CBGA and CBGB in the post test is 6.92, which is considered to be significant. However, to be more objective an independent samples t-test was run on the mean scores of the two groups. The results are presented in table 4.1.

**Table 4.1. The Results Of The Independent Samples Test Of The Scores Of The Listening Post-Test**

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means				95% Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2- tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower Upper
CBGA	Equal variances assumed	.315	.578	2.981	48	.005	6.92000	2.32149	2.25232 11.58768
CBGB	Equal variances not assumed			2.981	46.015	.005	6.92000	2.32149	2.24712 11.59288

The significance level in table 4.4 is .005 which is smaller than the identified level of significance .05 (.005<.05). This expresses the fact that the difference between the performance of the CBGA and CBGB is statistically significant. This leads to the rejection of the first null hypothesis of the research.

In order to check the possible relationship between the gender of EFL learners and their listening achievement in light of their level of emotional intelligence when culture bound materials are used in listening classes, the scores of the EFL learners in the post-test were reanalyzed in terms of the participants' gender. First the descriptive statistics of them are computed and compared, the results of which are given in table 4.3.

**Table 4.3. Descriptive Statistics Of The Performance of Male and Females in Listening Post-test**

				95% Confidence Interval for Mean			
Subgroups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Minimum Maximum

Male CBGA	12	65.3333	8.40274	2.42566	59.9945	70.6722	45.00	75.00
Females CBGA	13	60.6154	9.29640	2.57836	54.9976	66.2331	42.00	70.00
Males CBGB	12	60.3333	3.25669	.94013	58.2641	62.4025	56.00	66.00
Females CBGB	13	51.9231	7.76167	2.15270	47.2327	56.6134	42.00	62.00
Total	50	59.4200	8.84351	1.25066	56.9067	61.9333	42.00	75.00

According to the statistics presented in table 4.3 the mean score of males in CBGA is 65.33 which is higher than all other subgroups including the females in CBGA with a mean score of 60.61, the male subgroup in CBGB 60.33, and the females in CBGB being 51.92. It seems that the first subgroup has outperformed all other subgroups, and there is difference between the performance of the four subgroups; however, it is not still clear whether this difference is statistically significant or not. To be more objective in this claim a one way analysis of variances (ANOVA) was run, the results of which are presented in table 4.4 below.

Table 4.4. The Results Of ANOVA On The Scores Of The Post Test

VAR00002					
	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1178.847	3	392.949	6.812	.001
Within Groups	2653.333	46	57.681		
Total	3832.180	49			

Based on table 4.4 the identified level of significance is smaller than the observed level of significance is .001(.05>.001); therefore, it can be understood that gender has a significant effect on the performance of EFL learners in listening classes when culture bound materials are used in listening classes and when there is a difference in the level of the emotional intelligence of the learners. However, still it is not clear where the difference exists. Therefore to elaborate the problem more and locate the difference, a post-hoc test was run. The results are presented in table 4.5.

Table 4.5. The Results Of The Post-Hoc On The Results Of The Listening Post-Test

VAR00002						
LSD						
(I)	(J)	95% Confidence Interval				
VAR00001	VAR00001	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1	2	4.71795	3.04036	.128	-1.4020	10.8379
	3	5.00000	3.10057	.114	-1.2411	11.2411
	4	13.41026*	3.04036	.000	7.2903	19.5302
2	1	-4.71795	3.04036	.128	-10.8379	1.4020
	3	.28205	3.04036	.926	-5.8379	6.4020
	4	8.69231*	2.97893	.005	2.6960	14.6886
3	1	-5.00000	3.10057	.114	-11.2411	1.2411
	2	-.28205	3.04036	.926	-6.4020	5.8379
	4	8.41026*	3.04036	.008	2.2903	14.5302
4	1	-13.41026*	3.04036	.000	-19.5302	-7.2903
	2	-8.69231*	2.97893	.005	-14.6886	-2.6960
	3	-8.41026*	3.04036	.008	-14.5302	-2.2903

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

As it is seen, there are 4 subgroups in table 4.5. Subgroup 1 is the male learners in CBGA, subgroup 2 shows the females in CBGA, and sub group 3 is the males in CBGB and subgroup 4. As the caption of the table shows, the asterisks determine that the values are significant. The first significant difference exists between subgroup 1 and 4, that is the males in CBGA and females in CBGB, with the significance level of .000 which is smaller than .05. The second significant difference is seen between the subgroups 2, the females in CBGA and subgroup 4, the females in CBGB. The level of significance is .005 which is smaller than .05. The subgroup 3, the males in CBGB, had a significant difference with subgroup 4, the females in CBGB, the level of significance being, .008 which is smaller than .05.

The males in both groups outperformed the females. From the results it can be understood that the second null hypothesis of the study cannot be rejected. This is due to the fact that, though males in CBGA, that is the group with higher levels of emotional intelligence, performed better on post-test than all other groups, no significant difference was observed in the performance of the females in CBGA and CBGB. To put it in other words, we have to accept the null hypothesis expressing that gender has no meaningful effect on listening achievement in light of their level of emotional intelligence when culture bound materials are used in listening classes.

##### 5. Conclusion and Discussion

As far as the first research question is concerned, it was found that emotional intelligence has a significant positive effect on enhancing listening ability of Iranian intermediate EFL learners. The reason for such findings may be due to the fact that emotional intelligence is in close relation with learners' relationship with others. In other words, emotional intelligence is considered to be a social construct. Higher emotional intelligence rates leads the learners to get along better in language learning classes in general and in listening classes in specific.

About the second research question, it was made clear that the difference between males and females in their performance in listening tests, based on their level of emotional intelligence was significant.

Regarding gender, some points should be taken into account. First of all, the difference between females and males regarding listening tasks was significant. Second, males in CBGA surpassed females, the difference between females and males was significant. Third, males in both CBGA and CBGB outperformed females. This means that teaching the concepts of emotional intelligence is an effective way for improving listening comprehension achievement of Iranian EFL learners, regardless of gender and that improving listening comprehension emotional intelligence is gender specific. Thus, it can be concluded that there was a meaningful interaction between gender, emotional intelligence and listening comprehension when culture-bound materials are used in language classes, and that the observed difference may or may not occur in other similar situations.

The findings of the study in hand are in harmony with the attempt organized to find the impact of emotional intelligence components on listening proficiency together with gender differences in some of the significant emotional competencies by Jahandar, Khodabandehlou, Seyedi, and Dolatabadi (2012) who used the Bar-On EQ-I to obtain the emotional scores of the learners and then they took a listening comprehension test. They also found that emotional intelligence can enhance the listening comprehension of EFL learners.

The results of the present study, as far as the relationship between emotional intelligence and listening ability is concerned, are in line with Fahim and Pishghadam's (2007) study which showed that intrapersonal skills, general mood and stress management scales have positive correlations with educational success. The two studies show common results considering Intrapersonal skills and General mood scales. The results of Hasanzadeh and Shahmohamadi's (2011) study further showed a positive correlation between language achievement and General mood and Intrapersonal intelligence. The results correspond with the findings of this study with regard to the positive relationship found between these two scales of EI and metacognitive strategies. However the results are against Pishghadam's (2009) study who tried to explore the relationship between emotional intelligence and foreign language learning. The results reveal that although total EQ and its subscales were poor predictors of second language learning, several subscales were significant predictors of reading (stress management, adaptability, general mood), GPA (all subscales), writing (stress management), and speaking (intrapersonal, interpersonal, stress management, general mood).

In addition, the outcomes of this study didn't comply with the study conducted by Hasanzadeh and Shahmohamadi (2011) about the relationship between emotional intelligent and foreign language learners' achievement in Iranian context. The results indicated no relationship between total emotional intelligence and language achievement, but some of the main components of emotional intelligence, i.e. self-assertion, independence, and optimism has statistically meaningful relationship with language achievement. Moreover, regression analysis demonstrate two of the main components of emotional intelligence, interpersonal and

intrapersonal intelligence, can predict language achievement. The results also indicated emotional intelligence and age are positively correlated.

Against this study, in Alavinia and Behyar's (2012) study the participants' gender didn't have any significant role to play in this regard. Also against this study, Jahandar, Khodabandehlou, Seyedi, and DolatAbadi (2012) found that EI components have significant impact on listening in males and females. Additionally, by considering the gender through the influence of EI components this impact on female learners is greater than male.

The outcomes of the present study also prove the findings of another study by Mestre, Guil, Lopes, Salovey, and Gil-Olarte (2006) who tried to discover whether there is any relationship between emotional intelligence and social and academic adaptation for males and females to school.

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# THE EFFECT OF SCAFFOLDING ON EFL LEARNERS' READING COMPREHENSION

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## ABSTRACT

This study aimed at investigating the effect of scaffolding on English as a foreign language (EFL) learners' reading comprehension. It tried to answer if scaffolding improves reading comprehension skill, and if there is any significant difference between the effect of scaffolding and traditional instruction on EFL learners' reading comprehension.

Fifty- nine Iranian female intermediate EFL learners participated in this study. They studied at Novin English language institute in Shiraz. Oxford Placement Test was used as an instrument of this study. Learners were assigned into two groups: Scaffolded group and traditional group. Learners who were in scaffolded group received scaffolding instruction as a treatment. Learners who were in traditional group received traditional instruction. This study lasted for one term. To this end, Paired t-test and Independent sample t-test were run. Paired t-test showed that scaffolding had a positive effect on EFL learners' reading comprehension. Because, p value was .000 ( $p < .05$ ) which indicated there was a statistically significant difference between pre- test and post-test of scaffolded group. Moreover, Independent sample t-test indicated that scaffolding improved EFL learners' reading comprehension greater than traditional instruction as, p value was .036 ( $p < .05$ ) which showed that there was a statistically significant difference between the two groups. This study showed that scaffolding is suitable and useful for enhancing learners' reading comprehension. So, a lot of stakeholders can benefit from using scaffolding, especially, teachers who want to teach not only reading skill but also other skills such as writing, speaking, and listening, and students who want to boost their language skills.

**KEYWORDS:** Scaffolding , EFL, Reading comprehension

## 1.Introduction

As students may face problems in comprehending the text, reading skill is regarded as the most vital skill for students in the classroom context and extracurricular environment (Grab & Stoller, 2002). Walqui (2006) believed that teachers can help their students master the habit of evoking their prior knowledge on a subject which enhances their reading comprehension.

One approach that teachers use to assist their students is scaffolded reading experience (Graves & Graves, 2003). It is a flexible model in that it provides a framework within which to operate and allows the teacher to choose strategies that are best suited for the group of students reading a particular text (Cohen & Cowen, 2007). Scaffolding learning has been suggested as a way to help learners achieve what they would not be able to do on their own and then to make sense of and to internalize the experience (Dennen, 2003).

Applebee and Langer (1983) believed that learning is a process of gradual internalization of routines and procedures available to the learner from the social and cultural context in which the learning takes place. They have called this kind of learning as an instructional scaffolding.

Wells (1999) believed that scaffolding is a way of operationalizing Vygotsky's concept of working in the zone of proximal development (ZPD). He described two important features that give educational scaffolding its particular character : (1) essentially dialogical nature of discourse in which knowledge is co- constructed, (2) the significance of the kind of activity in which knowing is embedded .

Stone (1993) described a Vygotskian-inspired analysis of scaffolding. He has stated Vygotsky's view that learning first takes place on a social level meaning that it is seen as a fluid, interpersonal process in which both participants are active. Both participants actively build common understanding through communicative exchanges in which the student learn from more knowledgeable students.

Cadzen(1979) suggested that scaffolding can be explained from the domain of parent-child interactions to teacher-student interactions. Similarly, Verenikina (2008) believed that the importance of teacher-student communication in learners' achievement is strongly emphasized in the social - cultural educational theory , originated by Vygotsky.

## 2.Literature Review

Reading is considered as the core of the skills. Brown(2001) mentions that " reading ability will be developed best in the association with writing , listening and speaking activities"(p.298). Teachers try to find ways to improve learners' language learning. One of these ways is to scaffold students in their language achievement.

Although the term scaffolding has never been used by Vygotsky (1978),it refers to his work .He has proposed the notion of zone of proximal development (ZPD),which is closely related to scaffolding, in every learner as" the distance between learners' existing developmental state and their potential development "(Brown,2007,p.13). Based on Field (2004) there is a relationship between ZPD and scaffolding. An adult assists child by promoting his attention in a task, guiding him towards appropriate goals, marking prominent features of a task and showing related strategies.

Reiser (2004) believed that in scaffolding , students receive support to do certain tasks and move to more complex ones. According to McLoughlin (2002),scaffolding not only needs physical support in addressing students in learning context ,it needs addressing student learning of concepts, procedures, strategies, and metacognitive skills .Scaffolding is a learning process designed to promote a deeper level of understanding. It is the support given during the learning process which is tailored to the needs of the students with the intention of helping the student achieve his/ her learning goals (Sawyer,2006).

Walqui( 2006) has investigated the notion of scaffolding in both pedagogical context and education as follows:

In pedagogical contexts, scaffolding has come to refer to both aspects of the construction site : the supportive structure and the collaborative construction work that is carried out. Some educators are uneasy with the term scaffolding because in normal usage it refers to a rigid structure, not the fluid dynamics of collaborative work that was associate with working in ZPD: indeed if we think only of the supportive structure without focusing on the actual construction work, then such a reservation is justified. Most importantly, must be kept in the mind the process is enabled by the scaffolding structure , and structure can be dismantled or shifted elsewhere. In education, scaffolding can be thought of as three related pedagogical 'scales': First, there is the meaning of providing a supportive structure to enable certain activities and skills to develop. Second, there is the actual carrying out of particular activities in class. And, third , there is the assistance provided in moment- to - moment interaction (p,164).

In scaffolding, students require intensive instructional support when learning important skills and strategies. The gradual release of responsibility requires a lot of assistance. It has three stages. In the first stage , the teacher has high responsibility for modeling and explaining the learning task. In the second stage, the teacher and students share responsibility for learning. Student practice the task, and the teacher gives them feedback. In the last stage, students take responsibility of their own work. Teachers who assess students to provide the right amount of challenge and reflect on how they can provide just the right support and its gradual release will have students who attain high levels of achievement (Morrow, Grambrell, and pressley,2003).

According to Richards & Schmidt (2002), there are 3 types of scaffolding:

1. Vertical scaffolding: The adult asks further questions to extend the child's language.
2. Sequential scaffolding: It is found in games such as those played with children at meal time.
3. Instructional scaffolding: It refers to an important aspect of formal instruction. Learning is viewed as a process involving gradual internalization of routines and procedures available to the learner from the



social and cultural context in which learning occurs. The language learner is assisted in a new task by a more skilled user who models the learning tasks.

scaffolding provides learning environment that students ask questions, provide feedback and support their peers. Students take more active role in the classroom. Also, they take responsibility for their own learning (p.466).

Effective scaffolding requires a balance of support and challenge (Roeihler & Cantlon,1997). The teacher should determine the intensity of the task and students' proficiency level. If there is a high challenge with low support ,little learning will occur. On the other hand , if there is low challenge with high support ,little learning is likely to occur again (O' connor, Notari-syverson & Vadasy,1998).Effective scaffolding leads to effective teaching. In addition to adapting the complexity of the task to students' proficiency level, the teacher should also encourage the students to do certain activities. This will improve student s' motivation.

There is a relationship between the concept of zone of proximal development ( ZPD) and scaffolding. ZPD refers to the level of knowledge that is beyond the learners' ability. For leading students to a higher level, the students should cooperate with the teacher, or more knowledgeable peer that is just above a students' abilities (Pishghadam & Ghadiri,2011).

Teachers constantly assess students during a class. According to Bachman and Palmer (2010) , the teacher use dynamic assessment which is "instantaneous and cyclical: assessment- decision- instruction- assessment- decision - instruction. The teacher may use this assessment to make decisions to facilitate his own minute by minute instruction by adjusting his presentation, rephrasing, repeating, moving from student to student, and so forth. In this case the teacher is constantly collecting feedback from his students to make decisions about his own instructional activity" (p.28). Some researchers (Palinscar & Brown, 1984; Scardamalia & Bereiter, 1985; Schoenfeild ,1985) try to make a connection between scaffolding and dynamic assessment. Dynamic assessment helps teacher in the sense that decisions are made in what and when to scaffold as well as when to fade. Intermediate feedback in the form of scaffolding can be provided to learners during problem solving , when and where they need assistance. The purpose of assessment in this situation is to improve learning in the context of problem solving while the task is carried out (Lajoie,2005).

Scaffolding may have some effects on students' achievement such as scaffolding's effect on language leaning in which some researchers have investigated . Sadafi and Rababah (2012) examined the effect of scaffolding on reading comprehension skill. 107 female students of Al- Ittihad school in Amman, Jordn, were selected and were assigned into two groups, control and experimental groups. The instruments which they used in this study were multiple- choice pre and post reading comprehension tests. One way analysis of co-variance (ANCOVA) was used to measure any statistically significant differences in the subjects' achievement of experimental group in reading comprehension skill .So, scaffolding instruction improved learners' reading comprehension skill. Also, Bassiri (2012) conducted a study to determine the positive impacts of scaffolding teaching strategy on reading skill and its effect on motivation of Iranian L2 learners. 34 intermediate learners of English participated in this study. They were both male and female. Pre-test and post-test of reading comprehension were used. Besides, a quiz was taken at the end of each session. A statistical procedure of ANOVA was used to examine the effect of scaffolding . The result indicated that scaffolding had positive effect on learners' reading comprehension and motivation scores. Also. There was a positive relationship between females' learners' achievement than males in terms of reading and motivation was reported.

### 3.Research Questions

This study seeks to answer following questions:

1. Does scaffolding have any effect on EFL learners' reading comprehension?
2. Is there any statistically significant difference between the effect of scaffolding and traditional instruction in EFL learners' reading comprehension?

### 4.Methodology

#### 4.1.Participants

The participants consisted of 59 Iranian female intermediate EFL learners with the age of 14 to 25. They enrolled in Novin English Language Institute in Shiraz. They had different educational backgrounds. Besides, they had already completed pre- intermediate level. All participants were native Persian speakers. They studied English twice a week, about four hours.

#### 4.2. Instruments

Instruments used in this study to collect information were Oxford Placement Tests (version 1& 2) in the pre-test and post-test. Each test consists of 60 multiple-choice questions. The average time needed to complete Oxford Placement Test has been 30 minutes. This test was selected because it is inexpensive, easy to administer, and easy to score objectively. The reliability of the version 1 of this test based on Cronbach's alpha is .90, and the reliability of the version 2 of this test based on Cronbach's alpha is .88.

#### 4.3. Procedure

59 students as EFL learners in Novin English institute, who had studied at intermediate level, were divided into two groups. Students in an experimental group received treatment, scaffolding teaching instruction, while those in control group did not receive any treatment. They were taught according to traditional teaching instruction. Before applying the treatment, students in both groups took a pre-test to ensure that there was no statistically significant difference between the two groups. After that, scaffolding instruction was employed in scaffolded reading class while traditional teaching instruction was conducted in non-scaffold reading class. The study was done over one term. According to Graves and Graves (2003) scaffolding reading experience comprises some components in pre, while, and post reading. In this study, scaffolded reading experience (SRE) method was used. Fitzgerald and Graves (2004) have believed that SRE is a flexible framework which has two phases: the first phase is planning in which you should determine the purpose of the reading and reading selection, then they create activities that is adjusted for English language learners. The second phase is implementation, which consists of pre-reading, while reading, and post-reading activities. The teacher tried to incorporate some activities into scaffolded reading class in each session. The activities based on Graves and Graves (2003) were as follows:

1. Pre-reading activities: The teacher motivated students by writing the topic on the board, and by activating their background knowledge. Then, she related the topic to the students' lives. She provided them with some information in the reading passage, and if necessary, taught some vocabularies. She also tried to encourage them to predict what the reading was about.
2. While reading activities: The teacher asked the students to read the reading passage silently for 5 minutes just to understand the gist of the reading. Then she read the reading passage aloud and modified the text with the help of students in an interactive manner. She also asked the students voluntarily to read the reading orally.
3. Post-reading activities: In this step, teacher tried to evaluate students' comprehension of the reading text by asking questions, creating discussion groups, or assigning writing tasks.

The teacher gradually decreased her guidance so that the students became independent, and could guess correct answers. This strategy led students to be autonomous readers. At the end of the term, post-test conducted for both groups to identify whether treatment was effective.

In contrast to experimental group, the teacher in traditional group did not observe any of these three steps. She just started to teach reading without warm-up or motivating activities. She did not teach the reading in an interactive manner. Instead, she read the reading once when it was necessary and just gave some definitions or synonyms for words.

#### 4.4. Data Analysis

In analyzing the data for this study, the SPSS software version 16 was used. Paired t-test and Independent sample t-test were used to obtain descriptive and inferential statistics. T-test was employed to find out if there was any significant difference between the two groups.

### 5. Results

Statistical analysis of the data collected. A quantitative approach was taken to analyze the data. It consists of descriptive and inferential statistics and discussion.

#### 5.1. Research Question 1

Table 1 shows descriptive statistics of scaffolded group in pre-test and post-test. The mean of learners' scores in pre-test is 36.31 and in post-test is 42.89. It shows learners' scores have improved from pre-test to post-test.

**Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Scaffolded Group**

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pre-test	29	36.31	10.223	1.898
Post-test	29	42.8966	10.41752	1.93448

In this part, the results of students' scores in scaffolded group are calculated through Paired t-test in order to answer the first research question of the study. Table 2 shows the results of paired t-test which is significant as it is smaller than .05 ( $0.000 < .05$ ). It means that the treatment has had an effect on the students' performance, and it has changed significantly from the pre- test to the post-test.

**Table 2: Paired Sample t-Test**

		Paired Differences				T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
		Lower	Upper	Lower	Upper	Lower	Upper	Upper
Pair 1	Pre-test Post-test	-6.58621	1.72207	.31978	-7.24125 -5.93117	-20.596	28	.000

## 5.2. Research Question 2

Table 3 shows descriptive statistics of traditional and scaffolded groups in pre-test. Based on this table, the mean of traditional group is 36.50, and the mean of scaffolded group is 36.31.

**Table 3 :Descriptive Statistics of the Two Groups (Pre-test)**

Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
traditional instruction	30	36.50	10.123	1.848
scaffolding instruction	29	36.31	10.223	1.898

Table 4 shows the results of Independent Sample t-test of the two groups in pre-test. P-value is .94 ( $p > .05$ ) which indicates that the differences between two groups are not statistically significant. So, they are homogenous.

**Table 4: Independent Sample t- Test (Pre-test)**

	Levene's Test	t-test for Equality of Means
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		for Equality of Variances							
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference
		Lower	Upper	Lower	Upper	Lower	Upper	Lower	Upper
scores	Equal variances assumed	.024	.878	.072	57	.943	.190	2.649	-5.115 5.494
	Equal variances not assumed			.072	56.888	.943	.190	2.649	-5.116 5.495

Table 5 shows descriptive statistics of traditional and scaffolded groups in post-test. The mean of traditional group is 37 , and the mean of scaffolded group is 42.90. The mean of scaffolded group is higher than traditional group.

**Table 5: Descriptive Statistics of the Two Groups ( Post-test)**

groups		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
scores	traditional	30	37.00	10.706	1.955
	scaffolding scaffolding instruction	29	42.90	10.418	1.934

To see if there is a significant difference between the two groups ,an Independent sample t-test was run as Table 6 presents. P value is .036 ( $p < .05$ ) which shows that scaffolded group performed better than traditional group and Null- hypothesis is rejected.

**Table 6: Independent Sample t- Test (post- test)**

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference
		Lower	Upper	Lower	Upper	Lower	Upper	Lower	Upper
scores	Equal variances assumed	.207	.651	-2.143	57	.036	-5.897	2.751	-11.406 -.387
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.144	56.997	.036	-5.897	2.750	-11.403 -.390

## 6. Discussion

This part presents a discussion of the questions of the study in the light of data analysis and interpretations. For this purpose, Paired t-test and Independent sample t-test were done through SPSS.

In order to answer the first research question Paired t-test was run. P value was .000. It was smaller than .05 ( $p < .05$ ). Therefore, scaffolding had a positive effect on EFL learners' reading comprehension. In other words, it improved students' reading comprehension ability.

Concerning the second research question, Independent sample t-test was performed which showed that P value was .036 ( $P < .05$ ). So, the differences between two groups were statistically significant. Although both instructions improved EFL learners' reading comprehension, scaffolding instruction improved learners' reading comprehension greater than traditional instruction.

Based on the findings of the study, scaffolding is found to improve EFL learners' reading comprehension. The results of the study are in agreement with the work of Sadafi and Rababah (2012) who proved that scaffolding instruction has improved reading comprehension skill. Also, Bruch (2007) concluded in his study that the use of scaffolding is effective on improving learners' reading and writing skills.

There are some factors that cause learners' high achievement in scaffolded classrooms. These factors don't exist in traditional classrooms. Some of these factors are as follows: One of the main factor is providing interactive environment / collaborative condition in scaffolded classrooms. Lutz, Guthrie, and Davis (2006) proved that scaffolding effectively improve learners' reading comprehension when learners interact with each other. And, when they work cooperatively they get higher scores. Also, based on McMahon (2008) scaffolding improves learners' achievement in one-to-one interaction. Another important factor is motivation. Scaffolding promote learners' motivation which cause better learners' performance in language tasks. Bassiri (2012) came to this conclusion that scaffolding as a teaching strategy improves learners' reading comprehension and motivation scores.

## 7. Conclusion

According to Wood, Bruner and Ross (1976), scaffolding is the interaction between an expert and a novice engaged in a problem-solving task or the adult controlling those elements of the task that are initially beyond the learner's capacity, thus permitting him to complete only those elements that are within his competence.

Scaffolding strategy has its origin in Vygotsky's sociocultural theory. Ellis (2004) stated the social dimension of the development of a new skill is handled in sociocultural theory through the notion of scaffolding. Scaffolding is the dialogic process by which one speaker assists another in performing a function that he or she cannot perform alone.

In the light of research findings, it could be concluded that scaffolding instruction highly improved EFL learners' reading comprehension. Although learners' scores improved from pre-test to post-test in both groups, the promotion of learners' achievement in scaffolded group was more tangible. It means that scaffolding instruction improved learners' reading comprehension better than traditional instruction.

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# THE IMPACT OF CONTENT AND LANGUAGE INTEGRATED LEARNING (CLIL) ON EFL LEARNERS' READING COMPREHENSION

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of content and language integrated learning (CLIL) on English as a foreign language (EFL) learners' reading comprehension. Seventy Iranian students who studied at Azad University of Shiraz participated in this study. Their major was English language teaching.

At first, they were divided into two groups, CLIL and non-CLIL groups. Then, they took part in the pre-test in order to ensure there was no statistically significant difference between the two groups. Learners in CLIL group took teaching methodology course. But, learners in non-CLIL group took reading comprehension course. A framework which was used for both groups was scaffolding reading experience (SRE) model (Graves & Graves, 2003). The main difference between the two groups was the content which was selected for them. At the end of the semester, the learners took part in the post-test. The results indicated that CLIL method improved EFL learners' reading comprehension skill as p-value was 0.04 ( $p < 0.05$ ), and learners in CLIL group performed better than non-CLIL group.

**KEYWORDS :** CLIL, EFL, Scaffolding, Reading comprehension

## 1.Introduction

With the advent of the distinctive characteristics of academic language, there has been a tremendous methods compatible with the nature of these skills (Abebe, 2013). One of these methods is content and language integrated learning (CLIL). It refers to "both content-based instruction and immersion education by virtue of its Dual focus on language and content" (Dalton-Puffer, 2011, p.182). CLIL is an approach for learning content through foreign language. It can provide opportunities for learners to use their new language skill. It is a competence-based teaching approach which refers to European education systems. The idea is to teach the subject and the language simultaneously. CLIL encourages the use of curricula which promotes the right interpersonal skills, cultural sensitivity, communication, and language abilities (Schumacher, nd).

CLIL instruction changes teacher-centered classroom into student-centered classroom. So, it leads to more innovation and motivation than traditional instruction. Coyle (2010) claimed that CLIL is not a form of language education or subject education. In fact, it is an innovative combination of both.

Marsh (2002) believed that CLIL teachers can provide optimal condition for students' communication. They should be proficient enough in that content area, and they should know the foreign language very well. CLIL teachers must understand the difference between language learning and language acquisition, and they must introduce activities that link language and subject aspects.

## 2. Background

Knowing other language is the best tool for openness and mobility which allows people to get to know other culture as well as experience them. It also increases the maturity, consistency and prosperity of society as a whole, giving individuals a genuine freedom.

Exposure to foreign language develops affective strategies for grammatical treatment, accent opportunities and lexis acquisition (Bernabe, 2013). While human mind is open to language learning over a lifetime, the relatively recent findings have revealed the ability to learn other languages in infancy is optimal. (Brewster, Ellis, & Girad, 2004)

Teaching and learning through foreign language is not a novel phenomenon. Interests in this matter have recently increased considerably. CLIL attracts educators and researchers, for it may be an ideal environment for achieving good proficiency in second language (Pietila and Merikivi, 2014).

The term CLIL was coined by Marsh (1994). He defined CLIL as situations where subjects are taught through a foreign language. It has dual-focused aims which are learning of content and learning of foreign language at the same time.

In order to run CLIL method in classrooms effectively, Scott and Beadle (2014) suggested conditions for teachers. Teachers should use authentic material, should use scaffolding techniques to reduce the cognitive and linguistic load of context, should create classroom interaction to balance listening and speaking for students, should use appropriate feedback and correction in their classroom, and should use task-based language teaching method that promotes students' interaction.

CLIL has three main characteristics that are needed for effective foreign language acquisition in CLIL context: exposure to input, processing of meaning, and language production (Skehan, 1998). Learners should be exposed to input which is compatible and rich. They also process information in order to change them from input into intake; "the part of input that learners process is called intake" (Corder, 1976). So learners process compatible and relevant input to acquire language. The last characteristic is language or output production. It means learners should be able to produce language (Bernabe, 2013).

Besides these three skills Moate (2010) investigated the social dimension of CLIL approach:

From a sociocultural perspective, knowledge is understood as a historically constructed, culturally and socially contextualized entity instantiated in language. To unpack this dense definition, knowledge doesn't just exist as an independent body [...]. The sociocultural perspective rejects the idea that each learner discovers knowledge as an individual. Rather experts (teachers) act as authoritative mediators of knowledge, apprenticing novices (learners) into existing bodies of knowledge" (p.39).

The role of teachers in CLIL programs is not an easy undertaking. The teachers of content should have sufficient linguistic competence to be able to pass an academic content in that foreign language. They should also have an in-depth knowledge of their own subject. A lack of adequate knowledge of that language leads stakeholders to use foreign language teachers to teach specialized content (Vazquez, & Ellison, 2013). Gracia (2009) stated that the selection of teachers in many countries is not based on their professional qualifications in the content matter or in that foreign language.

The 4Cs' model which refers to content, cognition, communication, and culture (as cited in Ruiz De Zarobe, 2013) is the underlying basis of CLIL. Content is not only about acquiring knowledge. In fact, learners create their own knowledge and understand and develop skill. Cognition relates to thinking. It enables learners to create their own interpretation of content. Communication is an essential part for language learning. Interactive awareness plays an important role in CLIL.

Abebe (2013) examined the effect of CLIL on learners' awareness of problem-question answer genre and their writing performance. This study employed quantitative tools of data collection and analysis. 110 freshmen took part in this study. The students who studied law were categorized into two groups, CLIL and non-CLIL groups. Students in the non-CLIL group involved critical reading and writing practices, and oral argument. The teacher established a collaborative framework. The adjunct model of content-based instruction which involved integration of an English language course offered to the students. The results of the study revealed that CLIL approach fostered academic genre awareness and writing skill better than conventional (non-CLIL) approach.

Heras and Lasagabaster (2015) investigated the impact of CLIL on affective factors and vocabulary learning. Forty-six students studied in compulsory secondary education were administered a questionnaire on motivation and self-esteem, and were given a vocabulary test. Participants were tested on a pre-test, immediate post-test, and delayed post-test. Results indicated that CLIL reduced gender difference in motivation, and CLIL had a positive effect on both male and female students' learning of the technical content-related vocabulary.



### 3. Research Questions

1. Does CLIL approach have any effect on EFL learners' reading comprehension?
2. Is there any statistically significant difference between the effect of CLIL and non-CLIL approach in EFL learners' reading comprehension?

### 4. Methodology

#### 4.1. participants

The participants were chosen from Shiraz Azad university. All students were Persian native speakers. They were seventy junior university students. They were fifty-nine females and eleven males. They studied English language teaching.

#### 4.2. Instruments

Oxford placement tests (version 1 & 2) were used in this study. Version 1 of this test was used in the pre-test, and version 2 was used in the post-test. Both of these tests have 60 multiple-choice questions. The reliability of the version 1 based on Cronbach's alpha is .90, and the reliability of the version 2 based on Cronbach's alpha is .88.

#### 4.3. Procedure

seventy participants were divided into two groups. SRE (scaffolding reading experience) model was used as a framework for both groups. Based on Graves and Graves (2003). There are some activities in pre-reading, while reading and post-reading activities. These activities were used for these two groups. The CLIL group took a course in teaching methodology and the content was selected based on this course. Students learned different issues in teaching methodology while they were practicing on their reading comprehension skill. In non-CLIL group, students took a reading comprehension course. A reading book was selected for the learners in this group which improved their reading comprehension skill. CLIL group was considered as an experimental group and non-CLIL group was considered as a control group. Before applying any instructions, students in both groups participated in the pre-test, because it should not be any statistically difference between the groups. CLIL group was taught based on CLIL method, and non-CLIL group was not taught based on this method. At the end of the semester, students in both groups took post-test to identify if treatment was effective.

#### 4.4. Data analysis

In order to analyze the data, SPSS software version 16 was used to obtain descriptive and inferential statistics. Paired t-test and independent samples t-test were used. T-test was run to determine whether there was any statistically significance between the two groups.

#### 4.5. Results

Results are based on two research questions. The data was analyzed according to quantitative approach.

##### 4.5.1. Research question 1

Table 1 indicates descriptive statistics of the CLIL group in the pre-test and the post-test. It shows improvement of students' scores in post-test.

**Table 1: Descriptive statistics of the CLIL group**

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1 Pre-test	33.7429	35	12.77715	2.15973
Post-test	40.0571	35	9.62210	1.62643

Table 2 is the results of paired t-test. As the results show p-value is 0.39 which is significant. It means that CLIL method improved learners' reading comprehension, so it is effective.

Table 2: Paired Samples Test

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
		Lower	Upper	Lower	Upper	Lower	Upper	Lower	Upper
Pair 1	Pre-test-Post-test	-6.31429	17.43184	2.94652	-12.30233	-.32624	-2.143	34	.039

#### 4.5.2. Research question 2

Table 3 shows descriptive statistics of both groups in the pre-test. The mean of CLIL group is 33.74, and the mean of non-CLIL group is 34.31.

Table 3: Descriptive statistics of the two groups (pre-test)

Groups		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
SCORES	CLIL group	35	33.7429	12.77715	2.15973
	non-CLIL group	35	34.3143	12.79653	2.16301

Table 4 shows the results of independent samples t-test of the pre-test. P-value is 0.85 ( $p > .05$ ) which shows that there is not any statistically significant difference between the groups. So, they are homogenous.

Table 4: Independent Samples T- Test(pre-test)

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		Lower	Upper	Lower	Upper	Lower	Upper	Lower	Upper	Lower
SCORES	Equal variances assumed	.006	.940	.187	68	.852	.57143	3.05664	-5.52800	6.67086
	Equal variances not assumed			.187	68.000	.852	.57143	3.05664	-5.52800	6.67086

Table 5 shows descriptive statistics of the two groups in the post-test. The mean of the CLIL group is 40.05 , and the mean of non-CLIL group is 35. As the results show the mean of CLIL group is higher than non-CLIL group in the post-test.

**Table 5: Descriptive statistics of the two groups (post-test)**

groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
SCORES CLIL group	35	40.0571	9.62210	1.62643
Non-CLIL group	35	35.0000	10.75393	1.81775

Table 6 shows the results of independent samples t-test of the post-test. P-value is .042 ( $p < .05$ ) which shows that there is a statistically significant difference between the groups. Therefore, CLIL group performs better than non-CLIL group.

**Table6: Independent Samples T- Test(post-test)**

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		Lower	Upper	Lower	Upper	Lower	Upper	Lower	Upper	Lower
SCORES	Equal variances assumed	1.135	.290	2.073	68	.042	5.05714	2.43916	.18988	9.92440
	Equal variances not assumed			2.073	67.176	.042	5.05714	2.43916	.18880	9.92548

#### 4.6. Discussion

In order to answer research questions of the study, paired t-test and independent sample t-test were run. Paired t-test was done for the first research question. P-value was 0.39 ( $p < 0.05$ ) which was significant. It showed that CLIL improved EFL learners' reading comprehension ability. Independent sample t-test was done for the second research question. P value was .042 as it was smaller than 0.05. So, it indicated there was statistically significant differences between the two groups, CLIL and non-CLIL groups.

The results proved that CLIL method helps EFL learners' to enhance their reading comprehension skill. The results are in agreement with input hypothesis. Krashen (1985) believed learners should expose to comprehensible input to acquire languages. In addition to , Skehan(1988) stated that learners process information which they consider relevant and understandable at first which is one of the characteristics of CLIL.

There are some factors that cause the efficiency of this method. The first factor is that students have main roles in the classroom. It means that it is student- centered. It promotes students' motivation. The second factor is that students in these classrooms have interaction with each other. Based on Lutz, Guthrie ,and Davis (2006) , scaffolding improves learners' reading comprehension when learners interact with each other. As it has been mentioned scaffolding activities were used in this study. The third factor is that although language skills are

integrated, receptive skills(listening and reading) are favorably affected in CLIL classroom. Comprehensible input causes learners' better competence in listening and reading (Dalton-Puffer, 2008).

#### 4.7. Conclusion

Bilingual education, using a foreign language in addition to the students' mother tongue, non-language subjects is becoming more popular . CLIL combines content and language teaching. There are different forms of bilingual education programs that are covered under the umbrella term of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) (McDougald,2009).CLIL provide opportunities for learners to increase their linguistic competence. Learners in these settings have more positive attitudes toward language learning.( Merisuo-Storm,2007)

The success of programs involving the teaching of content through another language does not only rely on whether the teachers responsible for having a high level of linguistic and subject competence, but also on the collaboration between those teaching content subjects and languages (Vazques, Ellison,2013).

Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that CLIL method improved EFL learners' reading comprehension. Although learners in non-CLIL group performed better in the post-test than in the pre-test , but learners in CLIL group had better performance in reading comprehension.

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MJLTM

# A COMPARATIVE INVESTIGATION INTO THE IMPACT OF INNOVATIVE AND NON- INNOVATIVE TEACHERS ON IRANIAN EFL LEARNERS' SPEAKING ABILITY

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## Abstract

This study was done with the intention of investigating the effect of innovative teachers on EFL learners' speaking ability. To accomplish the objective of the study, 80 upper-intermediate EFL learners at an institute were chosen after going through an OPT and a speaking test (face2face Oral Placement Test) as a pretest. They were then randomly assigned to two experimental groups. Experimental groups consisted of classes 1 and 2 (group A) with an innovative teacher for each. Teachers' innovation was measured by the researcher's observation. The innovative teachers used their creativity and innovative methods in their classes, such as using Skype, video projectors, and English news. The other two classes (classes 3 & 4), or the control groups (group B) had two non-innovative teachers. After 20 sessions, both groups were post tested, t-test being employed to compute the differences between the two means. Having run a t-test, the researcher found out that group A outperformed group B on the post test, concluding that innovative teachers affect EFL learners' speaking ability.

**Key words:** Communication, EFL learner, Innovation, Speaking ability, OPT

## 1. Introduction.

Speaking in L2 has occupied a unique position throughout much of the history of language teaching. One of the main reasons which have made speaking an important skill in English is that people are interested in improving their communication with native speakers. Speaking is the skill which can be improved if learners wish to maintain themselves in an English environment and try to communicate and speak like their mother tongue. Brown and Yule (1999) stated that speaking depends on the complexity of the information to be communicated; however, the speaker sometimes finds it difficult to clarify what they want to say. Zhang (2009) argued that speaking remains the most difficult skill to master for a majority of English learners, and they are still incompetent in communicating orally in English. According to Ur (1996), there are many factors that cause difficulty in speaking, and they are as follows:

1. Inhibition. Students are worried about making mistakes, fearful of criticism, or simply shy.
2. Nothing to say. Students have no motive to express themselves.
3. Low or uneven participation. Only one participant can talk at a time because of large classes and the tendency of some learners to dominate, while others speak very little or not at all.
4. Mother-tongue use. Learners who share the same mother tongue tend to use it because it is easier and because learners feel less exposed if they are speaking their mother tongue.

In a growing number of countries, the Innovative Teaching and Learning (ITL) Research program is fueling inquiry and discussion among policymakers, educators, and researchers about the distance between teaching and learning visions and practice and what to do about it. ITL Research, sponsored by Microsoft's

Partners in Learning, investigates innovative teaching practices, the conditions that enable teachers to teach in new ways, and the resulting connection with students' 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. As the program progresses, these methods will be adapted into tools and processes that educators can use to examine, discuss, and ultimately improve the educational opportunities they provide to students (Shear et al. 2009).

The general statement is that the reasons behind the innovative teaching and learning methods and approach are the failures and weaknesses of the traditional methods. Traditional methods are not enough to promote adequate level and quality of student learning.

Creativity, understanding and encouragement will go a long way towards establishing rapport with our students and towards learning the English language. Using task-based learning to teach English does not fall into the well-trying comfort zone of traditional teaching. The average teacher feels comfortable with the prescribed textbook. The introduction of task-based learning into the classroom may bring about the fear that 'there is no teaching going on'. This unfortunately denies students the opportunity to immerse themselves in the English language. It is necessary that teachers try using other materials as a teaching resource. The language of communication is real-life or authentic and UN textbook-like in design.

By incorporating hands-on projects into their everyday language classroom, teachers are preparing students to enter the real world. Teachers can create a non-threatening environment to encourage both shy and talkative students to participate. In short, teachers can help students catch the passion for learning English. English speaking ability is very important for people interaction where people almost speak everywhere and every day through English.

In this global era, many people use English as a media of communication and it makes people who come from different countries to be easier in making interaction and communication. As an international language, English is also being taught in Indonesia both in religious or non-religious institution. As an institution of education, Islamic boarding school also has a program of learning English as the way of communication in daily conversation.

## 2. Background

Speaking English is usually the first step to learn the three English language skills (speaking, reading and writing) if the curriculum is learner - centered, as it has shown that learners have the greatest role in a learning process and it can be the result of the students' interest in language learning. This claim has been supported by some researchers like Makarova (1997) and Rifkin (2000). Along the same line, Nunan says "no curriculum can claim to be truly learner-centered unless the learners' subjective needs and perceptions relating to the process of learning are taken into account" (1988: 177). In the context of this paper the speaking process is the learners' subjective need stated by Nunan and therefore this need has to be taken into account. Allwright says, "very many teachers seem to find it difficult to accept their learners as people with a positive contribution to make to the instructional process" (1984:167). The general impression is, however, that learners do have to play a major role in the learning process to ensure success in learning, especially the oral skill of the language being learnt (i.e. English).

Recent developments in the fields of discourse analysis, conversational analysis, and corpus analysis suggest that discourse can be compartmentalized into a number of speaking situations and genres, and that successful L2 speakers should be able to operate in these situations and genres (Roger, 2006). A number of empirical studies have examined university ESL students' concerns and difficulties they face while participating in oral classroom activities.

### 2.1. English Speaking Problems among EFL Learners

Ferris (1998) investigated the views of tertiary ESL students at three different American tertiary institutions about their difficulties in English listening and speaking skills, and found that the students were most concerned with oral presentations and whole class discussions, but they perceived little difficulty with small-group discussions.

Cheng, Myles and Curtis (2004) examined consistency between the language skills required for engagement with the demands of course work at the graduate level and the skills that non-native English speaking students found difficult to master. Their findings suggested that many non-native English speaking students still needed continual targeted language support even after they were admitted into the graduate programs.

Unlike the above studies which adopted a quantitative approach, Morita (2002) carried out a qualitative study that investigated how students were expected to speak in two graduate courses in a TESL program at a Canadian university and how they acquired the oral academic discourses required to perform successful oral academic presentations. Morita's findings suggested that both nonnative and native speakers gradually became apprenticed into oral academic discourses through ongoing negotiations with instructors and peers.

Since the emergence of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), the only groups of people having difficulty using it are not the teachers. Students are also to be taken into account in this case. An important question to ask is if EFL students need to speak English and communicate in this language. In a setting where English is a foreign language, students usually learn with low intrinsic motivation; English may be deemed irrelevant with students' needs because the language is not part of their everyday life.

In order to investigate the perceived English speaking problems of the ESL English major students, the study reported here used semi-structured interview, which aimed for "concrete and complex illustrations" (Wolcott, 1994, p. 364) and thus provided the students with opportunities to talk about their experiences in their own words.

Richards (2010) outlines ten specific language competencies that a language teacher needs in order to teach effectively: 1) competence to provide good language models; 2) competence to maintain use of the target language in the classroom; 3) competence to maintain fluent use of the target language; 4) competence to give explanations and instructions in the target language; 5) competence to provide examples of words and grammatical structures and give accurate explanations (e.g. of vocabulary); 6) competence to use appropriate classroom language; 7) competence to select target-language resources (e.g. newspapers, magazines, internet websites); 8) competence to monitor his or her own speech and writing for accuracy; 9) competence to give correct feedback on learner language; 10) competence to provide input at an appropriate level of difficulty. Clearly, each of these language competencies is closely related to a teacher's ability to speak the target language fluently and confidently in classroom. It can be assumed that the students' perceived speaking problems and difficulties will have an impact on their teaching when they actually start to teach.

## 2.2. History of Language Teaching In Iran

Language teaching has a long history in Iran. It dates back to 1851 when the first government-sponsored institution of learning under the name of Dar-ol-Fonun (poly-technique) was established in Tehran (the capital). The foreign language taught at that time was French. Since then, foreign languages have been among the main components of curriculum in Iranian schools. However, the objectives of teaching and learning English have not been satisfactorily met.

As a result, almost none of the high school graduates are able to use the English language for the purpose of communication, except for those who learn English in language institutes outside schools. Such a failure in the educational system of the country warrants investigation. Regarding the vast range of efforts made in relation to the trend of teaching and learning English in Iran, one may think that its objectives have been completely achieved, but it is not true. In this regard, there are still many problems in the area of learning and teaching English in Iran (Tabatabaei and Pourakbari, 2012).

The abstract nature of learning necessitates constant research in the field to find solutions to questions and difficulties language educators and program developers face. Thus, the constant change and development in language teaching methods is meant to accommodate new findings in the field. In the last fifteen to twenty years, language teaching in Iran has seen a slow and gradual change from traditional methods, in which deductive learning was stressed and learning of a language was done mainly through teaching and studying of grammar and translation, to more modern methods based on communicative approaches.

Today's world is a world of rapid technical change. Innovations come out in an ever increasing pace. Due to tremendous progress in information and communication technology, the scenario of contemporary teaching techniques is entirely changed. The teacher of 21<sup>st</sup> century should discard traditional concepts and techniques of classroom teaching and should adopt the recent and innovative teaching ones. English language teachers must be innovative, imaginative, and resourceful and have thorough knowledge of the subject and adopt new techniques to change socio- economic status of the country.

The importance and necessity of creativity and its ever-developing process at present time has attracted the attention of researchers and educational planners towards the study and analysis of creativity from the educational point of view. Considering their plans, objectives, content, and educational facilities, educational



systems have an important role in the activation or suppression of creative abilities in individuals. Therefore, most communities have focused their attention since long ago on the revision and modification of the curricula and educational plans with the purpose of helping the development of creative abilities in children and adolescents (Manteghi, 2011).

After getting familiar with the different aspects that can be effective in maintaining a creative atmosphere in classrooms, and active and creative education, different examples in various courses are provided in terms of different aspects and structures. The world-wide experiences show that educational innovations in the field of educational innovation have taken place. For this reason, without doubt it is essential to be aware of such developments and try to investigate the possibility of expanding and deepening them, and so making these methods native across Iran (Manteghi, 2011).

Teachers' proficiency in using technology is another issue covered in literature (Shaffer, 2006). Teachers, who are not conversant with the technologies they use in their teaching, may not feel comfortable with showing their lack of expertise in front of their students. As Shaffer argues, if a teacher cannot read, it would be difficult for him/her to identify whether a book is bad or whether his/her reading is inadequate to judge the book. When it comes to technology 18"Diegetic," in the cinema, typically refers to the internal world created by the story that the characters themselves experience and encounter: the narrative "space" that includes all the parts of the story, both those that are and those that are not actually shown on the screen (such as events that have led up to the present action) (Definition retrieved from Wikipedia, June 2009) 36 similar behavior is noted.

### 3. Statement of the problems

A large percentage of the world's language learners study English to develop proficiency in speaking, because speech is the most basic means of human communication. Perhaps the most difficult aspect of spoken English is that it is almost always accompanied by interaction with at least one other speaker. This is one reason why many of us were shocked and disappointed when we used our second or foreign language for the first time in a real interaction. Oral skills have not always been figured so centrally in second language pedagogy. In classes that utilize comprehension-based approaches to language teaching, listening is stressed before speaking.

There are many factors which affect learning English; they include selecting and utilizing a good method of teaching, motivating learners, reforming the relation between teacher and students, a good class management (Brown, 2000), modern training technology (Harmer, 2001) and an appropriate curriculum (Richard & Renandya, 2002; Nunan 1998).

What can guarantee permanent learning and a desirable situation involves using an efficient training method, quitting traditional methods, making students think, using innovative factors in teaching and maintaining a dynamic class. Accordingly, the present researcher tries to find out how innovative teachers can affect learners' speaking ability.

Based on the problems stated above and the background presented, the current study aims to find answers to the following questions:

1. What is the effect of innovation on learners' speaking skill?
2. Is there a relationship between teachers' innovation and EFL learners' speaking ability?

And the null hypothesis of the study is as follows:

There is no relationship between innovative teachers and Iranian EFL learners' speaking ability.

### 4. The Design of the Study

The present study followed a quasi-experimental design. The study consisted of an independent variable (innovation) and a dependent variable (speaking English). The design to carry out this study was quasi experimental, with a pretest, treatment and a posttest. The researcher gave students in group A (classes 1 and 2), a pretest (face2face Oral Placement Test, Cambridge University Press, 2013) to identify students' level of speaking, and then treatment started with innovative teachers. According to this definition that creative teacher will find multiple methods to engage students, creative teaching found that teachers placed a great emphasis on their interpersonal relationship with students; the innovative teacher can extract information from texts, audio and visual sources of information for teaching purposes. And briefly, characteristics of innovative teachers are being reflective, creative, connected, collaborative and inquisitive the innovative teachers are selected. They used training aids, video projectors, English news, song and film in their classes.

At the end of treatment, (its duration is 20 sessions and each session will be one and a half hour long) the researcher gave the same speaking test as a post test. Students in group B (classes 3 and 4) had just a pretest and posttest and there was no treatment here in this group. The pretest was used as the posttest as well. The design of the current study has been illustrated diagrammatically in figure 4.1 below:

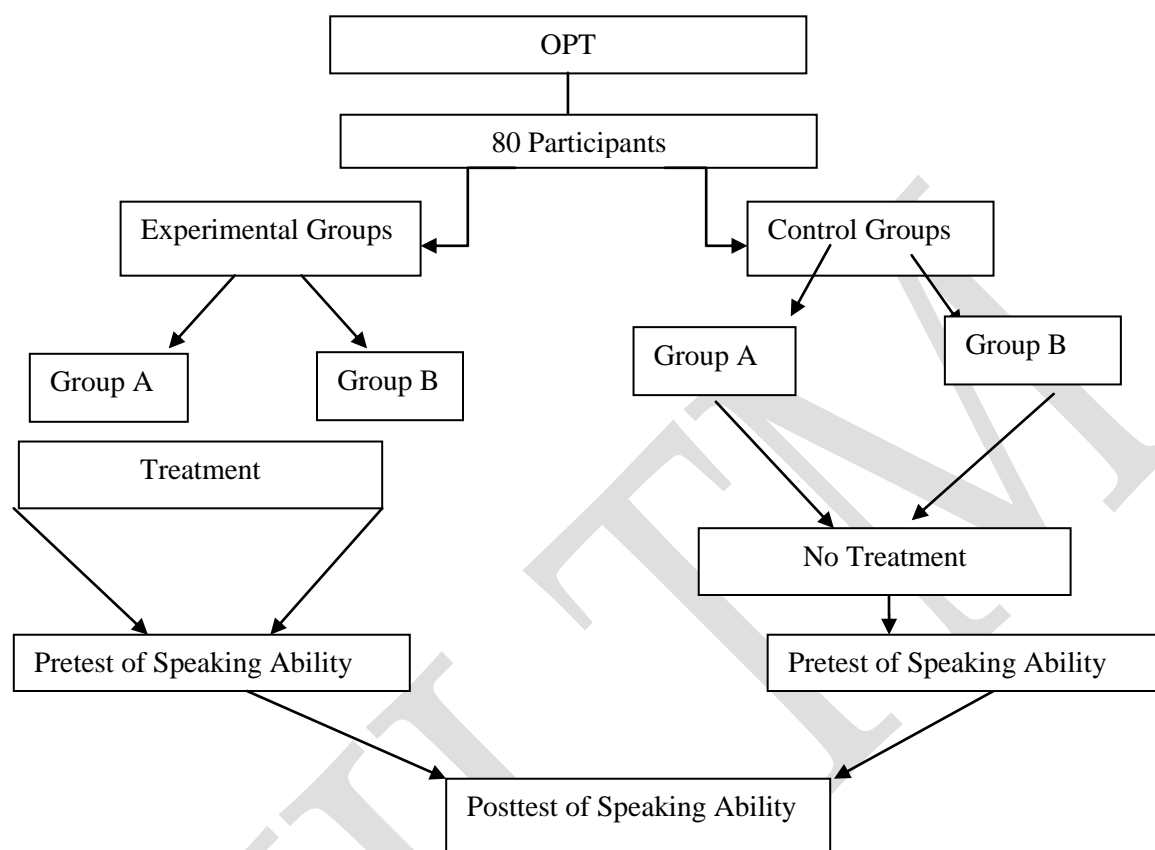


Figure 4.1. The Design of the Study

Figure 4.1 illustrates the general schematic representation of the design of the current study. This includes at least four stages: 1) subject selection via administering an OPT, 2) exposing the participants to the pretest of speaking ability, 3) treating the experimental group of the study with treatment and the control group with no treatment and 4) administering the posttest of speaking to both groups of the study.

## 5. Participants

In order to accomplish the objectives of this study and have a homogenized group of subjects, 80 learners (aged 20-30 years old, female) from Mehr Afarin English institute (Rasht, Iran) took a placement test at an upper-intermediate level. There were also 4 teachers with the same level of education between ages 24 and 30 years.

In order to obtain some information about the teachers' innovation, the researcher observed 4 classes in the institute and noticed some of them used training aids like video projector, English films and animations or songs, giving lectures to students, using Skype, asking students to listen to English news and giving lectures, asking students to read short stories and giving a summary of the story in class.

## 6. Materials

The materials used in the current study were in three types: an OPT (Oxford Placement Test) for proficiency, a pretest and a posttest. The OPT test used in this study consisted of two sections including vocabulary, grammar. For each section, the participants were asked to answer the questions in the specified answer sheets. The answers were then collected and scored by the researcher. The pretest of the study consisted of a test of speaking in the form of an oral interview. The test which was used in pretest was an Oral Placement Test (face2face Oral Placement Test, Cambridge University Press, 2013) with 36 questions that started with easy questions and

continued with difficult ones based on the certain general concepts of general proficiency such as the participants' life and education careers, family relationships, jobs, leisure activities, and interests. Students' scores were measured out of 10. The researcher asked 5 questions like 1: what do you think your friends are doing now? 2: Have you been to English -speaking country recently? 3: Tell me about a book you've read recently? 4: Tell me how you imagine your life this time next year. 5: What, in your opinion, are the characteristics of a good friend? And each question carried 2 marks. The material for the posttest of the study consisted of the interview questions used in the pretest of the study

## 7. Data Analysis and Findings

### The Descriptive Analysis of the Data

This section focuses on the descriptive analysis of the obtained data in this study, using the SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Science, version20). Table 1 shows the descriptive analysis for the pretest and the posttest of speaking in the experimental group of the study.

Table 1. Descriptive analysis of the data of the Experimental Group of the study

Test	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
PRspeaking	40	2.83	1.599	2.558
POspeaking	40	6.80	2.041	4.168

As is indicated in Table 1, the number of participants was 40 in experimental group, the mean for the PRspeaking (pretest of speaking) scores was shown to be 2.83 ( $X=2.83$ ) as compared to the mean for the POspeaking (posttest of speaking) scores which was 6.80 ( $X=6.80$ ).

The obtained means are representative of a significant difference. As for the standard deviations obtained for the experimental group, there seems to be more variability among the PRspeaking scores than among the POspeaking scores. This may give an image of the participants' posttest scores being more homogenous after the treatment of the study. Similarly, the descriptive analysis for the pretest and the posttest of speaking in the control group of the study is given in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Descriptive analysis of the data of the Control Group of the study

Test	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
PRspeaking	40	3.15	1.833	3.362
POspeaking	40	3.63	1.735	3.010

As is indicated in Table 2, the number of participants was 40 in the control group. The mean for the PRspeaking scores was shown to be 3.15 ( $X = 3.15$ ) as compared to the mean for the POspeaking scores which was 3.63 ( $X=3.63$ ). Although it does not seem statistical to compare means non-inferentially, the obtained means are representative of a no significant difference. As for the standard deviations obtained for the control group, there seems to be more variability among the PRspeaking scores than among the POspeaking scores. This may give an image of the participants' posttest scores being more homogenous after the treatment (i.e. using innovative teachers as a treatment).

Due to the specific method of calculation for the t value, the participant groups of the study had to be given a label. Thus, the experimental group was labeled 'A (Ex)' and the control group of the study was labeled 'B (Con)'. Apparently, the means of the posttests of the two groups were significantly different; however, the significance of the difference between the means had to be determined when the t value could be calculated.

## 8. Inferential Analysis of the Data

A t-test as well as a descriptive data analysis was run to gain a profound understanding of data analysis to find out how different the groups performed on the two sets of speaking tests.

Table 3. Paired Samples Test for experimental group

		Paired Differences			T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean			
Pair 1	post1 - pre1 ex.	3.975	2.722	.430	9.236	39	.000

The t-value of the study was calculated between the pretest and posttest of the experimental group. Table 3 shows the degree of freedom as 39 for the experimental group receiving training by innovative teachers. Also the t value for the experimental group was 9.236. The level of significance for the experimental group was computed as .000 which is smaller than 0.05.

Thus,  $\text{sig}=0.000$  and  $\alpha = 0.05$  rejects the null hypothesis of the study. The result proves that the training of the participants having innovative teachers has a positive effect on their speaking ability. Also the research question is positively answered as the innovative teachers had a positive effect on the participants' speaking ability.

Table 4. Paired Samples Test for control group

		Paired Differences			T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean			
Pair 1	post2 - pre2	.475	2.253	.356	1.333	39	.190

The t-value of the study was calculated between the pretest and posttest of the control group. Table 4 shows the degree of freedom as 39 for the first group which belongs to the control group. Also the t value for the control group was 1.333. The level of significance for the control group was computed as .190 which is greater than 0.05.  $\text{sig} = 0.190 > 0.05$ . This shows that the control group having non-innovative teachers did not reveal any significant change in terms of their speaking ability.

In the end, to compare the performance of both the control and experimental groups in their posttest, an independent sample t-test was run. Accordingly, the significance level came to .575 which confirms the equality of the variances. The t-test section of the table shows that the significance level equaled .000. This rejects the assumption of groups' equal performance the posttest performance. Table 5 shows the result.

Table 5. Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		Test Statistics		t-test for Equality of Means		95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower Upper
P	Equal variances assumed	.317	.575	6.076	78	.000	2.775	.457	1.866 3.684
s	Equal variances not assumed			6.076	78.000	.000	2.775	.457	1.866 3.684

## 9. Conclusion

According to the data gathered from both descriptive and inferential analysis, the null hypothesis of the study was rejected which holds that the innovative teachers have no effect on the speaking ability of the intermediate learners since the mean scores of the experimental groups were higher than those of the control groups. The

participants in the experimental group showed significant improvement in their posttest after the treatment. The level of significance for the experimental group was computed as .000 which is smaller than 0.05 and rejects the null hypothesis of the study. The same procedure was conducted for the control group and revealed that the level of significance was computed as .190 which was greater than 0.05.

Descriptive statistics of the data gathered also revealed that the mean posttest score of the control group was 3.63 which had no significant difference from the pretest which was 3.15. Also the mean score of the experimental group in their posttest of speaking equaled 6.80 that show a significant improvement from the pretest of the same group of participants. As the data and discussion descriptively and inferentially indicate, there was a significant difference between the two groups in terms of their speaking performance in their posttest. Therefore, this rejects the hypothesis that having innovative teachers has no effect on the speaking ability of the intermediate EFL learners. A model of current study is suggested in Figure 9.1.

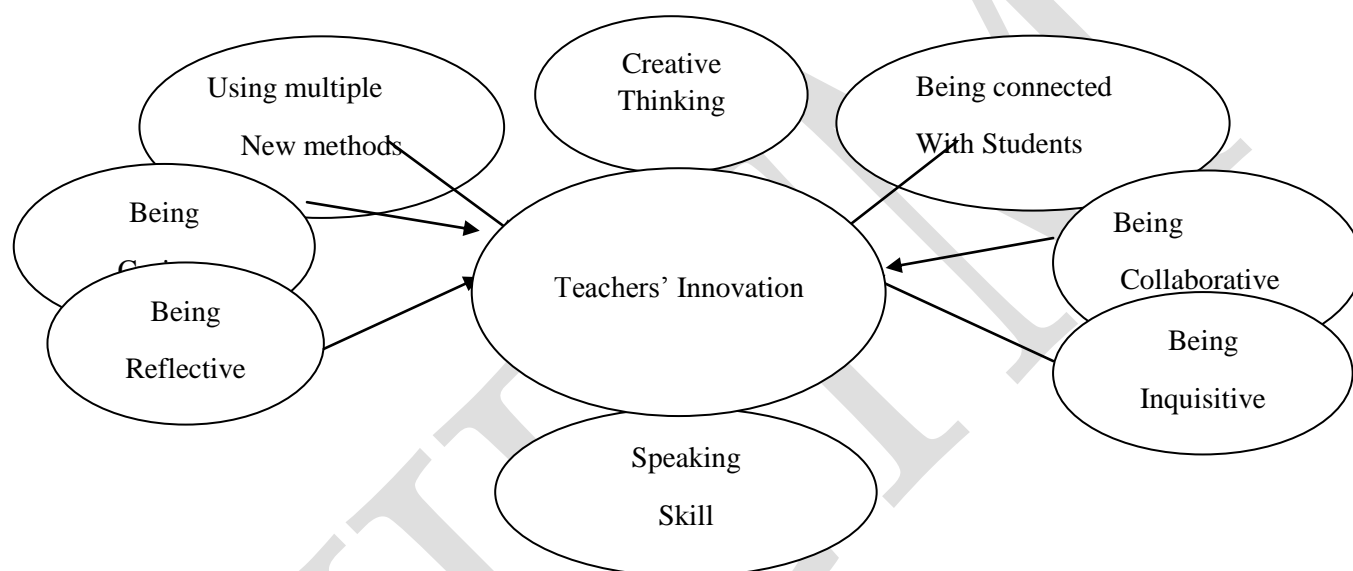


Figure 9.1. General model of the Study

Figure 9.1 shows that, factors such as creativity, using multiple methods, being Inquisitive, being collaborative, being reflective, being connected to students and being curious are the ones which innovative teachers possess to result in improvement.

Speaking is an important part of teaching of any foreign language, and it requires a communicative approach integrative of both implicit and explicit teaching methods in order to achieve successful integration into the EFL curriculum. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is comprised of an approach to teaching a language through a syllabus designed for instruction, materials, classroom techniques, learners, and teachers. English speaking is a modified communicative activity that involves English spoken language to achieve a particular goal or objective in the English language medium.

The interactive role of the teacher in the EFL classroom should not be underestimated. Teachers have an important effect on those who do and do not speak in the EFL classroom. Nation and Newton (2009) indicated that teachers were usually the people who have the power to control both the content and the procedure of classroom learning, the discussion topic, and the decision of who may or may not participate. Tsui (1996) found that the role of the teacher (i.e. way of interacting with students) directly influenced students' reticence in the classroom.

In addition, he found that the teacher regulates the speaking turns, provides both positive and negative feedback to encourage or discourage learner behavior, and motivates students through constructive criticism and meaningful dialogue. As teachers use creativity and new methods in their classrooms, and they can understand students' needs better.

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# THE EFFECT OF DEEP ORTHOGRAPHY TASK ON IRANIAN INTERMEDIATE EFL LEARNERS' SPELLING AND PRONUNCIATION

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## Abstract

The present study aimed to investigate the effect of deep orthography task on Iranian intermediate EFL learners' spelling ability and pronunciation ability. The questions of this study tried to answer whether using deep orthography task affect learners' spelling and pronunciation accuracy. To answer this question, 30 intermediate learners participated in the experiment of the study. They were randomly selected via an OPT test score of at least one standard deviation below the mean. They were then divided into four groups , each two groups consist of one experimental and one control group. In one of the two groups spelling variable was studied and in the other two groups pronunciation variable was studied. A pretest of spelling and pronunciation was administered to both 2-groups, then, experimental group of each set were taught existing methodology and phonetic symbols and spelling patterns for 5 sessions for pronunciation and spelling variables respectively, and control group of each set received only the existing methodology. A posttest of spelling and pronunciation was then administered to both 2- groups. The data of the study were analyzed using the T-test and correlation coefficient to indicate how participants progressed.

**Keywords:** English orthography, Spelling, Pronunciation, Reading

## 1. Introduction

It is a fact that English spelling system has both regularities and irregularities which can be problematic for non-native speakers learning English both for spelling accuracy and pronunciation accuracy. Therefore, English writing system, spelling ability and pronunciation ability are all related concepts. As Cook (2004, p. 1) puts it, "English writing system is connected to our lives in many ways, not something that is an ancillary to other aspects of language but vitally important to almost everything we do, from signing our wills to sending a text message". Pronunciation is one of the most important skills in English Language Teaching. It is an integral part of foreign language learning since it directly affects learners' communicative competence as well as performance. If speakers have very bad pronunciation, their speech will not be understandable to the listeners. Pronunciation involves far more than individual sounds. Many learners of English language have major difficulties with English pronunciation even after years of learning the language. Also, English spelling is characterized by the inconsistencies of pronunciations, by the discrepancies in numbers of letters and combinations of letters used to represent English sounds (Fay, 1971). The ability to write clearly is essential to effective communication and critical to employment and production in the contemporary world. One important factor to take into account when discussing writing is spelling. In the worst case, one single misspelled letter can change a word and alter the whole meaning of a text. Learning to spell English involves the correct association of phonemes and graphemes.

## 2. Review of the Literature

Pronunciation is one of the most important skills in English Language Teaching. It is an integral part of foreign language learning since it directly affects learners' communicative competence as well as performance. If speakers have very bad pronunciation, their speech will not be understandable to the listeners. Apparently, the fault which most severely impairs the communication process in EFL/ESL learners is pronunciation, not

vocabulary or grammar (Hinofotis and Baily (1980), cited in Okita (1999). In a study entitled "The impact of orthography on the acquisition of L2 phonology: inferring the wrong phonology from print", Goutsougera (2007) investigates how the opaque orthography of English influences the acquisition of L2 English pronunciation. The paper delineates the fundamental differences between English morphophonemic orthography and the Greek purely phonemic orthography. It concludes that Greek learners, who use a Roman script, generate phonology from orthography by mapping graphemes onto phonemes in a true shallow orthography. This conclusion is in congruence with Bassatti (2006), who proposes that L2 orthography affects the mental representations of L2 phonology in beginner L2 learners if L1 is phonetic.

English spelling is characterized by the inconsistencies of pronunciations, by the discrepancies in numbers of letters and combinations of letters used to represent English sounds (Fay, 1971). Learning to spell English involves the correct association of phoneme and graphemes. It also involves the ability to sequence, segment and transform phonemes into graphemes. The speller needs to coordinate several sources of word knowledge phonological, orthographic, morphological and semantic (Wong, 1986). Data collected by Margolin (1984) supported a model in which semantic, lexical, phonological and non-lexical phonological processes can generate spelling, either independently or in an interactive fashion. He added that oral and written spelling depends on common processes up to and including an orthographic code and that after this point, each depends on several separate stages of information processing.

According to Mikko Aro, (2004) English is an example of an orthography where the written script does not fully represent the phonemic structure of spoken language. According to Ehri, Nunes Willows, Schuster, Yaghoub-Zadeh and Shanahan (2001, p. 253), there are about 41 phonemes in English; in the ITA there were 44 characters with a distinct corresponding phoneme (Downing, 1964, p. 15). The number of graphemes is much higher and many graphemes consist of multiple letters. A phoneme can be marked with a variety of graphemes, depending on the context, and vice versa. DeFrancis (1989, pp. 201-208) listed a number of factors behind the complex correspondence of spoken and written English. More than half of the words of the present-day English vocabulary are of foreign origin, mostly from Latin or French. Often, the spelling and pronunciation of the loan words was preserved in English.

### 3. Theoretical Framework

The impression of the researcher is to investigate the effect of deep orthographic task on the learners' spelling and pronunciation accuracy because the orthography of a language plays an important role both in spelling ability and reading ability of L2 learners. The orthographic depth of an alphabetic orthography indicates the degree to which a written language deviates from simple one-to-one letter-phoneme correspondence. It depends on how easy it is to predict the pronunciation of a word based on its spelling—shallow orthographies are easy to pronounce based on the written word, and deep orthographies are difficult to pronounce based on how they are written. In shallow orthographies, the spelling-sound correspondence is direct: given the rules of pronunciation, one is able to "say" the word correctly. In other words, shallow (i.e., transparent) orthographies, also called phonemic orthographies, have a one-to-one relationship between its graphemes and phonemes, and the spelling of words is very consistent. In contrast, in deep (i.e., opaque) orthographies the relationship is less direct, and reader must learn the arbitrary or unusual pronunciations of irregular words. In other words, deep orthographies are writing systems that do not have a one-to-one correspondence between sounds (phonemes) and the letters (graphemes) that represent them.

## 4. Method

### 4.1. Participants

Thirty Iranian intermediate students at institute level participated in this study. They were students who were native speakers of Farsi. Their ages ranged between 14-18 years old. These participants were selected from among 60 students. Thirty out of the sixty students were excluded from the main study after participating in the homogenization process since they fell outside the range of one standard deviation above and below the mean. Therefore, the study entailed 30 intermediate participants. These students were then assigned into four groups (two sets): one control and one experimental group in each set. The scores of all 30 students were considered as the data for the study.

### 4.2. Materials

The instruments used in this study include:

-Material for the proficiency test: The proficiency test of OPT was administered to select 30.



-Material for Pretest: The pretest of pronunciation and spelling administered to the four groups of the study including experimental and control group in each set. It included dictation and pronunciation of 20 misspelled-and-mispronounced words for each set respectively. In one set, Students were asked to pronounce aloud the words and a sound-recorder set for recording the pronunciations was used. In the other set, they were asked to write the words as they listened to the recorder playing them.

-Material for Posttest: posttest of pronunciation and spelling administered to each set to investigate the effect of the treatment, deep orthographic task, that includes instruction of English sound-spelling system and practicing 20 misspelled-and-mispronounced words according to their level at institute. The characteristics of the posttest of the study resembled those of the pretest.

-Materials for Treatment: In this study treatment included two parts. One part included the instruction of English sound-spelling system to the first set. This included definitions and examples of phonetic symbols. Also some sub-regularities in English spelling were explained and practiced to the next set of students. Some of those are explained below:

- 1- [c] is pronounced as /s/ if after [c] there is [e, I, y] as in City, Cycle,...and /k/ in other positions, as in Close, Cat, Cream,...
- 2- Silent [gh] and [g] signal how to pronounce the vowel in a word as in fit, fight sin, sign sit, sight
- 3- The first letter is silent:
  - a. Wh- is sometimes spoken as /h-/ as in Who, Whole
  - b. Kn- is spoken as /n-/ as in Knife, Know
  - c. Wr- is spoken as /r-/ as in Write, Wrist
  - d. Ps- is spoken as /s-/ as in Psychology
  - e. Pn- is spoken as /n-/ as in Pneumonia
- 4- The second letter is silent:
  - a. Wh- is sometimes spoken as /w-/ as in Which, What
  - b. Gu- is sometimes spoken as /g-/ as in Guest, Guess
  - c. Gh- is spoken as /g-/ as in Ghost, Ghastly
  - d. Bu- is spoken as /b-/ as in Build, Buoy
- 5- The first two letters have a special sound:
  - a. Ph- is spoken as /f-/ as in Photo
  - b. Qu- is spoken as /kw-/ as in Quick
  - c. Ch- is spoken as /k/ as in Chorus
- 6- Single consonant VS. single consonant plus silent [e] as in
  - a. Tap VS. Tape
  - b. Mat VS. Mate
  - c. Pip VS. Pipe

These regularities and phonetic symbols in addition to combined graphemes were explained and practiced in 6 sessions(each 30 minutes).The second part of the instruction included practicing the 20 words that were selected according to their level at institute. These twenty words were selected to practice Considering some of English sound-spelling features such as letter-sound correspondence, silent letters, different position-different sound, combined graphemes and some other features these words were selected. Reading aloud and writing them was included.

#### 4.3. Procedure

The procedure of the study is reported in several sections according to the nature of the steps taken in the study. The subjects of the study were divided into four groups (one experimental group and one control group in two sets). The participant each set took a pretest of pronunciation and spelling ability respectively. Then, the next step was the treatment of the participants in the experimental groups of the study which was instruction of English sound-spelling system ,its regularities, sub-regularities ,exceptions and phonetic symbols. In each session the students were given some handouts prepared for them. The researcher explained the points while practicing the examples and using oxford Learners' Dictionary. Reading aloud practice and dictation practice also was one part of this treatment. During this procedure the students' attention was guided toward the spelling points and regularities of English sound- spelling system which they can find by themselves. Also they

were taught some strategies for increasing their writing ability (how to remember the spelling of difficult words they encountered). Finally, the participants took the posttest of pronunciation and spelling ability in each set, the scores of which were compared with the pretest scores through statistical calculations.

## 5. Data Analysis and Findings

### 5.1. 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 (4.1) shows the descriptive analysis for the spelling variable of the study:

Table 4.1. Descriptive analysis of the data of spelling variable of the study

Treatment	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
+DOT	7	18.0667	1.90738	0.49248
-DOT	7	15.7333	3.19523	0.82501

As indicated in table (4.1), the number of participants has been 7 in each group ( $N_C = 7$ ;  $N_E = 7$ ). The mean for spelling variable of experimental group scores was shown to be 18.0667 ( $X_{PRE} = 18.0667$ ) as compared to the mean for spelling variable of control group scores which was 15.7333 ( $X_{POE} = 15.7333$ ).

Similarly Table (4.2) shows the descriptive analysis of the pronunciation variable of the study:

Table 4.2. Descriptive analysis of the data of pronunciation variable of the study

Treatment	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
+DOT	8	19.6000	0.63246	0.16330
-DOT	8	17.7333	1.75119	0.45216

As has been indicated in table (4.2), the number of participants in the experimental group and the control group of the study is 30 ( $N_E = 8$ ;  $N_C = 8$ ). The standard deviation for the experimental group of the study and the control group of the study was .63246 and 1.75119, respectively.

### 5.2. Inferential Analysis of the Data

This section focuses of the inferential analysis of the obtained data of this study. Such analysis was done using the SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Science) was selected and used to calculate t-test and correlation coefficient.

Table4.3. The T-test results for the spelling test

T-Test Results	Observed T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Spelling (Equal variances not assumed)	2.198	12	0.040

As is indicated in table (4.3), the t-value of the study was calculated between the posttests of spelling knowledge of the experimental and the control groups. The observed t was calculated as to be 2.198 ( $t_{obs} = 2.198$ ) and the degree of freedom was 12 ( $df = 12$ ). The t-observed value, 2.198, at 12 degrees of freedom is higher than the critical value of t, that is, 2.179. It can be concluded that there was a significant difference between the two groups mean scores in the experimental group and the control group. Finally, the level of significance was calculated as to be 0.040 that is used in interpreting the data for the rejection or support of the hypothesis of the study in the next session.

The results of the T-test for the pronunciation test are shown in the table (4.4) below:

Table4.4. The T-test results for the pronunciation test

T-Test Results	Observed T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pronunciation (Equal variances not assumed)	3.883	14	0.001

As it is shown in table (4.4), the t-value of the study was calculated between the posttests of pronunciation knowledge of the experimental and the control groups. The observed t was calculated as to be

3.883 ( $t_{\text{obs}} = 3.883$ ) and the degree of freedom was 14 ( $df = 14$ ). The  $t$ -observed value, 3.883, at 14 degrees of freedom is higher than the critical value of  $t$ , that is, 2.145. It can be concluded that there was a significant difference between the two groups mean scores in the experimental group and the control group in this set studying pronunciation variable. The observed  $t$  is higher than critical  $t$ ; this indicates that the hypothesis is rejected. Finally, the level of significance was calculated as to be 0.001 that is used in interpreting the data for the rejection or support of the hypothesis of the study in the next session.

The next inferential analysis of the data of this study was related to the degree of the relationship between the pretest and the posttest of spelling and pronunciation in each groups of the study. This was indicated by calculating the Pearson Correlation Coefficient. The results of the Pearson correlation coefficient between the pretest and posttest scores of spelling and pronunciation of the experimental and the control groups of the study have been illustrated in table (4.5) and table (4.6), respectively below:

Table 4.5. Results of correlation between the pretest and the posttest of the **Spelling** variable in experimental and control group (PRESP=pretest of spelling, POSSP=posttest of spelling)

Metric	Control Group	Experimental Group
Pearson Correlation	0.846	0.671

Table (4.5) indicates that the scores of pretest and posttest in spelling group are close to each other. Table (4.5) indicates that the correlation coefficient between the pretest and the posttest scores of the experimental group of the study is .671 ( $R = .671$ ) as compared with the correlation coefficient between the pretest and the posttest of the control group to be .846 ( $R = .846$ ). This indicates that there has been difference between the correlation coefficient of the two groups. That is the scores in the pretest and posttest of spelling in the control group of the study are closer to each other than the scores in the experimental group. It can be inferred from such closeness that there has been no significant progress in the pretest scores of spelling in the control group after being compared with the scores in the posttest.

Table 4.6. Results of correlation between the pretest and the posttest of the **Pronunciation** variable in experimental and control group (PREPR=pretest of pronunciation, POSPR=posttest of pronunciation)

Metric	Control Group	Experimental Group
Pearson Correlation	0.689	0.233

As table (4.6) indicates the scores of pretest and posttest are different meaningfully and this indicates the fact that probably deep orthography task affects pronunciation accuracy of learners. This indicates that there has been difference between the correlation coefficient of the two groups. That is the scores in the pretest and posttest of pronunciation in the control group of the study is closer to each other than the scores in the experimental group. It can be inferred from such closeness that there has been no significant progress in the pretest scores of pronunciation in the control group after being compared with the scores in the posttest.

## 6. Discussion

The process of learning to read and write is difficult for learners of certain orthographies. According to the orthographic depth hypothesis (Katz & Frost, 1992), it is easier to learn to read and write in shallow orthographies than in deep orthographies. Orthographic depth concerns the extent to which written symbols correspond directly to spoken sounds, phonemes, and the extent to which spoken sounds correspond to written symbols. As Venezky (1970) concluded from his analysis of the structure of English orthography, "a person who attempts to scan left to right, letter by letter, pronouncing as he goes, could not correctly read most English words" (p. 127). Also since L2WS of learners are different from L1WS. L2WS learners already have another language and writing system in their mind. This affects the way they learn, read, write and think about their L2 writing system. In addition, learning to spell English involves the correct association of phonemes and graphemes. Thus the difficulty of English orthography results in difficulty in decoding process of reading and hence learners encounter difficulty in spelling and pronunciation accuracy. The effective instructions in both fields have always been an important issue.

Proficiency in spelling actually supports reading (Moats, 2005/2006). Accurate spelling reflects more advanced linguistic knowledge because it requires the integration of phonological, orthographic, and

morphological knowledge (Ehri, 2000) Put simply, the English writing system is complex and, therefore, challenging to learn. Spelling is the writing of a word or words with all necessary letters and diacritics present in an accepted standard order. It is one of the elements of orthography and a prescriptive element of language. It makes lots of problems even for educated people. Investing instructional time in spelling can be profitable if the English language is not treated as a haphazard writing system that can only be learned through rote memorization. Students need to be taught how to learn and remember the spellings of the words. This can be accomplished through: 1- explicit instruction in phoneme-grapheme correspondences, phonemic patterns in letter sequences or syllables, rules for joining syllables or adding morphemes, elements of morpheme preservation in word formation, and strategies for encoding irregular words; 2- careful selection of spelling words that capitalize on students' developing knowledge of the underlying structures of words; and 3- repeated and cumulative practice in coordinating phonemic, orthographic, and morphemic knowledge with immediate error correction.

Above all, through the analysis deep orthography task in this study, overall, the results indicate that instruction of spelling patterns and phonetic symbols is effective.

### **7. Limitations of the Study**

Like any other researches, some inevitable limitations, which may raise new questions for further researches in the same field in the future, will be imposed on. First of all, variables such as age and personal variables are not taken into account. Also, the number of participants seemed not enough but this is due to the fact that number of students in institutes is not high.

### **8. Implications of the Study**

According to the results of the present study, the following implications are drawn to reduce the number of pronunciation problems and spelling errors committed by Persian learners of English as a foreign language:

1. Students should be advised to listen to good English from what available source\_ radio, television, native speakers, and good local speakers of the language. They should listen for correct pronunciation and understanding.
2. Students can record their speech, compare it to that of a native speaker in terms of vowels, consonants, consonant clusters, stress, intonation, etc., find their problems in each area, and practice the correct pronunciation.
3. Teachers most frequently remind their students that they pay attention to the spelling patterns and regularities. Also they should teach students helpful strategies needed for spelling the words
4. English is not an easy language to master. Teachers of English should advise their students to persevere in studying English. There are no short cuts to learning the language. When they are sufficiently exposed to target language, the possibility of making pronunciation errors is minimized.
5. The teacher should provide an explanation with regard to the possible source or cause of error to bring about an awareness of what could be the potential contributory factor. In conclusion, the findings of this study have implications for in-service training programs to include some instruction when training teachers about English spelling and to raise their awareness of the importance of their pronunciation and the resulting result of teacher-induced errors. Spelling is a critical aspect of the curriculum that is integral to the process of reading. It is a subject that needs to be taught thoughtfully and consciously.

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# THE EFFECT OF GI AND CIRC AS THE COOPERATIVE TECHNIQUES ON LEARNERS READING COMPREHENSION AT INTERMEDIATE LEVEL OF IRANIAN EFL CLASSROOMS

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## Abstract

This study was designed to compare two methods of cooperative learning namely, Group Investigation (GI) and Cooperative Integrated Reading and Comprehension (CIRC) in learning English at an intermediate level of reading comprehension. Reading skill as one of the language skills always plays a good role in helping students of language in order to have better understanding of their language. Reading skill is necessary for language learners to acquire new information about textbooks. However, there is, in fact, many researcher scholars have always been interested in investigating reading strategy as one of the most important strategies in learning and teaching language. The design of the study is quasi-experimental. The participants of this project divided into three groups: one of the groups was the control group and the other two groups were called experimental groups. Each group consisted of ninety intermediate level students were studying English in Iran. All students in the three groups were given TOEFL test and each group's scores were compared with the scores of the control group to determine the performance of each of experimental how the controls are different. The results showed that although the CIRC method is significantly different from GI, but as mean scores of students with CIRC were higher in comparing with students thought with GI and thus, CIRC was suggested as more efficient an effective method in teaching reading and can improve more Intermediate Iranian Foreign language learners' reading comprehension.

**Key words:** Reading comprehension, cooperative learning, foreign language learner, English language

## INTRODUCTION

Before, we can consider this research work; we examine the role of language methods briefly. In history of language teaching, they are many methods that have important role in giving information to language learners. Khansir (2014b, p.259) mentioned that "with the development of language teaching over the world, many language methods emerged, syllabus designers, researchers and teachers tried to enable language learners to use the second or foreign language, however; they have provided essential techniques for each method for increasing the knowledge of language learners in language settings". Ziahosseiny (2009) mentioned that a language method used in order to indicate to idea, belief, or theory that a teacher holds in her mind; it is used based on two principles, the first principles in linguistics and the other in psychology. History of English methods are divided into several methods have been used in order to help both teacher and learner to learn English language all over the world (Khansir, 2014a). An English teacher can use of his technique that sometimes consisted of different methods or a method in order to use of different kinds of classroom activity in teaching his students in ELT settings.

In order to investigate how the two methods of cooperative learning namely, Group Investigation (GI) and Cooperative Integrated Reading and Comprehension (CIRC) in learning English will be happen, we consider first the cooperative learning and then go on to consider Group Investigation (GI) and Cooperative Integrated Reading and Comprehension (CIRC). Richards & Rodgers (2001) mentioned that cooperative

learning in language learning is known as Collaborative learning (CL) and used as a part of a more general instructional approach. Note that this method involves pair and small groups of learners in their classroom. Olsen and Kagan (1992, p. 8) argued that "Cooperative learning is group learning activity organized so that learning is dependent on the socially structured exchange of information between learners in groups and in which each learner is held accountable for his or her own learning and is motivated to increase the learning of others." One of the main aim of cooperative language learning is to support working together in order to reach shared goals, and in other words, it focus on developing classrooms that foster cooperation rather than competition in learning. Richards & Rodgers (2001) emphasized that cooperative language learning is an approach designed based on foster cooperation rather than competition, in order to develop critical thinking skills, and to develop communicative competence through socially structured interaction activities, these can be regarded as the overall objectives of CLL. Thus, Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition is designed to develop reading, writing and other language skills, with the primary focus on reading and writing. In this technique, learners are grouped by the teacher, then, they are paired within their groups. Whenever there is a material to learn, the learners work first within their pairs and try to teach each other the new material, then, they pair up with another member of the group and help each other master the material and gain strategies such as oral reading, contextual guessing, summarizing, and asking questions. This process continues with each individual member from different groups pairing up with each other. Next, the learners comeback to their home groups and are evaluated based on the average performance of group members. In implementing this technique, the teacher plays a significant role in knowing the learners well, assigning them into suitable groups, using appropriate materials in terms of content, structure and adjusting the proper time; and in assessing the groups work (Durukan, 2010). Last group of this project is Group Investigation. This group encompasses four elements of investigation, interaction, interpretation and intrinsic motivation that function simultaneously. These elements distinguish GI from the other CL techniques (Koc et al, 2010).

In discussion of statement of problem, Iranian English learners have to pass reading examination as one of the important university examination in order to promotion in their subjects or pass entrance examination to get seat in Iranian universities. Khansir and Dashti (2014) indicated that English language is taught as a foreign language subject from middle (Guidance) school in Iran. The investigators felt that the Iranian English learners need more information about reading skill as one of the language skills in their classroom. In other words, about all Iranian university subjects have general English as a compulsory subject for Iranian learners, thus; the researchers selected cooperative language learning in order to develop the reading skill of the learners. According to this idea, cooperative language learning can help the learners to work together to better understanding of reading comprehension passages are considered as a good method in EFL classroom, especially in Iran. In order to get more information about reading comprehension at intermediate level of Iranian EFL classrooms, the investigators have visited the language teachers and discuss about the material and learning strategies of their learners. This paper followed several questions as follows:

Q1. Is there any significant relationship between CIRC and GI in the reading comprehension test scores before the treatment (that is all of the three groups are homogeneous)?

Q2. Is there any significant relationship between control and GI groups in the reading comprehension test scores after the treatment?

Q3. Is there any significant relationship between control and CRIC groups in the reading comprehension test scores after the treatment?

Q4. Is there any significant difference in the mean score of reading comprehension between experimental group of GI and experimental of CRIC after the treatment?

Hence, the four hypotheses are considered as follows:

H1. There is not any significant relationship between CIRC and GI in the reading comprehension test scores before the treatment (that is all of the three groups are homogeneous).

H 2. There is not any significant relationship between control and GI groups in the reading comprehension test scores after the treatment.

H3. There is not any significant relationship between control and CRIC groups in the reading comprehension test scores after the treatment.

H4. There is not any significant difference in the mean score of reading comprehension between experimental group of GI and experimental of CRIC after the treatment.

### Literature Review

In order to consider the topic of this paper, we shall look at many research works are related to this paper.

Zarei, (2012) investigated the effects of the 'Student Teams-Achievement Divisions' (STAD) and 'Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition' (CIRC) cooperative learning models on reading achievement and vocabulary learning of Iranian learners of English. In this paper, he selected one hundred thirty two female of EFL language learners that were studying English language at National Iran English Language (NIEL) institute in Takestan place, Iran. In this study, the participants divided into the four experimental groups, in addition; the four groups were taught in cooperative learning for one semester with methods of the 'Student Teams-Achievement Divisions' (STAD) and 'Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition' (CIRC), and thus, the control groups in this study were taught in a non-cooperative method. The collection of data in this project used through reading comprehension and vocabulary post-tests were analyzed using four one-way ANOVA procedures. The results indicated that the cooperative learning model CIRC had statistically significant effects on reading comprehension and vocabulary learning, particularly for elementary EFL learners. Khansir and Alipour (2015) focused on the Impact of Students Team Achievement Divisions (STAD) on Iranian EFL Learners Listening Comprehension. In their paper, the total number of sixty Iranian students was selected based on their performance on Oxford Placement Test (OPT). The participants of this article were in the age range of 18 to 25 studying English as their foreign language in a language institute in Bushehr city, Iran. The findings of this article showed that there is a statistically significant difference between the participants of control and experimental groups' scores ( $t = 6.50, p < 0.05$ ) on post-test. Alijanian is one of the research scholar in 2012, investigated the effects of STAD on the English achievement of Iranian third grade junior high school students. He chose sixty Iranian high school learners as participants of this study. As the students consisted of two classes; and divided into the experimental and control groups. The process of the research work in this paper has been done based on a period of two months, in other words, the experimental group was taught based on STAD technique and the control group was taught also for a period of two months based on traditional method. However, in this paper, two types of test teacher-made English achievement tests, and a questionnaire measuring their learning style preferences were administered to the participants. The analyzing of data was used based paired and independent T-test. The results of this study also showed that the difference between the 2 classes was significant, and the experimental group was superior to the control group in terms of English achievement tests. Khan and Inamullah (2011) investigated the effect of a form of cooperative learning instruction on students' team achievement division (STAD) with that of traditional lectures method. The participants of their study consisted of the students were studying chemistry at higher secondary level in Khyber Pukhtunkhwa (Pakistan). The sample of this project included thirty students of chemistry with grade 12 in government higher secondary school Jamrud. The students were divided into the two experimental and control groups based on stratified random sampling techniques. The true experimental design of the post-test only control group design was applied in this study. The control group was taught with the traditional lecture method while the experimental group was taught with the cooperative learning instruction STAD.

In this study, the researchers made a test including multiple choice questions, short questions and long questions. As the credit of the test was of 50 marks, the post-test consisted of multiple choice questions of 16 marks, short questions of 24 marks and one long question of two subsections having 10 marks. Thus, in this paper, the analyzing of data used based T-test of non-dependent sample. Their study indicated that the students' achievements of both the groups were not significant.

### Method

#### Participants

Two hundred and seven Iranian EFL students were selected by the researchers as the sample of this project. All the students were female and they were studying at intermediate level. Thus, the investigators administrated TOEFL test in order to make sure that the participants are roughly at the same level of proficiency. Those students were at the level of intermediate and passed the TOEFL exam was randomly divided into three equal groups: One of the groups was the control group and the other two groups were experimental groups. As all



participants were native Persian-speaking learners of English as a foreign language who have never lived or travelled to an English-speaking country. However, almost all the students took English classes in other language centers before the study. The students in the experiment and control groups at intermediate level were instructed by the researchers who have a good experience in this area. In addition, in this paper, the researchers used of quasi-experimental as the design of this study. Quasi-experimental used in order to compare outcomes for individuals receiving program activities with outcomes for a similar group of individuals not receiving program activities.

### Materials

In order to consider of this study, the two types of TOEFL questionnaires (i) PBT test and (ii) IBT test were used. In the start of the collection of data, a reading comprehension test which was adapted from a TOEFL PBT test was administered to the students. Those who had high score in that test were divided into three groups. At the end, all the participants, two experimental groups and one control group, took the reading comprehension test which was adapted from a TOEFL in order to determine whether there was any significant difference between the two experimental groups' mean score after the treatment. The instruments of the study were passages for both intermediate levels. Each passage has several units. Each unit has several heading and subheading and their readings.

However, The TOEFL exam is divided into four sections namely, Listening, Reading, Writing and Speaking, which are slightly different for the two formats of the test. The two formats of the test are IBT and PBT. The Reading and the Listening sections of TOEFL are common to both formats but they vary slightly in terms of structure. Let us discuss the Reading section for both formats individually.

### Procedures

In this research work, a proficiency test (TOEFL test) was administered for determining the proficiency level in English of the participants. Thus, the test was selected to assess the participant's level of proficiency in English. In administering the test, the researchers piloted the test for the target group. In addition, 15 students in the target group were used as participants in this research. The General English Proficiency Test was found to be appropriate for the participants' performing level. Its reliability through the K-R 21 formula turned out to be .66 for the target group. In this experiment, the students who scored between one standard deviation below or above the mean score were selected for the purpose of collecting data in the present study. A proficiency test was administered to ensure inter-group homogeneity. That is the TOEFL test was used as a pre-test for intermediate level students. Those who passed the TOEFL test from 207 students were randomly divided into three groups: two experimental group and one control group. The control group was instructed via conventional technique following an individualistic instructional approach. In control group, intermediate students received traditional teacher-fronted instruction throughout the classroom time. In the control group, the researchers began each new reading passage by reading it aloud and then translating each sentence into the students' native language, thus; Persian was native language for this research. . After transmitting the required knowledge, the researchers asked some of the students to answer the exercises individually. They have taught the grammar points of each unit deductively in the native language and she also taught the new vocabulary items via using native language translations. Students could ask several questions about the unclear points. The interaction in the classrooms which had conventional instruction was typically teacher-initiated and the researchers started the conversation and the learner-learner interaction was limited.

The one experimental group received GI technique as investigation, interaction, interpretation, and intrinsic motivation. Students were assigned to several groups based on the common interest in a specific subtopic of units and teacher's decision about the size of the group. At first, the students at each group read the reading comprehension individually within a limited time (10 to 15 minutes). Then the investigators asked each group to investigate and exchange ideas about the topic of reading through interaction. Then they exchanged their ideas about the meaning as well as the structure, or they asked each other some questions about some parts of reading that they were not able to follow successfully. Each group could cooperate with the researchers and they could integrate its finding with the teacher.

The other experimental group received CIRC technique. The focus of this technique was on reading and writing. The researchers selected the group the students and the students were paired within their groups. Then

the students worked on the reading material in their pairs and they tried to teach and learn from each other the reading material. Then the student was paired with another member of the group and again, they helped each other to master the reading strategy such as summarizing, guessing and asking questions about the content of the reading. This process continued with other students in different groups and student of one group went to the other group to gain knowledge about the reading and to cooperate with each other. Then the students returned to their original group and the teacher assessed their group works. At the end, all the subjects, the two experimental groups as well as one control group at the level of intermediate took the TOEFL reading passages.

### Results and Discussion

In order to investigate two cooperative techniques in reading comprehension, 99 students selected in order to get the aim of this paper. So the reading comprehension test of TOEFL with 50 questions has been used in this study. Thus, the reading comprehension test of TOEFL has 5 passages with 10 questions in each passage. The number of the learners and their educational level are presented in the following table:

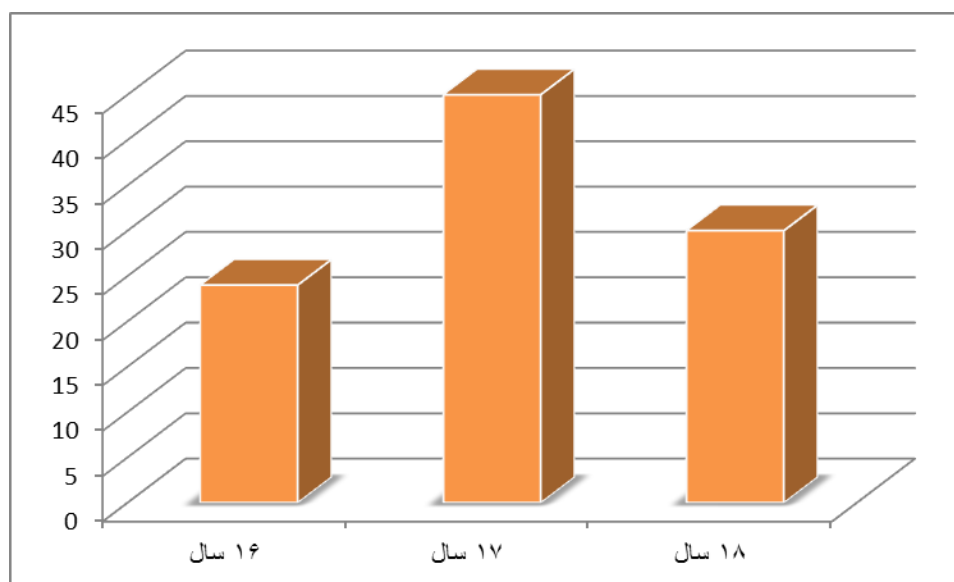
**Table 1: The number of the learners and their educational level**

Percent	Number	Educational level
44	44	Three high school
56	55	Pre-university
100	99	Total

The above table showed that the forty- four students were studying in three high schools and fifty -five the rest of the students were studying in pre-university level. In the following table ages of the subjects are mentioned.

**Table 2: The ages of the subjects**

Percent	Frequency	Level
24.24	24	16 years old
45/45	45	17 years old
30.30	30	18 years old
100	99	Total

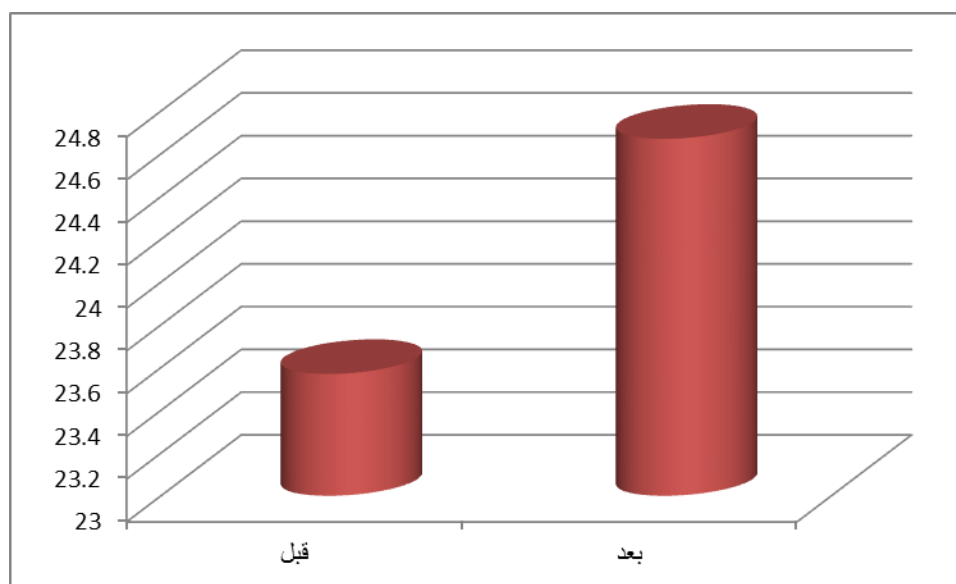


According to the above table and its figure, the groups of the students were comprised of 99 who were selected for computer analysis from three high schools and pre-university level. However, the majority of students were 17 years old and they constituted 45 percent's of participants. 30 of the subjects were 18 years- old and 24 of the students were 16 years -old.

**Table 3: The descriptive statistics of the test score of the control group before and after the course**

Control Group			
Number	SD	Mean	
33	2.74	23.57	Before the course
33	2.39	24.67	After the course

Figure 2: The mean of test score of the control group before and after the course

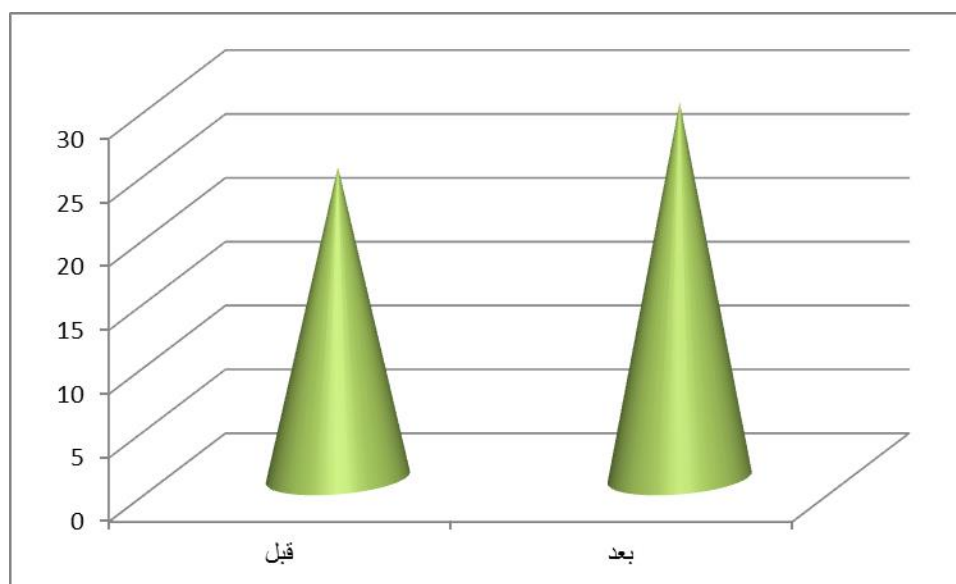


According to the above table and its figure, the mean score of control group before and after the course has not changed significantly. The mean of test score of the control group was 23.57 before the course, and thus; the mean of test score of the control group was 24.67 after the course.

**Table 4: The descriptive statistics of the test score of the experimental group of GI before and after the treatment**

The experimental group of GI			
Number	SD	MEAN	
33	2.23	24.33	Before the course
33	3.78	29.39	After the course

Figure 3: The mean of the experimental group of GI before and after the course

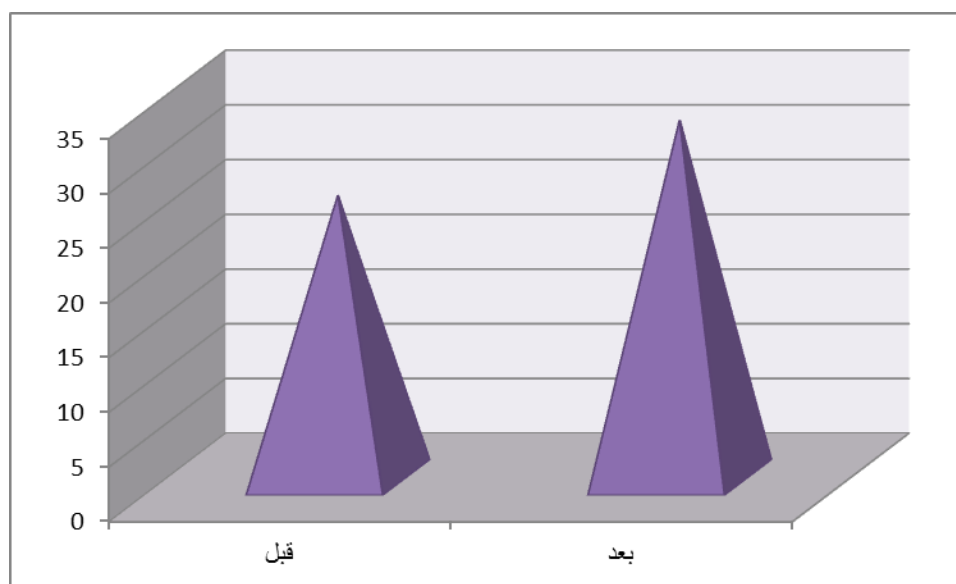


The above table and its figure indicated that the mean of test score of the experimental group of GI after the course was more than the mean of test score of the experimental group of GI before the course of this study. However the role of the teaching with GI technique has influenced positively on reading comprehension score.

**Table 5: The descriptive statistics of the test score of the experimental group of CIRC before and after the treatment**

Experimental group CIRC			
Number	SD	Mean	
33	2.93	25.81	Before the treatment
33	3.70	32.69	After the treatment

Figure 4: The mean of experimental group of CIRC before and after the treatment



According to the above table and its figure, the mean of test score of the experimental group of CIRC after the course of this paper was more than the mean of test score of the experimental group of CIRC before the course study of this paper. As the role of the teaching with CIRC technique has influenced positively on reading comprehension score.

### Discussion

In this study, the four research hypotheses are used in order to conclude the aim of this paper. In the consideration of the research hypotheses of this article, the independent sample t-test has been used through Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), which is a computer program that is used to analyze data in research studies in Social Sciences. The four hypotheses are considered as follows:

Hypothesis 1: There is not any significant relationship between CIRC and GI in the reading comprehension test scores before the treatment (that is all of the three groups are homogeneous). This test has been used in order to show that the three groups are homogeneous for implementing the treatment and there is not any significant difference between the mean of TOEFL score in three groups. So, the t-test has been used.

Table 6: Descriptive statistics of three groups before the treatment

SD	MEAN	NUMBER	Groups
2.74	23.57	33	First
2.39	24.67	33	Second
2.93	25.81	33	Third

According to the above table, the mean score of the first group before the treatment was 23.57. This group recognized as the control group. The mean score of the second group before the treatment was 24.67. This group recognized as the experimental group of GI group. The mean score of the third group before the treatment was 25.81. This group recognized as the experimental group of CIRC.

Table 7: Independent Sample t-test

sig	Degree of freedom	statistics t	variable
0.19	64	-1.32	First and second group
0.08	64	-1.25	First and third group
0.10	64	-1.36	Second and third group

The significant value of the difference between first and second group at the error level of 0.05 was 0.19 which was more than 0.05. So it can be claimed that there is not any significant difference between the mean of the reading comprehension score of first and second group. The significant value of the first and the third group was 0.08 and it was more than 0.05. So it is claimed that there is not any significant difference between mean of the reading comprehension score of first and third group. The same result has been obtained for the second and third group and there is not any significant difference mean of the reading comprehension score of second and third group.

Hypothesis 2: There is not any significant relationship between control and GI groups in the reading comprehension test scores after the treatment.

Table 8: Descriptive statistics of reading comprehension score of the TOEFL

SD	MEAN	Number	Groups
2.39	24.67	33	Control
3.78	29.39	33	Experimental group of GI

The above table showed the reading comprehension mean score of control group and experimental group of GI. As the table indicated, the mean score of reading comprehension for the control group was 27.67 and for the GI group was 29.39. So the mean score of experimental group of GI was more than that in control group.

Table 9: Independent Sample t-test

Sig	Degree of freedom	statistics t	Variable
0.001	64	-6.67	Reading comprehension

The significant value of the difference between control group and experimental group of GI at the error level of 0.05 was 0.001 which was less than 0.05. So it can be claimed that there is significant difference between the mean of reading comprehension score of control and experimental group of GI. That is the GI technique has the positive influence on the scores of reading comprehension test.

Hypothesis 3: There is not any significant relationship between control and CRIC groups in the reading comprehension test scores after the treatment. In order to test the third hypothesis; independent sample t-test is used.

**Table 10: Descriptive statistics of students' reading comprehension score**

SD	Mean	Number	Groups
2.39	24.67	33	Control group
3.70	32.69	33	Experimental group of CRIC

The above table showed the reading comprehension mean score of control group and experimental group of CRIC. Thus, the table indicated that the mean score of reading comprehension for the control group was 27.67 and for the CRIC group was 32.69. So the mean score of experimental group of CRIC was more than that in control group.

**Table 11: Independent Sample t-tests**

Sig	Degree of freedom	statistics t	Variable
0.001	64	-10.39	Reading comprehension

The significant value of the difference between control group and experimental group of CRIC at the error level of 0.05 was 0.001 which was less than 0.05. So it can be claimed that there is significant difference between the mean of reading comprehension score of control and experimental group of CRIC. That is the CRIC technique has the positive influence on the scores of reading comprehension test.

Hypothesis 4: There is not any significant difference in the mean score of reading comprehension between experimental group of GI and experimental of CRIC after the treatment. In order to test this hypothesis, independent sample t-test is used.

**Table 12: Descriptive statistics of students' reading comprehension score**

SD	Mean	Number	groups
3.78	29.39	33	Experimental group of GI
3.70	32.69	33	Experimental group of CRIC

The above table showed the reading comprehension mean score of the experimental group of GI and experimental group of CRIC. The above table showed that the mean score of reading comprehension for the GI experimental group was 29.39 and for the CRIC group was 32.69. So the mean score of experimental group of CRIC was more than that in GI experimental group.

**Table 13: Independent Sample t-test**

Sig	Degree of freedom	-statistics t	Variable
0.001	64	-3.57	Reading comprehension



The significant value of the difference between GI experimental group and CRIC experimental group at the error level of 0.05 was 0.001 which was less than 0.05. So it can be claimed that there is significant difference between the mean of reading comprehension score of GI experimental group and CRIC experimental group. So the hypothesis based on the difference of mean score of reading comprehension between GI experimental group and CRIC experimental group is accepted. According to the above table, the mean score of reading comprehension of CRIC experimental group was more than that in GI experimental group, it can be said that CRIC technique was more effective than GI technique in enhancing the reading comprehension test scores of students.

### Conclusion

In this paper has been tried to examine the reading comprehension of the Iranian learners at intermediate Level in Iran through the cooperative techniques. Reading as one the major important language skills has always been used in Iranian educational system in schools and universities. Reading comprehension has always been as one of the keys of reading ability in order to let the students reach reading fluency in target language. In other words, reading comprehension can be a bridge between language of the students and their ability in learning language in target language. In the discussion of learning for a group of students is that they attempt to learn a language through a cooperative work, what is important is that they reach a decision on shared problems. The results of the study indicated that GI technique is more effective than CI in reading comprehension of EFL intermediate learners. What we have discussed in this paper is useful in learning language in general and reading comprehension in particular in target language. Finally, the two hypotheses of this study were mentioned in the discussion of this paper: the first and fourth hypotheses were accepted and the second and third hypotheses were rejected.

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# THE STRUCTURAL AND TEXTUAL CHARACTERISTICS OF TRADITIONAL AND CONTEMPORARY IRANIAN WEDDING CARDS

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## Abstract

The aim of this study is to explore – from a sociolinguistic point of view – the structural and textual characteristics of traditional and contemporary Iranian wedding cards. More specifically, this study is an attempt to examine the changes in form and language of wedding cards from their emergence in Iran until present which covers a 40 year period of time.

To this end, 100 old and recent wedding cards were examined. This analysis revealed that design and wording of wedding cards have undergone significant changes over the course of time. This change can be attributed to sociocultural changes due to an increasing western life-style affinity and access to more creative resources because of technological advancements.

**Keywords:** Sociocultural changes, life style, technological advancement

## Introduction

Sociolinguistics is the study of relationship between language and society (Wardhaugh, 2006: 1). *Society* is any group of people who are drawn together for a certain purpose, and *language* is what the members of a particular society speak constantly and as Holmes (1992) States: “The linguist’s aim is to move toward a theory which provides a motivated account of the way language is used in a community and the choices people make when they use language” (P16). In fact, the basic purpose of sociolinguistics, as Chambers (2003: 226) suggests is to seek the social correlates of language variability. Thus the central question of sociolinguistics is what variation tells us about language and speakers knowledge of language (Wardhaugh, 2006: 12). In other words, Sociolinguistics attempts to explain the social life of a language and the social origins of language change.

Social patterns and institutions produce and reproduce linguistic norms and behaviors which may change in the course of time. Over time, traditions change in a society and some linguistic usages seem to 'creep' into language (Wardhaugh, 2006: 193) while some other linguistic forms seem to fade away. This evolution manifests in many different contexts: in address terms, rules of politeness, formal and informal usages of language, speech acts, sexist language, stereotypes and taboos, etc.

Seen in a *sociolinguistic perspective*, wedding cards – as formal invitations – are an example of social behavior or social use of language and observing the changes that they have undergone over time would be a correlational study of language and society in a simple way.

Wedding cards do not have a long history in Iran. In the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, many Iranian people were illiterate and wedding announcements had to be verbalized rather than hand-written. A town crier would announce the wedding in a loud manner and everyone within earshot or those who heard the news from others would take part in the celebration. However, families of wealth, nobility and royal families would commission the scribes, skilled in the art of calligraphy, to hand- craft their wedding invitations. By the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the invention of metal-plate engraving, and later lithography in the West had paved the way for the emergence of a genuine mass-market in wedding cards. On the other hand, from the period immediately

following World War II, a combination of democracy and rapid industrial growth gave the common man the ability to mimic the life-styles and materialism of society's elite. Sending out wedding invitations became accessible and affordable for everyone. In the middle 1960s, wedding cards were brought to Iran and immediately came into vogue and fascinated the Iranian people who were experiencing their first patterns of western- modern life. In 1979, the Islamic revolution overthrew the monarchy in Iran which along with the war with Iraq led to striking sociopolitical changes and modifications. Today, in Iran, Sending out wedding cards have gained in such general acceptance that it has become something of a ritual.

Seen in a *linguistic perspective*, the language of wedding cards has been the mirror of current language norms and accepted linguistic patterns of the time. Society and culture have always been changing in response to internal and external circumstances and the language used in wedding card wordings has been evolving. But through this change, the basic components of them have remained the same. The structure of a wedding card text fundamentally carries the following components:

- Heading
- Body (including bride and groom's names, invitation text, bride and groom's parents' names)
- Date, time, type of reception, and location

The aim of my paper is to study the changes in the above components of wedding cards as well as the changes in their form and shape.

### Data and Methodology

50 wedding cards dating from 1970 to 1990 (Group A) and another 50 wedding cards dating from 1990 to 2010 (Group B) were randomly selected. The reason behind choosing the year 1990 as a turning point was that before that time Iran was under the influence of Islamic Revolution and the 1980-88 Iran – Iraq war. In the beginning of 1990s-a little while after the ceasefire-economic situation began to improve and the issues that had faded into insignificant in people's minds began to come under consideration. New patterns of social interaction flourished among which were the new norms in marriage ceremonies including sending out invitation cards. The two above- mentioned groups of wedding cards were scrutinized to identify their prominent features and characteristics.

### Results and Discussion

#### Design and form of wedding cards

Almost all of group A wedding cards had simple and plane design, were white in color, and were in the form of traditional solid square- shape card and envelope. They had just a few recurrent decorative patterns which are presented in table 1.

Table 1. Decorative motifs of group A wedding cards.

Features	Frequency	Percent (%)
Flowers	24	48
Carriage and horses	15	30
Bride and groom	8	16
Hearts	6	12
Rings	4	8
Birds	4	8

(Some features were shared, e.g. bride and groom riding in a carriage or birds carrying rings)

Differently, group B wedding cards had a wide range of different colors, shapes, and forms. The paper used in these cards varied from plain traditional pages to various graphic designs such as paisleys, dots, strips, textured, and vellum overlay. Some features of group B wedding cards are shown in tables 2, 3, 4.

Table 2. Different colors of group B wedding cards

Color	Frequency	Percent (%)
White	21	42

Brown	18	36
Cream	5	10
Purple	3	6
Pink	2	4
Blue	1	2

It is interesting to note that contrary to group A wedding cards that were all white in color, in group B, according to table 2, a variation in color was seen. Although color white was still prevailing in group B, colors such as brown, cream or purple which in the past supposed to be ominous and inappropriate for a wedding card were extensively employed. Another interesting thing worth mentioning is that the price of wedding cards available in the market ranged from 150 tomans to 1500 tomans. Light colored wedding cards (white, milky white, cream) were the cheapest cards while the most expensive ones were all dark in color (especially dark and chocolate brown).

Table 3. Different shapes of group B wedding cards

Shape	Frequency	Percent (%)
Simple solid	2	4
Scroll	18	36
Multiple - fold	10	20
Layered	14	28
Other creative cuts	6	12

Table 4. Embellishments in group B wedding cards

Embellishment	Frequency	Percent (%)
Ribbons	36	72
Stones & beads	12	24
Hand - made flowers	38	76
Thermography	21	48
Other	3	6

Table 3 shows that traditional simple solid cards which were the predominant form of group A have lost their popularity and have been replaced by fanciful and ornamental styles especially scrolls and layered cards. Furthermore, to complete the extravagant image, a great number of various creative designs and decorative accents were used in assembling the group B wedding cards, such as: colorful ribbons around the top, bottom, or middle of the card, multicolored beads and stones, embossed and thermography features, flowers in different sizes and made of different materials such as: paper, china, lace, fabric, wood, etc. Table 4 shows the frequency of some of these embellishments in group B wedding cards.

### Wording of wedding cards

#### Heading

An important component of a wedding card which existed in both group A and B was the heading of the text: conventionally, the name or a title of God. In Iran's religious culture, Basmala (Bismillah) or mentioning God's name or one of his titles is the first phrase of every activity. By doing so, people put themselves in divine will and seek God's guidance, protection and support. It is no wonder that Iranian wedding cards texts start with asking God's blessings for the newly-weds.

In group A wedding cards, there were a few recurrent and unvaried patterns of heading which are presented in table 5.

Table 5. Headings of group A wedding cards.

Heading (referring to God)	Frequency	Percent (%)
با تاییدات .... متعال	33	66
بنام پیوند دهنده قلبها	5	10
در پرتو مهر یزدان	5	10
به نام خداوند بخشنده مهربان	4	8

به نام آفریننده هستی	3	6
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In group B, there were numerous heading statements, which were basically more long-winded and wordier than that of group A. They seemed to be the result of attempts to make the heading rhythmic, poetic and more sentimental to fit the context of marriage.

The most used statements were:

- به یادش و بیاریش
- به نام خدای من و تو
- به نام آن که میثاق را آفرید
- به نام نور مطلق پاک و آفریننده مهر
- به نام خالق عشق
- به نام مهرآفرین
- به نام خالقمون
- به نام آن که آتش عشق را در جانها افروخت
- به نام آن که مروارید عشق را در صدف دلها نهاد

In group A, God has been referred to in majestic terms and titles. As seen in 66% of these samples showed in table 5, in the past the names or titles of God were treated with absolute sanctity; even the name of God (Allah) was not written for fear of disrespect (It was replaced by '...'). But this custom is no longer used and is not seen in none of group B wedding cards. In effect, in group B, God is referred to in familiar and informal terms. It is becoming increasingly common to speak of God with the familiar third - person singular pronoun. Of course, this kind of allusion is not a sign of lack of reverence, but it should be regarded as a mark of superior modernization and sophistication to avoid the old forms and use modern and up-to-date language in mentioning the Deity. But in some cases, it has been taken to extremes by using the offensive mushy language and vocabulary of the street corner. Examples are:

- بنام تک نوازنده ی گیتار عشق
- به نام یگانه ساقی باده ی عشق
- به نام تنها معمار کاخ عشق
- به نام نخلبند باغ هستی

#### *Bride and groom's names*

In group A, almost all of the wedding cards had the traditional pattern below:

آقای (groom's first & last name) و دوشیزه (Bride's last name)

In all of group B wedding cards bride and groom were introduced with their *first names* and not even a single sample followed the traditional pattern of group A.

In the past, naming women by their first name was said to be a taboo and in order not to break it women were called by the name of their brothers or sons. It is little wonder that in wedding cards young ladies' First names were not mentioned.

That taboo has lost its sting today; even naming the bride in the above-mentioned old style may induce comical reaction and a sense of being old-fashioned by the general public.

Another interesting point is the 'order' of appearing the names. In the past the only possible order was the groom's name first, followed by bride's name then. Today this conventional order has changed and in many

group B samples the bride's name was mentioned first as a sign of love and respect. (Some samples are presented in the appendix.)

#### *Invitation text of wedding cards*

In group A, there were a number of recurrent formulaic sentences which were more or less the same in terms of meaning and content. Some most used samples were:

- آغاز زندگی نوین خود را جشن می گیرند. با چهره ی گشاده به پای شما گل میریزیم و انتظار داریم گل روی شما (15 samples) زینت افزای جشن و شادی ما باشد.
- 
- وقتی که من و تو ما می شویم فرشتگان شادی در دلها خانه می کنند. در خانه کوچک قلب ما سروری برپاست. (8 samples) خواستاریم: به تابش مهر و فروغ نگاه خویش به شادی بزم ما بیفزائید.
- فرخنده پیمان همسری خود را جشن می گیرند. با تشریف فرمائی خود بر شکوه این مجلس خواهید (5 samples) افزود.
- پیوندی ملکوتی می بندند. امید آن داریم که گل وجود شما محفل دوستانه ما را عطرآگین سازد. (5 samples)

In group B there were numerous patterns. Some of the most repetitive samples were as the following:

- خانه ای ساخته ایم  
سایه باننش همه عشق  
زیر پا فرش غرور  
و حصارش همه تکرار صفا  
ما در این جمع لطیف  
(12 samples) لطف دیدار تو را می طلبیم
- خدایا به هر آنکه دوست می داری پیاموز که عشق از زندگی کردن برتر است؛  
(10 samples) و به هر آنکه دوست تر می داری بچشان که دست داشتن از عشق هم برتر است.
- همتان بدرقه راه کن ای طایر قدس  
که دراز است ره مقصد و ما نو سفریم  
(3 samples)
- مرا به رجعت خورشید باور است هنوز  
دل بسته ایم به صبح سپید  
به سپیدی بلندترین طلوعه خورشید  
دل بسته ایم به زندگی  
(2 samples) با ما باشید.
- بار سفر بسته ایم به قصد دریای همدلی  
(2 samples) در پگاه آغازین این سفر همراهان باشید.

However, in many samples of group B, the language was on the verge of being absurd and ridiculous. Examples are:

- می سرائیم با هم شعر شکفتن را در باغی از آرزو  
با نوائی از پیوند

با آمدنتان هم صدایمان باشید.  
تا بشنویم با هم پژواک سیمین عشق را

- دلمان می خواهد با نسیم سحری  
شاخه ای از گل مریم  
بغلی از گل سرخ  
همه را دسته کنیم  
برگیریم و بسازیم سبزی از پر طاووس سپید  
تا دهیم مژده بر آنان که در این بزم به ما پیوندند
- کلبه ای ساخته ایم در بلندای بهار، بر درخت احساس  
روی گلبرگ گل نیلوفر که از آن عشق خدا می روید  
زورقی از امید که رساند ما را به وصالی ابدی  
دل کوچک ما خشنود ز دیدار شما می گردد.
- یک سبد از گل یاس، عطر گیسوی چمن  
یک غزل آب روان، یک ترانه دست چنگ  
ما پر از شوق وصال همقدم با گل سرخ  
می کنیم آغاز عشق

In more recent wedding cards (dated 2000s) there appeared to be a tendency toward an informal and colloquial language in invitation wordings. Examples are:

• گل نیارید چون خودتون گلید  
تعریف آزاده را نکنید چون کاوه از قبل ستایش کرده  
بچه نیارید چون خوابشون می بره  
مجلس را گرم کنید چون از خودتونه  
در ضمن به کاوه دلداری ندید چون آب از سرش گذشته

• تورو خدا پاشین بیان  
واسه یه جشن  
از ساعتی 7 تا دمدما صبح  
تازه پذیرائی هم میشه  
راستی تا یادمون نرفته بذار آدرسشم بدیم:....  
خوب دیگه می بینیمتون

• می دونین چه خبره  
چه خبره؟ عروسیه  
عروسی کیه؟  
خوب مبارکه  
کجاست؟

چه روزیه؟  
چه ساعتیه؟  
چی میدن؟ شیرینی و شام  
برنامه چیه؟  
هر چه پیش آید خوش آید

• یادتونه بچه بودیم می گفتین  
ایشالا عروسیتون  
حالا وقتشه تشریف بیارین

• یکی بود یکی نبود، غیر از خدا هیچکس نبود  
دو تا شاخه گل توی بوستان عشق بهم رسیدند.  
این وصال براشون خیلی قشنگه  
حالا میخوان جشن بگیرن  
برای همین دلشون می خواد همه ی فامیل و دوستان دور هم جمع بشن

تا در شادپیشون شریک باشن.

● پاشین آب دستتونه بذارین زمین  
و بیاین که عروسیه  
همه جمعند فقط شما دو نفر رو کم دارن  
بچه هاتونم بذارین پیش همسایه که خوابشون نبره  
راستی دوربین و موبایلیم نیارین  
چون خودشون فیلمبردار خبر کردن

● دوربین... حرکت، صدا، نور  
قصه از اون جایی شروع میشه که  
لیلا و مروا عروسیشون بپا میشه  
هرچی بگین از سور و سات فراوونه  
شیرینی و شام  
ساز و دهل که میزونه  
اونی که کمه تو قصه شون شماین  
حتما تشریف بیارین  
ما عکاس و فیلمبردار داریم شما زحمت نکشین  
نکته: موقع ورود لیلا و مروا میوه پوست نکنید چون چسب زخم نداریم

As is evident, in group B wedding invitations, there has been a tendency to use lyrical and rhythmic phrases, poems, or quotations on love and marriage. But whether or not they are of real literary value is in doubt.

#### *Wedding host' name*

In group A wedding cards, at the bottom of the invitation text the bride and groom's parents' names were mentioned indicating that they were issuing the invitation and they hosted the wedding ceremony. In group B, this convention was less observed and in many cases was replaced by the bride and groom's last names. In fact the old wedding etiquette that bride and groom's parents (or older family members) were organizers and supporters of every marriage has changed and today the younger generation arrange their marriage more independently of their families and foot the bill themselves.

#### *Date, time, reception type of the wedding*

There was no significant difference between group A and B in the way time, type of reception, and location of the wedding ceremony was presented (some exceptional samples are presented in the appendix).

An interesting point to notice is that in group A wedding cards whenever the wedding date coincided with religious events or the birthday anniversary of religious leaders it was certainly mentioned in the wedding invitation. Examples are:

- همزمان با خجسته میلاد منجی عالم بشریت
- مصادف با عید سعید غدیر خم
- مصادف با میلاد قائم آل محمد(ص)
- (نیمه شعبان)
- همزمان با میلاد ثامن الائمه (ع)
- مصادف با میلاد کریم اهل بیت امام حسن (ع)

In group B, this feature was less common. Table 6 shows this difference.

Table 6. Mentioning the coincidence of wedding date with a religious event

	Frequency	Percent (%)
Group A	22	44



Group B	2	4
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### *Invitation addressing on outer envelope*

In the far past in Iran, guests were invited by sending written invitations to the men (or simply by calling on them and letting them know). For the women a female relative or servant (especially attendants of public baths) would personally visit the household and present the ladies with noughl, nabaat, and cardamom seeds in a silk or satin handkerchief. She would offer them the sweets, would tell them the time and place of the wedding and invite them. Later on, this tradition was replaced by sending out wedding invitation cards. Contrary to foreign countries where wedding invitation cards came from, they are not mailed in Iran but are delivered in person. So there is no need to write the address of wedding location on outer envelope of wedding card and mentioning the guests' names would suffice.

The most dominant pattern of this in both group A and B groups was:

حضور محترم جناب آقای.... به اتفاق خانواده

(In very old samples from the times that talking about one's family and wife considered as taboo "منزل" is used instead of "خانواده".)

In group B a shift from elaborate titles and formal language to more informal language was observed. Some examples of these kinds of differences are seen in table 6.

Table 6. Informal style of invitation in group B versus formal style in group A.

Group A	Group B
حضور محترم جناب آقای ناصری به اتفاق خانواده	شهرام و نادیا و دو نوگل عزیزشان
حضور محترم جناب آقای حق شناس و بانو	الهام و داریوش سعید جان و خانم گلش امیر و آزاده ی عزیز
خدمت بانو جعفری و والده ی مکرمه	خدمت سرکار خانم قادری و مادر
حضور محترم جناب آقای اسماعیلی به اتفاق بانو و صبیحه	حضور محترم اقا و خانم نعمت بخش و مژده جان

### **Conclusions**

Traditional wedding invitation cards offer a classic look with a simple design whereas contemporary cards enjoy a wide range of creative forms with many matching motifs and embellishments.

The proper wording and etiquette for wording invitations have followed some conventional patterns in traditional cards whereas in contemporary wedding cards a great number of different passages, quotes and lyrical sentences are used.

In sociolinguistic terms, findings of this study can be listed as the following:

#### **1. Shift of emphasis from "inner meaning" of invitation to "outer beauty" of wedding card.**

As a result of infamous souvenir of foreign cultures, our society is placing more and more emphasis on looks and appearance of things (and people) rather than their inner beauty. Society dictates to us how to live our lives, how to behave in different contexts, and because it favors 'attractiveness', many people have become so obsessed with outstanding looks of their social behaviors (including choosing wedding cards) that they have lost sight of such basics as the meaning and message of their actions. Some others are just following the crowd to keep up with looking modern and fashionable and by doing so they seek to gain an upper social status.

In fact, the more extraordinary and exceptional a wedding card is in shape and design, the more expensive it is; promising a lavish sumptuous wedding ceremony. But giving the primary importance to the form of wedding cards over their wording and content has led to a feeble despicable language which is inappropriate for a formal wedding invitation.

## 2. Shift of style from 'formal' to 'informal'

Since the early 1990s, with the advent of a more westernized economic structure and the introduction of movies, satellite and internet, there appears to have been a shift from formal language use to a more informal discourse. Common or familiar discourse is winning significant popularity because people – the audience of careless mass media – are bombarded with informal, colloquial, disrespectful or slang language constantly. The reason behind this popularized trend is that the authorities have goals to communicate the massive numbers of people while attempting to speak in a way that the average person can understand without a large vocabulary or a great amount of education. Due to these goals, not only does society hear informal language permanently, but it also reads it in print everyday. So it is no wonder that this type of language has rubbed off onto wedding invitations. Some manifestations of such a shift in wedding invitation cards are:

- Referring to God in familiar and informal ways
- Dropping the old terms of honor and respect
- Increasing use of colloquial expressions and vocabularies in invitation wording.

On the whole, today the technology and communications are shrinking the global distance and making once remote villages more open, and more vulnerable to the wider world. There is a growing acceptance of Western lifestyles and ways-of-thought leading to social and cultural changes. In this regard, Iran is no exception. Our language is changing. On a personal level, in day-to-day communication, this may not be easily apparent or obvious. We are so intimately connected to our language that we may fail to see its changes in much the same way that our closeness to our children obscures perception of their development.

However, we do not have to accept the change passively. As language users, we are free to choose which language style and vocabularies to use. That is, the choices we make on an individual and daily basis, determine the communication pattern in the society. This ultimately determines whether our language dies or thrives.

Finally, I would like to finish my paper with the following relevant fable:

"The graceful fairy  
With a wave of her magic wand  
Did change  
The frog into a handsome prince  
He was charming, he was dazzling  
He was not eloquent though.  
Since all in all  
He was still a frog!"

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# A COMPARATIVE STUDY ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF PEER-DIRECTED LEARNING STRATEGY VS. SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING STRATEGY ON IRANIAN INTERMEDIATE EFL LEARNERS' WRITING IMPROVEMENT

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## ABSTRACT

This research tried to investigate the effectiveness of peer-directed learning strategy vs. self-directed learning strategy on Iranian Intermediate EFL learners' writing improvement. For this purpose 100 EFL students of SHOKOUH institute in RASHT were given an OPT test to calculate their homogeneity, they were between 16 and 20 years old. According to their scores on OPT test, 40 students were selected to be a part of this research. They were divided randomly into the peer-directed and self-directed group. Then they were given a writing test as a pretest to measure their ability of writing before the treatment. Then peer-directed group used peer-directed strategy in their writing and self-directed group used self-directed strategy. Finally both groups sat for posttest of writing. The collected data was then processed through statistical analysis of ANCOVA.

Statistical analysis of the results clearly showed that the peer-directed group who received treatment on the basis of peer-directed learning strategy outperformed as compared to self-directed group who conducted self-directed learning strategy.

**Key words:** Learning strategy, Peer-directed learning strategy, Self-directed learning strategy, writing

## Introduction

Writing is an important skill during long years of teaching to students, we are always involve with this view that how can our students write in good harmony in chronological order? This is an important issue for many years that all teachers, students, and staff are evolving with this skill. Writing is a kind of speech that we don't have a chance to say directly to audience, it's a kind of logical connection to say our beliefs, ideas that are not possible to tell on that time and situation. It is important to view writing not solely as the product of an individual, but as a cognitive, social and cultural act. Writing is an act that takes place within a context, that accomplishes a particular purpose and that is appropriately shaped for its intended audience (Hamplones & Condon, 1989).

In writing, you cannot make use of auditory and visual aids, so you must think and plan carefully what you're going to write to ensure that your reader knows exactly what you mean. When the order in which things happen, or a time sequence, is used to develop a paragraph, this is called chronological order.

Arnaudet & Barret (1990) mentioned that writing is a skill that you say your idea without any fear from face to face talks. It's a process that helps you to go deeply into your thoughts, and purpose your idea, to share your knowledge, and it also provides you a good condition for your confidence to say your idea frankly.

Birjandi et al. (2004) maintain that most Iranian students have problems in the writing skill that originate not only from macro-skills (grammar and vocabulary) but also from micro-skills (content and organization). The

problem is that Iranian students attempt to represent the world through ideational meaning, and they ignore the other two meanings, that is, interpersonal meaning (the meaning about the relationship between the writer and the reader) and textual meaning (the meaning that helps the readers navigate through the text). According to Silva (1993), second or foreign language writers have more difficulty setting up goals and organizing the written materials; therefore, it is important to provide the students with an effective instruction of writing.

For this purpose, this study was conducted to ameliorate the status of peer-directed and self-directed learning strategy and sheds light upon the position of peer-directed and self-directed learning strategy in writing pedagogy. It will also attends to make a shift of focus in teaching peer-directed and self-directed learning strategy as it is related to writing task.

### Definition of key terms

**-learning strategy:** Weinstein and Mayer in Witrock (1986) have coined one definition of learning strategies as "behaviors and thoughts that a learner engages in during learning and that are intended to influence the learner's encoding process." They go on to state various learning strategies that could be used with learners. Nisbet and Shucksmith (1986) define learning strategies simply as "the processes that underlie performance on thinking tasks."

**-Peer-directed learning strategy:** Peer learning essentially refers to **students learning with and from each other** as fellow learners without any implied authority to any individual, based on the tenet that "Students learn a great deal by explaining their ideas to others and by participating in activities in which they can learn from their peers" (Boud, 2001).

**- Self-directed learning strategy:** As the term suggests, SDL views learners as responsible owners and managers of their own learning process. SDL integrates self-management (management of the context, including the social setting, resources, and actions) with self-monitoring (the process whereby the learners monitor, evaluate and regulate their cognitive learning strategies) (Bolhuis, 1996; Garrison, 1997).

**-Writing:** is a complex meta-cognitive activity that draws on an individual's knowledge, basic skills, strategies, and ability to coordinate multiple processes (Graham, 1997).

### Traditional approaches to writing

Most of the classroom activities in foreign language writing are based on product-oriented and little is done on the process-oriented activities. In order to promote such activities, alertness and responsiveness to formal aspects of language becomes paramount. Rutherford and Sharwood-Smith (1985) believe that formal grammar has a role to play in language pedagogy and they stress the importance of grammatical conscious-raising (C-R), which is the deliberate attempt to draw a learner's attention and awareness to the formal properties of the target language. In developing this awareness practically, the use of group and pair work is common practice in both first and second language classes. A number of studies (Swain and Lapkin, 1998; Ellis, 2000; Mayo, 2002) state that there are both pedagogic and social gains for most learners working in small groups. It is seen as providing learners with more opportunities to practice the L2 than are afforded in teacher led classroom activities, and as Storch (1998) emphasizes, this type of instruction needs to be studied more precisely.

Despite significant development in ESL and EFL writing, research in academic writing skill has rarely been devoted to strategy development in this skill. Although writing at the tertiary level needs to be professional, and certain technical aspects have to be taught, most EFL teachers mainly focus on presenting some prefabricated models and paradigms of various forms of writing. They scarcely follow a strategic or an interactional task-based approach that involves learners in a task type to enhance their ability in output production, whose function in second language learning is of paramount importance.

### Method

#### Participants

The participants in this study were 100 intermediate English language learners at SHOKOUH Language Institute. An OPT test was administered to the participants to make them homogenized. This test was divided into 3 parts, cloze test, structure, and vocabulary proficiency. Students with scores of 1 standard deviation below and above the mean was selected. Having being homogenized by an OPT test 40 students were selected and they were randomly divided into two groups, self-directed group and peer-directed group (N=20). The

participants were varied in terms of age and the field of study. That is all students irrespective of their major and ages were selected on the basis of selection tests.

### Materials

To conduct the present investigation and to implement the process of data collection, the researcher used various tools including the OPT test of English language proficiency in order to measure the subjects' current status of proficiency level. A pre-test of writing was given to the subjects to measure the subjects' initial differences in writing test. And finally a post test of writing was administered to both groups to find out the effectiveness of the treatment.

### Procedure

To achieve the objective of this study the following procedures were taken by the researcher:

In this study, in order to have homogenous sample an OPT test was administrated to 100 students in order to select two groups of students, one group as a self-directed learners and other group as a peer-directed learners. Both groups sat for a pre-test of writing ability. The purpose of this test was to assess the initial subject knowledge of the learners in writing.

Then the first group received self-directed learning strategy and second group received peer-directed learning strategy. In group one, each session they were given a topic to write. After finishing writing, students themselves evaluated their own writing and monitor their own strengths, and weaknesses and the learners themselves found errors and mistakes.

In the second group the learners were touch on peer-directed learning strategy in that each session a topic was given to them to write, then the peers themselves evaluated each other's writing and they found their strengths and weaknesses and their errors.

Then at the end of each session teacher scored both groups writing papers they scored based on their mistakes and grammatical points such as: tenses, passive & active sentences, punctuation, accurate use of expression, appropriate words, and everything related to a well-organized writing.

The whole project took for 5 weeks, each week for 2 sessions, and each session for 60 minutes. And the last step was the posttest of writing ability in which the subjects' ability in both groups on the specific treatment program were assessed.

### Results

The descriptive statistical analysis done on the collected data of pre-test and post- test is shown in table (3).

Table (1). Descriptive statistics for the pre-test and post-test+

Group		pre-test	post-test
peer-directed	Mean	53.15	71.6
	N	20	20
	SD	9.83	9.78
self-directed	Mean	56.95	55.85
	N	20	20
	SD	9.7	9.63
Total	Mean	55.05	63.72
	N	40	40
	SD	11.52	12.46

Table (2) shows the corrected means of dependent variable writing improvement. The data demonstrate that the means of peer-directed group are upper than self-directed group.

Table (2) Mean and corrected Mean of writing improvement

Source	Post-test	Corrected Mean
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	M	SD	M	SE
peer-directed group	85.55	9.63	55.520a	1.32
self-directed group	71.6	9.78	71.930a	1.32

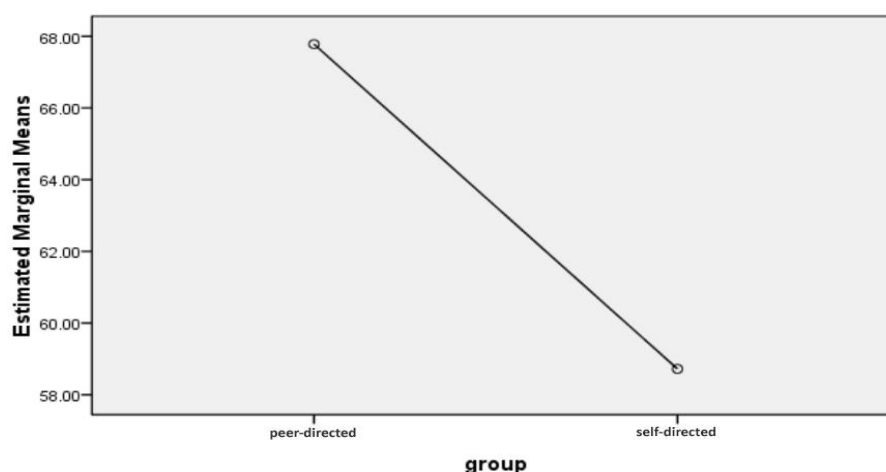
Sum of analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) of writing improvement in peer-directed and self-directed groups after eliminating between-subjects effect is demonstrated in table (3)

Table (3) Sum of Analysis of covariance

Source	Type III Sum	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial of Squares
Corrected Model	4762.860a	2	2381.43	67.82	.00	.78
Pre-test	2282.23	1	2282.23	65	.00	.63
Group	2687.44	1	2687.44	76.54	.00	.67
Error	1299.11	37	35.11			
Total	168497	40				

As it can be seen, the corrected model ( $f = .00$ ,  $F = 67.82$ ) is statistically significant. The results ( $F_{76.54}$ ,  $f = .000$ ,  $Eta = .67$ ) show that there is a difference between two groups. It means that there is a significant difference between peer-directed group as compared to self-directed group. As a result the null hypothesis as peer-directed learning strategy vs. self-directed learning strategy does not have any effect on Iranian Intermediate EFL learners' writing improvement was rejected, so it can be concluded that peer-directed learning strategy as compared to self-directed learning strategy has an effect on Iranian EFL learners' writing improvement.

To clarify the result, the data will be demonstrated in graph (1). The vertical axis represents the post-test and the horizontal axis represents peer-directed and self-directed groups.



Graph (1) Means of post-test of peer-directed and self-directed groups

The graph shows that there is a significant difference between writing improvement of peer-directed group as compared to self-directed group. It clearly shows that the peer-directed group who received treatment on the basis of peer-directed learning strategy outperformed the self-directed group who conducted self-directed learning strategy.

### Conclusion

With respect to the effect of peer-directed learning strategy vs. self-directed learning strategy on improving EFL learners' writing improvement, the results of the present study showed a significant statistical difference in writing ability between the performance of peer-directed group and self-directed group which means that peer-directed group results in better writing ability for Iranian EFL learners. This finding supports the findings of (Langan et al., 2008) that peer-directed learning strategy enhances learning process more than self-directed learning strategy. According to Matsuno (2009), the merits attributed to applying peer-directed learning strategy cannot be ignored. peer-directed learning strategy is an effective tool on Iranian EFL learners' writing improvement, and can encourage reflective learning through observing others' performances and awareness of performance criteria, but self-directed learning strategy cannot.

Regarding the impact of peer-directed learning strategy and self-directed learning strategy on Iranian Intermediate EFL learners' writing improvement, the finding of this study confirm the previous findings (Patri, 2002; Saito, 2008; Yamashiro, 1999) that learners could rate their peers acceptably and improve their judgments so that they could acquire a better understanding of their own performance. Lastly, the peer-directed learner report higher marks as compared to self-directed learner. The finding of the current study also is in agreement with the results of other study (Praver et al., 2011) in that peer-directed learning strategy is more useful for English writing development.

Concerning the impact of peer-directed learning strategy and self-directed learning strategy (or teacher) assessment on L2 writing, the results of this study indicated that the peer directed group outperformed the self-directed group. This finding is in line with the study conducted by Patri (2002).

Tavakoli (2010) believes that peer directed learning strategy would mitigate the student teacher relationship by giving responsibility to students as to their own progress and to their own learning would so that they can become more motivated in participating in their evaluation for future learning expectations. It has been argued that peer directed learning strategy serves as an effective language learning strategy to promote Iranian learners' writing improvement. Because it encourages language learners to assess their learning progress and in turn helps them to stay focused on their own performance (Chamot & O'Malley, 1994; Chen, 2005; O'Malley & Pierce, 1996; Oscarson, 1997).

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# THE EFFECT OF USING TIMED READING AND GENRE-BASED READING ON INTERMEDIATE EFL LANGUAGE LEARNERS' READING COMPREHENSION

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## Abstract

English is the main international language of communication; moreover, it is the language of publication of scientific articles in national and international journals. However, it is a challenge for non-native speakers of English to become a good reader, and finding an effective technique for teaching reading comprehension is of great importance. Thus, the present study investigates the effect of genre-based reading and timed reading on EFL language learners' reading comprehension. To this aim, 24 participants were selected randomly, and they were divided into two groups. One group (n=12) received the treatment by using the genre-based reading approach, and the other group (n=12) received the treatment by using the timed reading activity. Before applying the treatment, a pre-test was conducted, and at the end of the course, a post-test was given. The two sets of scores were compared together by using Independent t-test. The result indicated that the genre-based students were more successful at reading comprehension.

**Key Words:** Reading comprehension; Genre-based approach; Timed reading activity; EFL language learners

## 1. Introduction

Nowadays Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) plays a significant role in many countries around the world. Teaching a language is a complicated process since every language consists of four main skills, including reading, writing, speaking and listening, and some sub-skills, including grammar, pronunciation and vocabulary. One essential skill is reading, and it has always been taken into account as one of the most influential skills which is now even more important than before due to the large amount of information in every specific area of study.

By knowing the importance of reading, a question may arise: How can teachers improve the language learners' reading skill? To answer this question, a research study can be conducted. A good way of finding an effective technique for improving the language learners' reading comprehension is to select two critical techniques in order to compare their effects on the language learners' reading comprehension.

Genre-based reading can make the process of reading easier. In other words, language learners need to construct meaning while reading a text; therefore, having adequate knowledge regarding the genre of a text can facilitate this process. It works as 'textual schemata', and it limits the 'meaning-potential' of a specific text

(O'Sullivan, et al, 1994). In other words, having knowledge about the genre of a text is likely to play a significant role in enhancing the reading comprehension. Fowler (1989) has pointed out that "readers learn genres gradually, usually through unconscious familiarization." (p. 215) Thus, teachers can employ this technique to improve the learners' reading comprehension.

Timed reading is an activity which is usually used to increase reading speed (Nation, 2007). Timed reading activity involves reading of passages with equal length and equal word difficulty. This type of activity is usually done over a period of weeks or months with the purpose of increasing the reading speed. It is likely that the growth of reading speed can affect the level of reading comprehension. Thus, this study tries to discover whether genre-based reading or timed activity reading is more beneficial for improving the language learners' reading comprehension skill.

## 2. Statement of the problem

One of the most fundamental skills in learning a foreign language is reading. Research studies regarding English as a foreign language (EFL) reading comprehension is related to the feasible ways to increase reading comprehension. Accordingly, genre-based instruction is believed to be an effective approach and activity in reading comprehension. And on the other hand, timed reading activity is likely to enhance reading comprehension of language learners. Improving all of the four skills of a language is of great importance. However, reading is an important skill for successful learning. Therefore, in many teaching situations, reading is considered as a fundamental skill. Alderson (1984) pointed out that

In many parts of the world a reading knowledge of a foreign language is often important to academic studies, professional success, and personal development. This is particularly true of English as so much professional, technical and scientific literature is published in English. (p. 1)

Accordingly, it is crucial to discover an effective technique to enhance the language learners' reading comprehension skill.

## 3. Literature review

Learning to read in a foreign language is surely a demanding task. "It implies interaction between the reader and the text, a degree of knowledge of the world and determined topics, some knowledge of the target language and also the interpretation of the writer's message which can vary from reader to reader." (Fuenzalida, 2010, p. 4) "In the reading process, the reader is an active participant, constructing meaning from clues found in printed text." (Shafiei Ebrahimi, 2012, p. 195) In other words, the active role of the reader constructs the meaning from the text.

In the history of research, it has been agreed that reading is a very complex process that involves different factors which interact with one another. When it comes to EFL students, the difficulty of reading becomes even more complicated. The readers must be aware of the implicit and explicit data that is being transferred. In fact, being able to read competently is one of the most important skills that we need to have in today's world. The EFL students' difficulties to comprehend a text may be due to not only lack of knowledge about the target language but also not having enough information about the genre of the text.

### 3.1. Genre-based reading

What is genre? A genre can refer to a type of text that contain a specific format and structure (Duke & Purcell-Gates, 2003). From the early stages of learning, students should know that there are different types of texts, and each type of text has its own components, rules and purposes. Therefore, beginner learners should be able to differentiate one variety from another such as 'a narrative text' (which describes a story), 'a persuasive text' (which tries to convince the readers regarding a specific point), 'a biography' (which tells about someone's life) and 'an informational text' (which makes the readers aware of some facts).

When students learn about different types of genres, the reading process would become easier. Students can be capable of reading competently like an expert. Moreover, they can understand the reading content quickly. According to Salehi, Lari and Rezanejad (2014), research studies have shown that familiarity with the genre of the text can make the readers able to construct meaning by using prediction. Similarly, Hyons (2002) pointed out that knowing about genres, including the purpose of the text and its features, can be helpful for effective

reading. Many research studies have indicated the effectiveness of having genre knowledge on reading comprehension (Francis and Hallam, 2000; Feez, 2002; Hyons, 2002).

### 3.2. Timed reading activity

Timed reading activity is usually employed by teachers and students with aim of increasing the reading speed. As Chang (2010) stated, "Timed reading involves having students read under time pressure, the purpose of which is to improve reading speed to an optimal rate that supports comprehension rather than developing speedy readers." (p. 287) Thus, most of teachers and students know this technique as a solution in order to be a fast reader. This ability can be achieved by making the process of reading automatic. In other words, enhancing the speed of reading can be achieved by what Samuels (1994) mentioned as 'automaticity'. Automaticity is the ability to decode and comprehend passages without much effort.

Therefore, it can be concluded that 'time pressure' is a factor for improving the students' reading speed which Nation (2007) calls "encouragement to perform at a faster than usual speed." (p.7) However, increasing the speed of reading may affect other features of reading skill. The word 'reading' is usually followed by the word 'comprehension'. In other words, the ability to read a text is not enough unless it is along with the ability to understand it. Most of the times, each academic reading is followed by some comprehension questions in order to assess whether the readers have understand the text. Accordingly, Atkins (2013) pointed out that "texts are timed as the learners read them, each text is followed by some reading comprehension questions which asses comprehension ability of the learners (p.199). Therefore, comprehension is the main aim of reading.

Reading speed is usually believed to be related to reading comprehension in L1, and previous research studies have shown the relationship between these aspects. Tran (2014) mentioned that there is a strong relationship between reading speed and comprehension in L1 reading; however, the connection between comprehension and speed in second/foreign language (L2/FL) reading is almost vague. Some researchers found no significant relationship between fast reading and reading comprehension (Bell, 2001; Kuhn & Stahl, 2003; Chang, 2010) Thus, conducting the present study is a good way to discover the probable relationship between the reading rate and reading comprehension.

### 4. Significance of the study

All of the four skills of a language, including reading, writing, speaking and listening, are of great importance. A language learner must equally improve all of the skills and sub-skills of the target language. "Clearly, reading is a most important activity in any language class, not only as a source of information and a pleasurable activity, but also as a means of consolidating and extending one's knowledge of the language." (Rivers, 1981, p. 259) Reading is a crucial skill for successful learning. Thus, finding a significant technique for a better teaching of reading is of great importance especially for EFL language learners.

### 5. Method

This research study uses a quantitative method of research study. This study is an experimental research that employs pre-tests post-test technique. Therefore, it employs the scores of a pre-test and a post-test to gather the data which is adequate to investigate the mentioned issues.

#### 5.1. Participants

To conduct this study, an institute for teaching and learning English was selected. A proficiency test was given to the students to get a homogenous sample. As a result, twenty four intermediate participants were selected randomly. The participants consisted of twenty four male language learners. It is also worth mentioning that the participants participated in this study on their own volition.

#### 5.2. Instruments and materials

The instruments that were used for this study were a proficiency test, a pre-test, a post-test and a textbook. A proficiency test was used to choose intermediate language learners to have a homogeneous sample. Then, a pretest was used to discover the present skill of the two groups before applying the two types of treatments. It is also worth pointing out that a TOEFL reading comprehension test, which was consisted of 3 reading comprehension parts, were used in this study both as the pre-test and the post-test since a TOEFL reading comprehension test is a well-known standardized English test that is designed to examine the students' reading comprehension proficiency. Later, a post-test, i.e. the similar test as the pre-test, was used to discover the improvement of the two groups about employing the genre-based reading and the timed reading activity.

During this 9 week course, the book 'selected reading, intermediate' by Jean Bernard and Linda Lee was used as the textbook.

### 5.3. Procedure

Before beginning the course, a proficiency test was administered in order to select the participants of the study. The participants of this study consisted of twenty four language learners, and they were divided into two groups. After that, a pre-test was used to gather some data. At the same time, all of the two groups improved their reading skill during 9 weeks. The discrepancy between the two groups is that the reading skill was taught by using different techniques in each group. The reading skill was taught to the first group by employing timed reading activity by asking the students to record the time on the page they read. When the students finished reading the texts, they checked their answers and teacher wrote down their reading speeds and comprehension scores every session. The reading skill was taught to the second group by using genre-based reading approach by familiarizing the students with different genres of the texts and giving them detailed information regarding the specific features of each type of genres. At the end of the course, all of the participants took the post-test. And finally, the scores of the pre-test and the post-test were compared together. These scores were analyzed to discover which group improved more. To this aim, Independent t-test was used by employing SPSS version 16.

### 6. Results

As mentioned before, this study has two series (pre-test and post-test) of scores taken from the two groups. This section is divided into two parts. First, the scores of the pre-test are compared together by using Independent t-test. Second, the scores of the post-test are compared together. Later, a line chart is presented to indicate both the pre-test and the post-test scores of the two groups.

#### 6.1 The outcome of the pre-test

All of the 24 participants of this study took the pre-test. The aim of taking the pre-test is to be able to investigate the improvement of the students at the end of the course. The following table shows the descriptive statistics of the results of the pre-test scores which is graded out of 20.

Table 1. The mean average of the pre-test scores

Group Statistics					
groups		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
pretestscores	genre-based	12	13.8333	.93744	.27061
	timedreading	12	14.0000	1.04447	.30151

As can be seen, the mean average of the timed reading group is a bit more. To assure whether this small difference is significant, Independent t-test is run.

Table 2. The Independent Sample t-test for the pre-test scores of the two groups

Independent Samples Test									
Levene's Test for Equality of Variances									
t-test for Equality of Means									
pretestscores	Equal variances assumed	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference
									Lower Upper
	Equal variances not assumed								
pretestscores	Equal variances assumed	.040	.842	-.411	22	.685	-.16667	.40514	-1.00688 .67355
	Equal variances not assumed			-.411	21.748	.685	-.16667	.40514	-1.00745 .67412

The value of sig (2-tailed) between the two groups is 0.68 which is above the standard level of 0.05. Thus, the two groups are not significantly different regarding the pre-test scores of reading comprehension. The researcher could begin the course by considering the equality of the two groups regarding the skill of reading comprehension.

## 6.2. The outcome of the post-test

All of the 24 participants of this study took the post-test. The aim of taking the post-test is to be able to investigate the improvement of the students at the end of the course. The following table shows the descriptive statistics of the results of the post-test scores which is graded out of 20.

Table 3. The mean average of the post-test scores

Group Statistics				
groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
Posttestscores genre-based	12	17.0833	.79296	.22891
timedreading	12	15.4167	1.08362	.31282

The table indicates various mean averages between the two groups. They are 17 for the genre-based group and 15.41 for the timed reading group. These numbers are apparently different; however, it's better to run t-test to discover whether this discrepancy is significant.

Table 4. The Independent Sample t-test for the post-test scores of the two groups

Independent Samples Test									
Levene's Test for Equality of Variances									
t-test for Equality of Means									
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
Posttestscores Equal variances assumed	2.339	.140	4.300	22	.000	1.66667	.38762	.86278	2.47055
Equal variances not assumed			4.300	20.155	.000	1.66667	.38762	.85850	2.47484

The value of sig (2-tailed) between the two groups is 0.00 which is below the standard level of 0.05. Thus, the two groups are significantly different regarding the post-test scores of reading comprehension. In other words, the genre-based group outperformed the timed activity group. Although, the timed activity students also made progress, the genre-based approach proved to be more effective for improving the reading comprehension skill. Thus, it can be concluded that both of the groups made progress; however, the genre-based group proved to be more influential.

The following is a visualized data about both the pre-test and the post-test scores of the two groups.

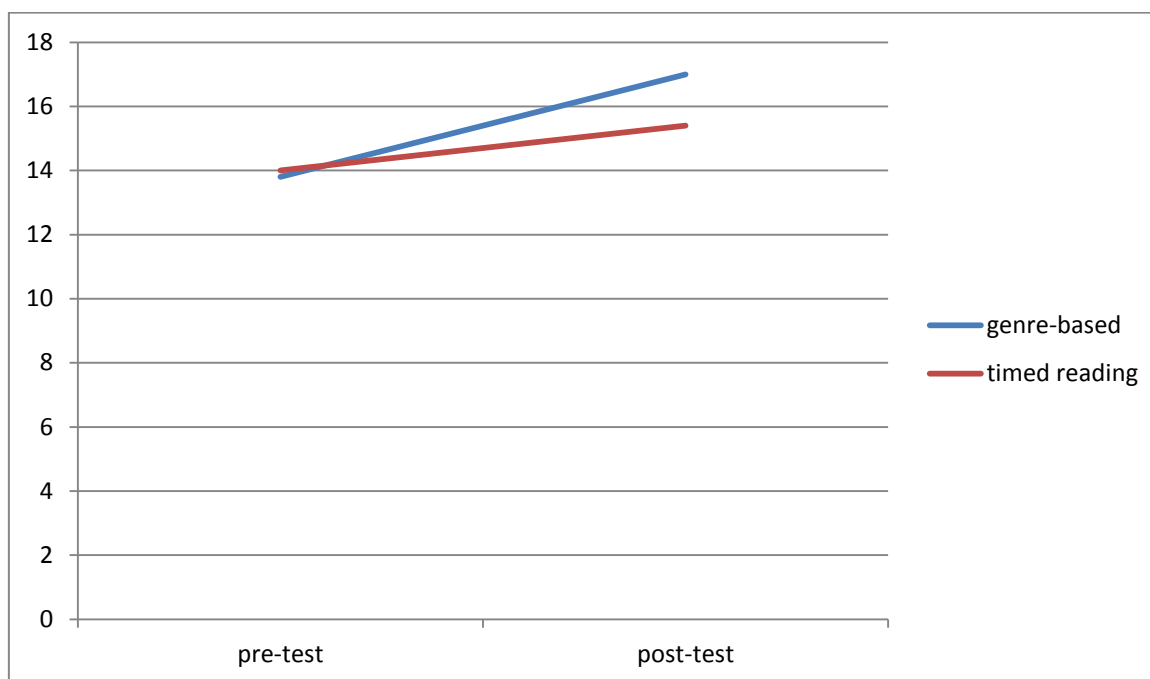


Figure 1. The line chart of the pre-test and the post-test scores of the two groups

As can be seen in the chart, the genre-based group proved to be more successful than the timed reading group.

## 7. Conclusion

People usually read a variety of texts according to their aims or the situation they experience. Some examples of these situations are reading books, papers, news, sports scores, weather forecasts, entertainment guides and advertisements and etc. It does not matter what the aim of the reader is; in fact, being able to comprehend is the first stage of reading a piece of text. The process of reading comprehension gets even more challenging when it comes to reading in the target language. Therefore, finding an appropriate technique is of great importance.

The present study investigated the effect of genre-based reading and timed reading on reading comprehension of EFL language learners. The result showed that the students who practiced by the genre-based approach were more successful. The result of the study proved some previous research studies such as Bell, 2001; Kuhn & Stahl, 2003 and Chang, 2010.

The findings of the present study can have implications for teachers and learners. The present study can help teachers and learners to understand the importance of reading techniques in language learning. Therefore, they can employ such techniques in order to facilitate the language learning process.

There are some recommended areas and possibilities for further research and future work indicated by present research. To make new questions, the effect of other techniques of reading comprehension could be analyzed.

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# THE EFFECT OF TEST CONSTRUCTION ON IRANIAN ADVANCED EFL LEARNERS' READING COMPREHENSION ABILITY

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## Abstract

The present investigation was an attempt to study the effect of test construction on Iranian advanced EFL learners' reading comprehension ability. To that end, an OPT test was administered to 110 university students learning English language in institutes. Learners who scored between one above and below the standard deviation were selected. 40 learners were selected and they were divided into experimental and control group, each group contained 20 learners. A reading test was administered to both groups as a pre-test to take their initial knowledge of reading comprehension ability. The reading section of the PET test was selected to test the reading ability of the participants. The experimental group received treatment in order to help them improve their reading ability by using test construction strategies in twelve sessions. The control group received no treatment. Finally both groups sat for the post-test of the same reading test. The results were analyzed through ANCOVA and it was explored that using test construction had a positive effect on Iranian EFL learners' reading comprehension ability.

*Key words: reading comprehension, test-construction, incidental vocabulary*

## INTRODUCTION

Test construction can be used to improve the reading comprehension ability. Test-construction strategy is designed to help students effectively understand complex reading demands (Schumacher et al., 1994). Belainch, Wisher, & Orvis (2005) defined Question-generation strategy as an activity in which students generate exam questions based on the reading content, using multiple-choice, matching, short answer, true-false, and fill-in-the-blank formats or word puzzles. Grasser & Mahen (1993) argued that students can more actively comprehend a text, and monitor their comprehension through the process of question-generation strategy. Through question-generation, teachers can identify students' reading problems and thus provide adaptive instruction (Lan & Lin, 2011). There are two significant points of Question-generation strategy: the first significant point of the Question-generation strategy is the quality of questions which stimulate development of cognitive abilities beyond memorization and the second one is equivalent of the effects of teaching question-generation on subsequent reading comprehension tasks, especially its influence on the recognition tests.

## STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Test construction processes can be used to improve the reading comprehension ability. Question-generation strategy is designed to help students effectively understand complex reading demands (Schumacher et al., 1994). Belainch, Wisher, & Orvis (2005) defined Question-generation strategy as an activity in which students generate exam questions based on the reading content, using multiple-choice, matching, short answer, true-false, and fill-in-the-blank formats or word puzzles. Grasser & Mahen (1993) argued that students can more actively comprehend a text, and monitor their comprehension through the process of question-generation strategy. In discussion of statement of problem, it is felt that Iranian students need more information about reading comprehension to get knowledge of English Language in order to use it in their real life situation. It seems worth mentioning that reading comprehension passages are considered as an important method in foreign language setting, especially in Iran.

## Significance of the study



In Iran English language as a subject is taught as a foreign language from middle (Guidance) school. Though it was introduced as a subject from middle school, the Iranian students accepted it as language to pass in the examination. Reading comprehension has always played a crucial role in Iranian EFL classroom. Reading skill is one of the skills used for Iranian high school and pre-university learners to pass entrance examination to get seat in Iranian universities, which is one of the reasons why the researchers have researched this subject. However, reading comprehension is used in EFL materials, textbooks and courses at several levels (school and university) and almost in all number of areas, both general and particular. It is felt that Iranian students need more information about reading comprehension to get knowledge of English Language in order to use it in their real life situation. It seems worth mentioning that reading comprehension passages are considered as an important method in foreign language setting, especially in Iran.

### Review of the Related Literature

Research has shown that reading comprehension is closely connected to vocabulary knowledge (Laufer, 1997; Adams, 2000). Stahl (1983) describes the relationship between reading comprehension and vocabulary knowledge as "one of the best documented relationships in reading research" (p.33). Vocabulary knowledge is fundamental to reading comprehension; one cannot understand text without knowing what most words mean (Nagy, 1988). Adams (2000) explored the relationship between reading comprehension, vocabulary, and fluency and found that word knowledge was important to comprehension, as was fluency.

This correlation between students' vocabulary and students' comprehension of what they read (Gersten & Geva, 2003) led many researchers to believe that "a reader's general vocabulary knowledge is the best predictor of how well that reader can understand text" (Anderson & Freebody, 1981, p. 3). Stahl (2003), who called the relationship between reading and vocabulary "robust," argues that vocabulary knowledge has been consistently the "foremost predictor of a text's difficulty" (p.241). Laufer (1997) argues that students who have knowledge of 3000 word families or 5000 lexical words can achieve a reading score of 56%, those who have a knowledge of 4000 word families or 6400 lexical words can achieve a reading score of 63%, while an increase to 6000 words families or 9600 lexical words will result in a score of 77 %.

Other studies (Groot, 1994; Hazenberg & Hulstijn, 1996; Hirsh & Nation, 1992; Laufer, 1989, as cited in Groot, 2000) found that, in order for second-language (L2) readers to adequately understand academic texts, they must be familiar with more than 90% of the words used. This great need for vocabulary explains the difficulty that foreign-language learners face when reading texts in the target language.

Laufer (1997) refers to L2 readers' struggle with vocabulary while reading L2 as "the lexical plight." It is not surprising that many of students studying a foreign language and their teachers cite vocabulary as their number one priority (Knight, 1994). This significant amount of needed vocabulary is hard to teach in class as it would take away the time required for students to learn other skills such as listening, reading, speaking, and writing (Groot, 2000). Therefore, foreign-language learners need to develop strategies for coping with unfamiliar words (Harley, 1996).

Traditionally, some of these strategies include the use of dictionaries and marginal glosses embedded in certain language textbooks. These two methods are not, however, very convenient for students who usually have to interrupt their reading process and lose sight of the text to find the meaning of unfamiliar words. The resort to dictionaries can make reading a text in a second language a "three to four-hour ordeal" (Crow 1986, p. 242). Furthermore, to be able to use the dictionary efficiently, students need special training, since the availability of several meanings of a single word can be difficult (Nation, 2001) and confusing (Luppescu & Day, 1993). Stahl (2003) states that most often there are more difficult words in the dictionary definition that makes the definition itself hard to understand.

Ali Akbar Khansir and Jamshid Gholami Dashti (2014) investigated the effect of question-generation strategy on Iranian EFL third grade high school students' ability in reading comprehension passages via multiple-choice question. In this research, the total number of one hundred and twenty male and female students participated. For homogeneity of the students, a proficiency test including a multiple-choice reading comprehension test (Hill, 1980) was ascertained in the twenty selected questions. Eight multiple-choice reading comprehension passages (Hill, 1980) used based on the target of pre-test and post-test in the forty selected questions. In this research, the students were divided into two experimental groups; each group consisting of 30 homogeneous students (i.e., EMG as Experimental Male Group and EFG as Experimental Female Group) and two control groups (i.e., CMG as Control Male Group and CFG as Control Female Group). In the treatment time, the two experimental groups of the students were instructed for 10 weeks. Outcome of the study showed that question-

generation strategy had significantly impact on the Iranian EFL third grade high school learners' in reading comprehension passages.

### Materials and Methods

In this study Oxford Placement Test Was used to make sure of the homogeneity of the groups. The reading section of PET test was used as pretest and posttest of reading.

### Data Analysis Procedure

The results of post test were analyzed for further discussion via ANCOVA on the scores obtained from experimental and control group to see whether using test construction strategies had any effects on EFL learners reading comprehension ability.

### Results

A descriptive statistical analysis was done on the collected data of OPT (Oxford Placement Test) test. The results are shown in Table (1).

**Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for the Proficiency Test**

N	Mean	SD
110	47	3.32

This table shows the result obtained from the proficiency test, OPT. The mean and standard deviation are presented.

Table (2) shows the number of students who took the pre-test and post-test. It should be mentioned that no one excluded.

**Table 2: Number of Students Participated in Pre-test and Post-test Cases**

Included N	Excluded Percent		Total N      Percent		N      Percent	
Pre-test*group	40	100%	0	0%	40	100%
Pre-test*group	40	100%	0	0%	40	100%

Forty participants were selected for this study. They were divided into two groups, experimental and control. The descriptive statistical analysis done on the collected data of pre-test and post-test is shown in table (3).

**Table 3: Descriptive statistical analysis done on the collected data of pre-test and post-test**

Group	Pre-test		Post-test	
Experimental	Mean	59.9	Mean	68.4
	N	20	N	20
	SD	4.8	SD	4.7
Control	Mean	58.45	Mean	58.1
	N	20	N	20
	SD	5.64	SD	5.2
Total	Mean	59.15	Mean	63.25
	N	40	N	40
	SD	5.216	SD	7.121

### Interpretive Statistics

Analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) is particularly appropriate when subjects in two or more groups are found to differ on a pre-test or other initial variable. In this case, the effects of the pre-test and/or other relevant variables

are partialled out, and the resulting adjusted means of the post-test scores are compared. Through ANCOVA differences in the initial status of the groups can be removed statistically so that they can be compared as though their initial status had been equated. In this study, in order to investigate the research hypothesis "test construction has no effect on reading comprehension ability of Iranian EFL learners", the differences between mean scores of pre-test and post-test of control and experimental group were calculated through ANCOVA.

In order to examine the equality of variances, Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances was run. It tests the null hypothesis that the error variance of the dependent variable is equal across groups.

**Table 4: Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variance**

F	df1	df2	Sig
.26	1	38	.61

According to table (4) the calculated F is not meaningful. So there is equality of variances and ANCOVA can be run.

The data in table (5) are related to test of homogeneity of regression. Before running covariance, between-subjects effects of pre-test-group should be investigated.

**Table 5: Tests of Between-Subjects Effects**

Source	Type III Sum of Square	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Corrected Model	1879.82	3	626.61	230.93	.00
Group (a)	17.86	1	17.86	6.6	.015
Pretest (b)	802.97	1	802	295.95	.00
Group*pretest(a*b)	.41	1	.41	.15	.7
Error	97.68	36	2.71		
Total	46200	40			

As table (5) shows, between -subjects effect (a\*b) is not significant ( $F=0.15$ ,  $Sig=0.7$ ). It shows that the data supports homogeneity of regression. Therefore, covariance should be run just for between - subjects effect of post-test and group to show whether mean scores of two groups are the same or not. The results of this analysis are demonstrated in table (6).

**Table 6: Mean and Corrected Mean of reading comprehension Ability**

Source	Posttest		Corrected Mean	
	M	SD	M	SE
Experimental	38.4	4.7	37.77	.36
Control	28.1	5.11	28.72	.36

Table (6) shows the corrected means of dependent variable reading comprehension ability. The data demonstrate that the means of the experimental group are upper than the control group.

Sum of analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) of reading comprehension ability in the experimental and the control group after eliminating between-subjects effect is demonstrated in table (7):

**Table 7: Sum of analysis of covariance**

Source	Type III Sum of Square	df	Mean Square	F	Sig	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	1879.415	2	939.71	354.48	.00	.95

Pretest	818.52	1	818.52	308.76	.00	.89
Group	805.42	1	805.48	303.84	.00	.89
Error	98.08	37	2.65			
Total	46200	40				

As it can be seen, the corrected model ( $f=00$ ,  $F=354.48$ ) is statistically significant. The results ( $F=303.84$ ,  $Sig=.00$ ,  $Eta=.89$ ) shows that there is a difference between two groups. It means that there is significant difference between experimental and control group. As a result the null hypothesis "test construction has no effect on reading comprehension ability of Iranian EFL learners." will be rejected, so it can be concluded that the students' paragraph writing ability can be improved by using dynamic assessment.

## Conclusion

The results of any skills such as reading comprehension in foreign and second language learning are very important and have vital role for educational policy makers, EFL teaching administrators, educators, and teachers. Policy makers are assumed to have major responsibility toward the national policy for education in general, and for foreign language teaching in particular. For instance, the outcome of this research would help policy makers to implement programs in changing of the strategies of the participants and teachers toward learning and teaching English. Educators, who have the responsibility for implementing the decisions made by policy makers, can utilize the findings of this research in order to improve the quality of teacher training and in-service training programs in manipulating of affective factors in helping the participants in EFL/ ESL settings.

This study can help EFL learners improve their reading proficiency through this test construction strategy and they do much more their language activities. This strategy helps the teachers promote their participants' reading comprehension ability and find the most important points that help participants enhance their performance in using reading comprehension tests. Moreover, it would prove pedagogical value of the test-construction strategy in EFL classrooms and lead EFL instructors provide the learners with enough information to utilize this strategy in reading comprehension to take reading comprehension tests. In this case, the significance of the present study is to make teachers familiar with the construction of multiple-choice reading comprehension tests. Teachers should give more demonstrations regarding how to generate higher order questions before using the test-construction strategy. During the instruction time, teachers should be a facilitator to help participants individually. The results of the present study can be used as a basis for syllabus designers, textbook writers, and EFL teachers at advanced level. At a pedagogical level, the study can help language teachers to discover the learner's knowledge of the foreign and second language in language settings.

The analysis of data revealed that test-construction strategy led to significantly better performances of the participants. Furthermore, experimental groups, males and females, who received the treatment in during instruction, had better performance in this study. This research revealed that male and female participants did not have any different performances.

Outcome of this research showed that the test-construction strategy has had positive effects on participants' learning through teachers' instruction. The awareness of test-construction strategy can enhance participants' reading comprehension because it can help participants pay more attention to the content of the text, generate higher order questions, enhance meta-cognition, and activate prior knowledge and in other hand, the test-construction strategy can be used as an effective method to promote EFL participants' reading comprehension in order to help the participants become active and independent readers in their performances. This research can be used as a positive learning experience for both learners and teachers in reading comprehension in EFL and ESL settings.

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# A COMPARATIVE STUDY ON LEARNING CONVERSATION VIA THE USE OF METACOGNITIVE LEARNING STRATEGIES AMONG IRANIAN EFL LEARNERS AT INTERMEDIATE LEVEL CLASSES IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE INSTITUTES.

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## Abstract

The aim of this study is to explore a comparative study on the relationship between learning conversation via the use of metacognitive learning strategies among Iranian EFL learners at Novin Goftehan Institute in Tonekabon and Shokuh language Institutes in Tonekabon, Iran. To this end, 30 intermediate level students were randomly selected from among a population of 60 who were administered a standardized OPT test and the range of whose scores was within standard deviation from the mean. They were then divided into two groups of 15 and were randomly assigned to the experimental and the control group. The experimental group (n=15) received learning strategies, while the control group (n=15) received no instruction. The conversation section of the TOEFL as an already established standardized test was utilized to measure the conversation ability of the participants before and after the treatment (pre\_test/post\_test design). The results revealed that the experimental group outperformed the control group on the post test measure and at 0.05 level of significance  $P < 0.05$  showed a 2\_tailed significance value of 0.038.

**Key words:** learning strategies, theory of metacognition, learning conversation, language strategy, language learner strategies.

## Introduction

Long ago, conversation ability used to be considered as a passive activity and did not merit researchers attention. A simplistic view of conversation skill would assume that L2 has occupied a peculiar position throughout much of the history of Language teaching and only in the last two decades has it begun to emerge as a branch of teaching, learning and of testing in its own right; rarely focusing on the production of spoken (Howatt 1984 :172). This confusion of speaking as a skill in its own right with speaking as a central medium for learning continues in current development. Speaking has increasingly emerged as special area in language pedagogy. Alexander 1967; O'Neill et al, 1971. However, in the past few years the interest in learning the conversation ability has grown. Now a days it is not regarded as a neglected skill anymore. Many people, including learners, need the conversation ability in diverse settings such as school, travel, and work.

## Significance and purpose of the study

Proficiency goals can direct the design and development of the quality learning activities. Foreign Language proficiency is measured by the ability to communicate in the Language. This ability is demonstrated in the understanding of authentic aural and written materials and in the ability to generate spoken and written language for real-life purposes. Proficiency in a language is a complex concept. Using the Language implies that the speaker is able to progressively perceive, understand, present, negotiate, persuade, hypothesize, and interpret in that Language. Strategies are an important pedagogical mechanism to examine the abstract concept of learning and metacognitive skills are key components of approaches to learning where the teacher monitors your learning, plans your learning and evaluates your learning. Learning strategies are defined as specific

actions, behaviors, steps, or techniques such as seeking – used by students to enhance their own learning (scarcella& oxford, 1992, p. 63).

### **Research question of the study**

The present study sets out to look for answers to the following question:

HQ: Does learning conversation via metacognitive learning strategies instruction have any effect on the Iranian EFL intermediate learners' conversation?

### **Hypothesis of the study**

A null hypothesis has been adopted for this study, and restated as below:

HO: Learning conversation via metacognitive learning strategies does not have effect among Iranian EFL intermediate learners.

### ***Styles of speaking***

An important dimension of conversation is using a style of speaking that is appropriate to the particular circumstances. Different styles of speaking reflect the roles, age, sex, and status of participants in interactions and also reflect the expression of politeness. Lexical, phonological, and grammatical changes may be involved in producing a suitable style of speaking, as the following alternatives illustrate:

- ✓ Have you seen the boss? / Have you seen the manager? (lexical)
- ✓ What are you doing? (phonological)
- ✓ Seen Joe lately? / Have you seen Joe lately?

Successful management of speech styles creates the sense of politeness that is essential for harmonious social relations (Brown and Levinson, 1978).

### ***Functions of speaking***

Numerous attempts have been made to classify the functions of speaking in human interaction. Brown and Yule (1983) made a useful distinction between the interactional functions of speaking, in which it serves to establish and maintain social relations, and the transactional functions, which focus on the exchange of information. In workshops with teachers and in designing my own materials, I use an expanded three-part version of Brown and Yule's framework (after Jones, 1996, and Burns, 1998): talk as interaction; talk as transaction; talk as performance. Each of these speech activities is quite distinct in terms of form and function and requires different teaching approaches.

### **Theory of metacognition**

Metacognitive skills are key components of approaches to learning where the learner has to monitor, evaluate, and regulate their own learning strategies. Metacognition is an important construct in relation to knowledge acquisition that emerged from the seminal work of Flavell (1976) and is concerned with how one thinks about one's own cognition. Metacognitive beliefs, metacognitive awareness, metacognitive experiences, Metacognitive knowledge, feeling of knowing, judgment of learning, theory of mind, met memory, metacognitive skills, executive skills, comprehension monitoring, learning strategies, and self-regulation are several of the terms we commonly associate with metacognition.

Metacognitive skills are key components of approaches to learning where the learners have to monitor, evaluate, and regulate their own learning strategies. Metacognition is an important construct in relation to knowledge acquisition that emerged from the seminal work of Flavell (1976) and is concerned with how one thinks about one's own cognition. Awareness of one's own thinking and increasing knowledge ability about cognition and learning process enable students to learn more effectively (Pintrich, 2002). Metacognition is usually conceptualized as having two components: knowledge of cognition and regulation of cognition (Schraw, 1998). Knowledge of cognition includes a general knowledge of strategies that can be Oxford's classification of learning strategies (1990) adopted from Chalamali & Faryadres (2011) used for different tasks, knowledge of which are effective under certain conditions, and knowledge about one self (Flavell, 1976). For example when attending a lecture, students use a number of strategies for listening, taking note, and checking ongoing comprehension. Students also are aware of their motivations, strengths, and weaknesses in relation to the lecture topics students can also use situational knowledge such as making a judgment about how to access information covered in the

lecture through alternative strategies. Regulation of cognition is where a learner exerts conscious monitoring and control over his cognitive and learning processes (Pintrich 2002). Brown (1987), for instance, presents four types of regulation: (a) prediction (b) planning (c) monitoring, and (d) evaluation.

According to Flavell (1997), metacognition comprises both metacognitive knowledge and metacognitive experience or regulation. Metacognitive knowledge refers to acquired knowledge about cognitive processes knowledge that can be used to control cognitive processes. In Flavell's words "metacognitive knowledge consist primarily of knowledge or beliefs about what factors or variables act and interact in what ways to affect the course and outcome of cognitive enterprises" (1979, p. 907). "Metacognitive experience is any conscious cognitive or affective experience that accompany and pertain to any intellectual enterprise. An example would be the sudden feeling that you do not understand something another person just said" (Flavell 1979, p.908). Anderson (2002) divides the metacognitive learning process into five components: (1) preparing and planning for learning, (2) selecting and using learning strategies, (3) monitoring strategy use, (4) orchestrating various strategies, and (5) evaluating strategy use and learning.

Many scholars have recognized the crucial role of metacognition both in cognitive psychology and second or foreign Language Learning (Bolitho et al . 2003; Chamot et al. 1999; Fernandez-Duque, Baird, and Posner 2000a , 2000b; Mokhtari and Reichard 2002; Paris and Winograd 1990; Pintrich 1999; Schoonen et al . 1998, 2002; Zimmerman and Schunk 2001).

### Participants

The participants in this study consisted of 60 students who studied English at the intermediate level in Novingofteman and Shokuh language institute in Tonekabon. The criterion for being an intermediate student in these two institutes was that they should have taken a placement test from all books of "Let's Go" and obtained a score of 70 and above out of 100. The students were of mixed gender. The age range of the participants varied from 16 to 23.

They were divided into two groups of 15 and were selected and assigned to experimental (n=15) and control (n=15) groups.

### Instrumentation

The first instrument in this study was the use of an Oxford Placement Test. It was used to measure the conversation performance of both control and experimental groups. There were five cloze test passages (19 questions), 19 multiple choice questions related to the knowledge of vocabulary, 11 multiple choice questions assessed the participants' knowledge of grammar, 5 questions related to their knowledge of different signs and notions used to indicate particular meaning, and the last question of the OPT was intended to ask participants to write about the selected topic. Both the experimental and the control group took a pre-test (Appendix B) of learning strategies in order to find their current level of conversation ability.

After the pre-test, the control group received the learning conversation strategies technique in 10 sessions. The experimental group on the other hand attended the learning strategies technique classes as a treatment for 10 sessions. After the 10 session, both the experimental group and the control group took the post-test (Appendix D) of conversation ability.

For the post-test the participants were again asked to answer a questionnaire on learning strategies.

### procedure

The first section, the researcher met the participants, talked with them about the study for a few minutes and made them aware of the processes they were supposed to go through. To ensure the homogeneity of the subject, 30 students were selected based on first administration of conversation section of the Oxford Placement Test (OPT). 15 students were assigned to experimental and 15 control groups. The experimental group underwent the treatment.

The treatment was based on the all books of (Let's Go). The participants in the experimental group participated in a 10 session strategy learning. Each session was held once a week and took 60 minutes. Each week, the steps taken during the strategy instruction period are as follows:

1) The concept of language learning strategies was explained. Different types of strategies including metacognitive, social, affective, memory, cognitive, and compensation strategies were briefly explained, especially metacognitive strategy. Some specific examples were given.



2) This stage involved focusing specifically on conversation learning. To familiarize students with them, the note taking strategies were explained as an example. Because the focus of attention was on metacognitive strategies, the metacognitive strategies were described. (see appendix B) were given to the students which included the definition of the strategies.

3) students were informed of the text of conversation and wrote it on a piece of paper.

4) They were asked to brainstorm the kind of informed they might hear of conversation and wrote it on the paper based on their background knowledge. This prediction phase was done in pairs or in small groups. The metacognitive processes involved in this phase were planning and directed attention.

5) At this point, they were encouraged to discuss points of confusion and disagreement, modify as required and decided the parts of the text of conversation and information that would require careful attention during the second conversation.

6) The participants repeated to the text of conversation a second time. They attempted to make sense of point of difficulty raised after the first conversation. The metacognitive processes involved in this phase were selective attention, monitoring, evaluating and problem solving.

7) student repeated to the text for a third time focusing specially on the information revealed in the class discussion which they were not able to make sense of before. The metacognitive processes involved in this phase were selective attention, monitoring and problem solving.

8) Finally, each student completed a personal reflection on the listening process, and any strategies they would use in the following conversation. After

the treatment stage was completed, another conversation learning test with the same level of difficulty was administered to both experimental and control groups to see whether the strategy instruction had any effect on the participants performance or not.

## Results

The research question concerned the degree to which metacognitive strategy might result in variance in conversation learning. It hypothesized that the group receiving the experimental treatment would outperform control group on the post test of conversation learning. To see if the control and experimental groups were in equal conditions before the treatment began, it was decided to compare the mean scores of both groups. A pre-requisite to any comparison of two independent means is equality of variances. Equality of variances was investigated using Levene's test. The following table presents a summary of statistical analysis utilized to investigate the equality of means.

Table 4.1. descriptive analysis of the data of the control group of the study.

N	Mean	Std.Deviation
PRE 30	85.96	17.14
POST 30	102.56	16.26

This section presents the data regarding the descriptive statistics of the groups. Table 4.1 shows the descriptive statistics of the control group of the study before and after the experiment.

This table indicates that the mean of the control group prior to the experiment was 85.96 with the standard deviation of 17.14. However, its performance improved after the instruction, that is, they showed an increase in their mean score ( $M=102.56, SD=16.26$ ).

Table 4.2. descriptive analysis of the experimental group of the study.

N	Mean	Std.Deviation
PRE Ex 30	87.43	17.86
POST Ex 30	115.53	28.89

Table 4.2 presents the result of the descriptive analysis of the Experimental group of the study. It shows that although its mean score was 87.43 with the standard deviation of 17.86 before the intervention, its mean score greatly improved after the intervention ( $m=115.53, SD=28.89$ ). Overall, the result of the descriptive statistics of the groups showed that the experimental group performed better on the post test measure even though the two groups, mean scores were almost the same prior to the intervention. That is, the experimental group outperformed the control group on conversational skills after the instruction.

Inferential statistics of the data:

Table 4.3 is the result of the independent samples t-test of the group's posttest scores on conversational skills.

Table 4.3 is the result of the independent samples t-test of the group's posttest scores on conversational skills. The

		Levene's Test for Equality of variances		t-test for Equality of Means					
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig.(2-taild)	Mean difference	Std.Error difference	95% confidence interval of the difference Lower
Post	Equal variances assumed	6.480	0.014	-2.142	58	0.036	-12.96667	6.05348	-25.08403
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.142	45.692	0.038	-12.96667	6.05348	-25.15391

result of the Levene's test is significant. This means that we should assume the variances unequal. The table indicates that the differences between the experimental and control group is significant at the level of significant of 0.05 ( $t=2.14, df=45, sig=0.038$ ). This shows that the metacognitive strategy training proved to be successful in increasing the learners conversational skills in this specific context.

Although the result of the independent samples t-test indicated that the experimental group outperformed the control group in the post test and the instruction was effective; however, we do not know how much this instruction was effective.

Therefore, the effect size was calculated manually to see the amount of effectiveness of the instruction. Rosnow and Rosenthal's (2005) Formula:  $\frac{\sqrt{t^2}}{t^2 + df} = 0.038$  was used to calculate the effect size. The amount of the effect size was 1.41. According to Cohen, the measurement scales of the effect size, 1.42 is considered as a small effect size indicating that although the instruction is effective in improving the learner's conversational skills, its effectiveness was not great.

### Conclusion

The result of statistical analysis indicates that the experimental group outperformed the control group after the treatment session. This findings of the current study indicated that using metacognitive learning strategies in learning conversation could result in a better performance of language learners in conversation ability. These findings seemed to be compatible with the finding of many studies which reported that metacognitive learning strategies is useful for EFL learners, and learners generally have a positive attitude toward using techniques for learning language skills like learning conversation because technique has a positive impact on the learning and teaching process also, specific methods or techniques used by individual learners to facilitate the learning and acquisition (Oxford, 1990).

Many scholars have recognized the crucial role of metacognition both in cognitive psychology and second foreign language learning (Bolitho et al. 2003, Chamot et al. 1999). Haris (2003) believes that "metacognitive" is concerned. With guiding the learning process itself and so includes strategies for planning, monitoring and evaluating both language use and language learning, key elements in developing autonomy. "(p.4)" Strong metacognitive skill empower second language learners "(Anderson, 2002, 9.2). The result of this study pointed out that metacognitive learning strategies has a good effect on the improvement of the skill of learning conversation. Using the language implies that the speaker is able to progressively perceive, understand, present, negotiate, persuade, hypothesize, and interpret in that language strategies are an important pedagogical metacognitive skills are key components of approaches to learning where the learning has to monitor your learning, planning your learning and evaluating your learning.

Learning strategies are defined as specific actions, behavior, steps, or techniques such as seeking used by students to enhance their own learning (Scarell and Oxford, 1992, p.63). Finally, this study confirms Flavells (1979, p. 907) that a word "metacognitive" knowledge consist. Primarily of knowledge or beliefs about what factors or variables act and interact in what ways to affect the course and outcome of cognitive enterprise". Also, language learning strategies have a significant role to play in the learning and English language teaching and learning. Oxford (1990) postulates that language learning strategies is being oriented towards the development of communicative competence.

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# THE EFFECT OF THE IDEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND OF TRANSLATOR ON THE INFORMATION STRUCTURE OF TRANSLATED TEXT

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## ABSTRACT

This study attempted to investigate the effects of ideological background of two different translators on the information structure of translated texts. In doing so, the translations of the Hoy Koran Sureh h Maryam (Mary), Verses 1-30 by Pickthall (1930) and Arberry (1955), were selected. Assuming the effect of the translator's ideological background on their translations during the whole process of translation, the results obtained from an independent *t*-Test showed the differences in percentage among the number of marked and unmarked words used by each translator to be statistically significant.

**KEY WORDS:** Information Structure, Critical Discourse Analysis, Translation Studies, Ideology, Mediation

## 1. Introduction

The recent breakthroughs in translation studies (TS) have led to many different approaches that consider translation as an act of intercultural communication. The emergence of critical discourse analysis (CDA) has deeply affected translation studies. According to CDA, using text-linguistic elements reflects the translator's intentions and membership to a particular ideology which, in turn, may create ideological struggle between the participants in the act of translation or interpretation. CDA considers the act of translation based on the translator's socio-cultural background, linguistic background, experiences with other texts and discourses and the translator's interpretation (understanding) of the source text (ST) and the choices made in the production of the target text (TT). This may result in the fact that translators add their own world views and ideologies to translations either unconsciously or deliberately according to their own assumptions or the requirements in the translation. Thus, revealing the effect of ideological background of the translator on the information structure of the text is one of the main purposes of CDA within TS. In TS, certain aspects of CDA have been used to examine the ideological motivations behind translator's text-linguistic choices in the TT and the translator's role in the interpretation process of the intended meaning of the ST and production of a new TT.

Regarding the relationship between ideology and translation, Mason (1992, p. 23) declared, "... ideology impinges on the translation process in subtle ways." Text users bring their own assumptions and general world-view at all levels, including lexical and syntactic choices. The translator has the responsibility of both understanding the meaning of particular choices of the ST and passing them, by suitable linguistic forms, to a TT. Translators do their task in specific socio-political contexts to produce target texts (TTs) based on their previous personal ideological tendencies, and the examination of surface linguistic relations in TTs reveals this ideology.

Language and society depend on each other. The modern approach to linguistics believes that the social world is constructed by means of language. Humans use language to share information with other individuals. Each individual belongs to a social group with its own values and beliefs. Thus, language is closely bound up in practice with culture, and culture is, in turn, closely connected with the practice of politics in a particular society

(Chilton & Schaffner, 2002). In other words, languages determine the physical and geographical borders between nations, social groups and even individuals.

Since discourse is a form of language use, discourse analysis (DA) is the analytical framework which was created for studying actual text and talk in the communicative context. The early DA or the so-called linguistic DA focused on the internal structure of texts, the linguistic devices that connect parts to wholes, grammatical cohesion and semantic principles through which words and sentences become recognizable as connected texts (Fitch & Sanders, 2005). Due to the rise of systemic-functional linguistics (SFL) (Halliday, 1978), the DA has become the core aspect of sociolinguistics and has focused on how personal and social processes are encoded in the ways sentences and utterances are formed as components of larger text units. Halliday (1978), introduced a tristratal model (tenor, mode and field) consisting of phonology, lexico-grammar and semantics where texts are no longer considered as a system of signs existing outside the social reality, but instead they are processes and products which are produced and interpreted in a specific social context. Halliday's tristratal model has now become the foundation of a variety of discourse analysis models. Still, another kind of DA looks for patterns of language use that may be related to themes of social structure and ideological critique. This is called CDA which combines linguistic analysis, ideological critique and cognitive psychology. CDA aims to uncover ideological relations and it has mainly been applied for the analysis of political discourse.

### 1.1. Significance and Purpose of the Study

The present study is significant to translators. The results obtained in this research prove the fact that the application of CDA for the analysis of the ST and TT helps the translator to become aware of the genre conventions, social and situational context of the ST and TT, and outline the formation of ideological relations on the text-linguistic level.

It is hoped that the findings will reveal and support the presence of some sort of interference as a result of ideological issues. They will also show that texts whether original or translated can offer information about the relationship between ideology and discourse.

Proving the hypothesis that CDA is a helpful tool in the translation process of text is another purpose of this study. CDA alone and within TS is used to uncover the attitudinal meaning, which typically creates ideology struggles in texts among readers. The present study deals with contrasting a ST and two of its TTs plus discovering the hidden meanings of each translated work. Furthermore, the study takes into account the factors which may affect the translator's decision to make choices in using or not using particular words in particular ways.

### 1.2. Statement of the Problem

The readers' unawareness of the impact of ideological background of the translator on the process and product of translation raises different kinds of problems such as ideological clashes between the readers and the translators/interpreters. This, in turn, results in taking hostile stances vs. cordial attitudes towards the STs and TTs. The kind of attitude readers and learners take towards the text deeply affects how they read, understand, and learn.

To investigate this problem, the present study compared two different translations of the Holy Koran by Pickthall (1930), and Arberry (1955), following the theoretical frameworks within Fairclough's social and cultural CDA model, Van Leeuwen's CDA model, Halliday's tristratal model, Wodak's discourse-historical CDA model, Van Dijk's socio-cognitive CDA model, and Toury's comparative model. The selected corpora were examined, the differences in the two translations were highlighted and processed to make known whether they originated from the ideological differences of the translators and to what degree they were significant.

The obtained findings were then reviewed to find any possible ideological mediation and manipulation. After recoding the findings into numerical data, statistical tests were run to calculate the amount of significance of the differences in the two translations.

### 1.3. Research Questions of the Study

The following research questions were addressed in this study:

1. Is there a relationship between ideological background of the translator and the information structure of translated work?

2. Is CDA powerful enough to unearth the hidden ideological differences in translations through investigating the different information structures of the translated text?

#### 1.4. Hypotheses of the Study

In order to investigate the above-mentioned research questions, the following null hypotheses were stated:

H0<sub>1</sub>. There is no relationship between the ideological background of the translator and the information structure of the translated work.

H0<sub>2</sub>. CDA is not powerful enough to unearth the hidden ideological differences in translations through investigating the different information structures of the translated text.

## 2. Review of the Literature

The impact of ideology on translation has motivated ample research. This research area still deserves more attention because how ideology results in mediation and manipulation of the ST can help the best interpretation of the text as well as its translation. Since the majority of the scholars agree upon the tendency of translations to deviate from their original texts, it is of great importance to recognize and deal with the possible underlying reasons.

Old linguistics-based approaches towards translation, whose main focus was describing textual forms, ignored the ideological aspects. This kind of deficiency resulted in developing a new trend of research called CDA. According to CDA advocates, all language use, including translation, is ideological. This area has enjoyed lots of attention and interest over recent decades.

The ideology of translation can deal with both process and product of translation. According to Tymoczko (2003), the ideology of translation exists not simply in the translated text, but in the voicing and stance of the translator, and in relevance of the text to the audience who receive it. With regard to this issue, Schaffner (2003) tried to examine the ideological aspects within the text itself by focusing on both lexical and grammatical level. She concluded that ideology can be extracted from a text by analyzing textual features.

The effective role of ideology in defining the translator's intended purpose is absolutely obvious. Based on what Nord (2003) claimed, almost any decision in translation is, consciously or unconsciously, guided by ideological criteria. Many different studies have been conducted regarding particular instances of translation. As an example, Badran (2001) aimed at exploring the relationships between modality and ideology in two different translations of the same political text, one in Arabic and the other in English. He concluded that although both translations seem to present a similar stance to that of the original text, the way in which the central issues were tackled revealed some sort of differences. For instance, the Arabic text was much more cautious considering the extent of damage that could occur when adopting more aggressive method of translation. Besides many articles published in the area of CDA, there are also many dissertations focusing on the same area. Davatgarzadeh (2007) studied the representation of social actors in *Interchange* textbooks. She found that "female social actors were more prominent, expressive and assertive in comparison to male social actors" (Rashidi & Karimi Fam, 2011, p. 116), a piece of finding which was the result of employing van Leeuwen's (1996) framework and Halliday's (2004) transitivity model.

In his 2006 study, Samaie (2006) tried to apply the CDA approach to investigate those types of distortion with ideological nature. He intended to find those parts of socio-educational model of second language learning which had syntactically, semantically, phonologically, pragmatically, etc. become distorted. His findings revealed a large amount of critical and ideological deformations in the model.

The critical examination of the ideological manipulations in the contents of the STs as well as the ideological orientations manifested in translation can show the intentional or unintentional strategies chosen by translators to manipulate the exact message and this will obviously influence the interpretation of ST. Rashidi and Karimi Fam (2011) made a CDA study to show a possible existence of such ideological manipulations and their effects on what the original text had tried to convey.

However, the main aim of the present study is to prove the effect of ideological background of translators on the translation process and the hypothesis that CDA is a helpful tool in uncovering this effect.



### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1. Materials

This study utilized two different translations of the Holy Koran, Sureh Maryam Verses 1-30 by Pickthall (1930), and Arberry (1955). The percentage of the marked and unmarked words of each verse used by each translator was first individually computed. Later the comparison was done by determining the grand total percent of the marked and unmarked words of the translators. Lexical elements were considered the translators' raw material for the interpretation of the ST and the creation of a corresponding text in TL. According to CDA, the text producer's intentions and linguistic and the ideological background affect the choice of lexical elements. It is evident that the social and situational contexts determine the vocabulary, syntax and the overall organization of the text. The translator's linguistic choices, lexis, speech acts, texture and structure of texts are revealed in the ideological struggle between two opposite ideologies due to different social and ideological backgrounds.

#### 3.2. Conceptual Model of the Study

This conceptual model shows that in the translation process, the translator's interpretation of ST may be informed by an ideological membership. In the production of TT, the translator may insert and impose his ideological opinion on the choice of certain words, which then may create a different meaning in the TT.

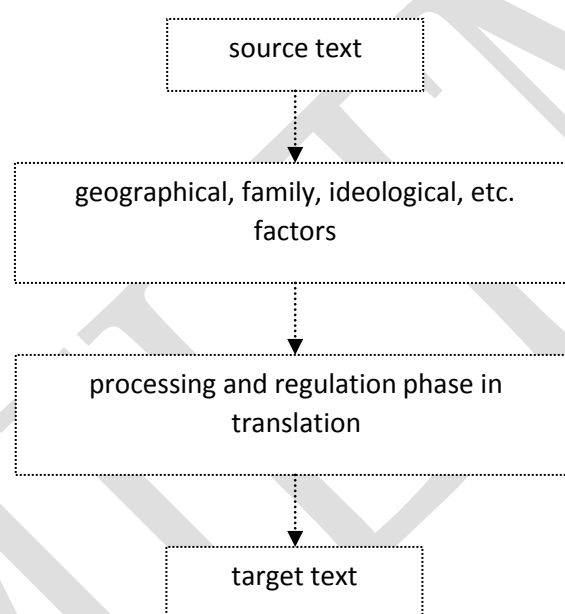


Figure 1. Conceptual model of the study

#### 3.3. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical foundation of this study was mostly based on the work of Halliday's tristratal model (1978) and Fairclough's social and culture CDA model (1989). It is related to how translation/interpretation process and end-product analysis could benefit from joining DA. The integration of CDA in TS also reflects the translator's translation strategies and lexical choices which may or may not be rooted in a particular ideology.

The first part of the study was related to a comparison of two different translations of the Holy Koran, Sureh Maryam Verses 1-30 by Pickthall (1930) and Arberry (1955). The second part dealt with the CDA framework as a helpful tool in the translation using CDA/TS approach and terminology and recognizing any ideological motivations behind the translator's textual choices, which reflect the translator's individual interpretation of the social context.

#### 3.4. The Design of the Study

In this study the comparison between two different translations of the Holy Koran were based on CDA approaches within TS to conclude what ideological relations are expressed in lexical elements of text, how they affect the rhetorical purpose of the text, and whether the related information can be useful to the translator during the translation process. It was not possible to do the comparison of the whole book. A certain part, Sureh

Maryam Verses 1-30, was chosen. After converting the findings into numerical data, an independent *t*-Test was run to calculate the amount of significance of the differences in the two translations.

### 3.5. Methods of Analyzing Data

This study was mostly based on a library and descriptive research method. Quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection were employed in support of each other in this research. The independent *t*-Test was also used to test possible differences between the two translations and the roles of translators and their ideological backgrounds in the translation process.

## 4. Results and Findings

### 4.1. Introduction

In order to answer the research question, the differences between translations were uncovered through determining the marked words in each verse translated by each translator. This was conducted through counting the marked and unmarked words and computing the number of marked words used by each translator in percentage. The comparison then was done by running an independent *t*-Test, and comparing the grand total number of words and marked words used by both translators.

### 4.2. Data Analysis and Findings

Several statistical analyses were conducted to answer the research questions in this research. A comparison of two English translations of the Holy Koran, Sureh Maryam Verse 1-30 by Pickthall (1930) and Arberry (1955) was done. The differences between the two translations regarding the number of marked words in each verse were shown in percentage. The findings of the independent *t*-Test rejected the null-hypotheses. The purpose behind such analysis was to show the fact that the unequal number of marked words used by each translator was based on their different ideological backgrounds. The *t*-value was enough above *t*-critical and the null hypotheses were rejected.

**Table 1. Group Statistics**

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
<b>Words</b>	% of marked words for T1	.2461	29	.09441	.01753
	% of marked words for T2	.2083	29	.08526	.01583

As we see, the different Means for translator T1 (.2461) and for translator T2 (.2083) are both positive, which show a different percentage of marked words used by each translator.

**Table 2. Independent Samples Test**

		Independent Differences			95% Confidence Interval of the Difference			
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Words	.03779	.08468	.01572	.00558	.07000	2.403	28	.023
Words % T1 & T2*								

\* Percent of marked words for translators T1 & T2

$$H_0: P_{T1} = P_{T2}$$

$$H_1: P_{T1} \neq P_{T2}$$

This shows that marked words are used unequally based on statistics. The *t*-value (2.403) was above the *t* critical (1.980), and the null hypotheses were rejected. In other words, the number of marked words used by T1 is far up the number of marked words used by T2. This inequality is also shown by Sig. (.023) which is less than .05. The upper interval (.07000) is also different from the lower one (.00558). Since both are positive, the percentage of the marked words used by the two translators is not equal.

### 4.3. Results of Hypothesis Testing

The results obtained from the analysis of the independent *t*-test regarding the number of marked words used by the two translators showed a considerable difference. The *t*-value was above *t*-critical (1.980) and therefore the two null hypotheses were rejected.

The major concern of the present study was both to focus on the translators' text-level choices and to see if the ideological backgrounds of the two different translators were reflected and represented in their translations. As every translator is considered to be an intercultural mediator, the analysis of TTs were aimed at each translator's individual understanding of the ST and its context, and their choices on the textual, pragmatic and semantic levels, which reflected each translator's specific linguistic, cultural and ideological characteristics.

Since the translations in this study were done by different translators with different ideological backgrounds, the reason could be traced in the effect of their ideological background as an independent variable on shaping their information structure during the translation process which was the dependent variable using the integration of CDA approaches in TS.

## 5. Discussion and Conclusions

### 5.1. General Discussion

The results of this study indicate that the ideological background of the translator has an impact on the information structure of the translation. Two translations of the same text by two different translators of the Holy Koran were chosen, and a comparison between their translations was done, assuming the effect of their ideological background on their choices of lexis, and finally the differences among the translators were shown by running an independent *t*-Test between the marked words used by them in their translations.

To prove that CDA is a helpful tool in the analysis of the translation process was one of the main aims of this study. It required the integration of Fairclough's social and cultural CDA model (1989), and also Halliday's tristratal model (1978).

Since this study aimed at finding the effect of the ideological background of the translator on the information structure of the translation of the Holy Koran by Pickthall (1930) and Arberry (1955), it is necessary to give a brief biography of the two translators. Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall was an English Muslim convert. For nearly three years, he intermittently wandered throughout Syria, Palestine, and Egypt and acquired a good knowledge of Arabic and customs and religious conventions of the three Arab countries. In 1920, he went to India with his wife to serve as the editor of the Bombay Chronicle, returning to England only in 1935, a year before his death. It was in India that he completed his famous translation *The Meaning of the Glorious Koran*. He is buried in the Muslim cemetery at Brookwood in Surrey, England.

Arthur John Arberry was a respected British orientalist. He was a non-Muslim scholar of Arabic, Persian, and Islamic studies. His translation of the Qur'an into English, *The Koran Interpreted*, is one of the most prominent written by a non-Muslim. Formerly, he was Head of the Department of Classics at Cairo University in Egypt. Later, Arberry returned home to become the Assistant Librarian at the Library of the India Office, and was then seconded to the Ministry of Information, London. Arberry was appointed to the Chair of Persian at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London from 1944 to 1947. He subsequently became the Sir Thomas Adams's Professor of Arabic at Cambridge University and a Fellow of Pembroke College, Cambridge, from 1947 until his death in 1969. He is buried in Ascension Parish, Cambridge, together with his wife.

According to CDA, the interpretation and production of text take place in a special socio-culture context. So, language is affected by the social context and is also used to change the social context and participant relationships. Therefore, the act of translation happens in a specific socio-cultural setting and it is determined by the purpose of the translation, the official representative's request, the target audience, the type of genre and translator's socio-cultural, as well as linguistic background knowledge and experience. Every and each act of text interpretation or text production occurs on the basis of the Member's Resources (MRs) of the translators, which shapes the translator's individual interpretation of the ST, his/her ability to determine the social and situational context of the communicative act and to understand the meaning intended by ST producer. "The translator's interpretation of the ST is then used to create a new TT in another culture according to the lexical and grammatical constraints of the TL. In CDA and TS, every text is considered to contain the text producer's intentions to create a certain rhetorical purpose." (Lande, 2010, p. 75)

## 5.2. Implications of the Study

The findings of the present study have implications for language learners, language translators and also linguists. It is especially used for the translators in which the CDA framework may be applied to TS in three ways: (a) as an auxiliary tool for critical analysis of the ST prior to the translation process; (b) for the analysis of the translator's role in the creation of ideological struggle in TT; and, (c) for the analysis of the translator's choices in the re-creation of the ideological struggle in the TT.

Approaches (b) and (c) require a comparative analysis of the ST and the TT. In this study, the CDA framework is applied to the analysis of the ST (a) and the analysis of the translator's textual choices in the reproduction of ideological relations in the TT (c). Translators play a considerable and significant role in the process of translation. Various translations of a source text reflect some sort of deviation which can be socially or culturally ideological. The best approach to detect and explain these deviations is CDA since it can develop systematic research investigating strategies that result in intervention of translators. As a matter of fact, much more attention should be paid to this aspect of translation as it deals with socio-linguistic patterns of the discourse and will, of course, influence the readership.

Thus, based on the results of this study in applying CDA as a helpful tool in the translation process of the texts, it can be concluded the CDA may be applied in the interpretation (understanding) of the ST or the TT on a descriptive level, the establishment of the type of genre, the establishment of the social and situational context, the text-linguistic analysis of the lexis, grammatical and textual structures and the explanation of the textual material in terms of the intended meaning, ideological implications, and social relations between interlocutors.

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# THE EFFECT OF TEACHING CRITICAL THINKING ON IRANIAN UPPER-INTERMEDIATE EFL LEARNERS' ESSAY WRITING ABILITY

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## Abstract.

The present investigation was an attempt to study the Effectiveness of Teaching Critical Thinking on Iranian Upper-Intermediate EFL Learners' Essay Writing Ability. To that end, an OPT test was administered to 110 university students learning English language in institutes. Learners who scored between one above and below the standard deviation were selected. 40 learners were selected and they were divided into experimental and control group, each group contained 20 learners. A writing test was administered to both groups as a pre-test to take their initial knowledge of writing ability. The writing section of the TOEFL test was selected to test the writing ability of the participants. The experimental group received treatment in order to help them improve their writing ability by teaching critical thinking in fifteen sessions. The control group received no treatment. Finally both groups sat for the post-test of the same writing test. The results were analyzed through ANCOVA and it was explored that teaching critical thinking had a positive effect on Iranian EFL learners' essay writing ability.

*Key words: coherence, cohesion, critical thinking*

## INTRODUCTION

The term critical thinking has been defined in many different ways. However, there are not certain differences among these definitions. One of the earliest definitions of critical thinking is the one given by Lipman (1988) who defines critical thinking as skillful, responsible thinking that facilitates good judgment because it relies upon criteria, is self-correcting, and is sensitive to context. He also argues that we as teachers must begin with the raw subject matter of communication and inquiry and cultivate all the skills that the mastery in such processes entails. As Elder and Paul (1994) state, critical thinking refers to the ability of individuals to take charge of their own thinking and develop appropriate criteria and standards for analyzing their own thinking (cited in Shirkhani and Fahim, 2011). Moon (2008) calls it a central point in education and indicates that critical thinking is now considered the goal of learning in many western educational systems. Various English language arts programs in the U.S. have been implemented to facilitate language learning and cognitive development in a complimentary manner and research findings have shown that many aspects of reading and writing are pertinent to important thinking skills (Moffett and Wagner, 1983; Pearson and Tierney, 1984; Stanford and Roark, 1974; Staton, 1984; cited in Liaw, 2007).

EFL learners of English, however, are often criticized by constructs which claim that they lack individual voice and critical thinking skills (Stapleton, 2002). In 2007, Alagozlu stated that Turkish EFL learners suffer from weaknesses in expressing their original thoughts in writing in a foreign language, she then associates this problem to critical thinking and mentions that integrating these skills into language learning programs can significantly help EFL learners improve in writing abilities. In Iran, likewise, it seems like the educational system has not paid enough attention on improving the student's critical thinking skills and only in recent years the scholars in the field of EFL teaching have started using the so called skills in their classroom techniques.

## STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

An increasing body of research has provided support for effective writing instruction that focuses on the writing process within a social context (Englert, Raphael, Anderson, 1992; Isaacson, 1984; Vygotsky, 1962). Several researchers have developed interactive writing programs which teach strategy development (Englert, 1992; Graham and Harris, 1989; 1992). This interactive approach between the teacher and student occurs through the use of scaffolding. Scaffolding is a form of support provided by the teacher to allow students to shift from their current unassisted level of functioning to a higher level of cognitive functioning (Brown and Ferrara, 1979). Teachers model the process of writing by verbalizing the strategies and self-questioning of strategy steps.

Although current research in writing instruction emphasizes writing as a process and the need for an interactional approach, the literature on writing instruction has not been linked to assessment of the writing process or remediation procedures (Isaacson, 1988; Scardamalia and Berefter, 1986). Effective writing requires the acquisition of strategies and metacognitive knowledge to regulate and control strategy use. Writing involves planning, monitoring and revising of written work, sensitivity to text organization, awareness of the needs of the audience and employment of strategies to stimulate idea generation (Taylor and Beach, 1984). In addition, metacognitive knowledge of the writing process provides an awareness of strategies which enable the writer to monitor his/her performance and to choose appropriate strategies to produce effective written composition (Englert and Raphael, 1988).

Writing an English essay is an activity as a result of the writing lesson in many educational books. Hence it is very important for students to be taught how to write an essay. Many students have difficulties in writing. Some of these difficulties are problems related to grammar and vocabulary at sentence level. How to organize sentences into a larger unit like the paragraph is an even more important problem. Their academic writings lack unity and coherence as they tend to pay attention to accuracy at the sentence level. Many difficulties on writing lead students to be more susceptible to producing errors.

## Significance of the study

Critical thinking has gained widespread popularity in various disciplines nowadays. Educators have realized the importance of nurturing students who are critical thinkers and have a critical eye to look at the world surrounding them. Critical thinking skills figure prominently among the goals for education, whether one asks developers of curricula, educational researchers, parents, or employers. Although lots of studies have been conducted in various fields to examine the significance of critical thinking and the methods of teaching it, we don't know much about the effect of teaching critical thinking and language learning. In other words, our knowledge about the effects of explicit instruction of critical thinking skills on language learning ability is far from perfect. To shed more light on this issue, the researcher will embark on the task of investigating the impact of teaching critical thinking skills on EFL learners' essay writing ability.

## Review of the Related Literature

Mamour Choul Turuk Kuek (2010) carried out study on developing critical thinking skills through integrative teaching of reading and writing in the I2 writing classroom.

Thirty, first year university students from the faculty of Medicine, Upper Nile University, Sudan were randomly selected. They were first pre-tested and then randomly assigned into experimental and comparison groups. A twelve-week intervention was conducted in which the experimental group were taught reasoning and critical thinking to enhance their argumentative writing abilities employing integrative teaching of reading and writing method in conjunction with sociocultural principles and Paul and Elder's (2006, 2007) close reading strategies. After the intervention, the groups were post-tested and a month later after the completion of the study they were post-post-tested. The nature of the tests was argumentative written compositions. In addition, pre and post focus groups interviews were conducted with the experimental group to explore their perceptions and attitudes towards thinking skills before and after the intervention. These interviews were organized to enable the researcher to trace and monitor how students' ideas and perceptions changed as a result of the intervention. The study found among others that students' critical thinking, reasoning and argumentative writing skills improved dramatically after the intervention. In addition, there were improvements in their perceptions and attitudes towards thinking skills as well as in their understanding of the cognitive relationship between reading and writing. Moreover, a remarkable improvement in their spoken English was recorded as well as they developed positive attitudes towards learning English. The study concluded that critical thinking skills can be taught at postsecondary school level. It recommended that

future research should investigate the complexity of argumentative texts written by L2 students and how the complexity of their thinking may lead to the increasing sophistication of the language produced.

JESSICA AMMAR(2012) conducted a study to examine whether or not intermediate students preferred teaching methods that integrate critical thinking in English-as-a-third-language (L3) class, and if teachers integrated critical thinking in their teaching methods. The subjects of the study were multilingual students, trilingual teachers, and a bilingual observer. Results of the study indicated that integrating critical thinking in L3 intermediate classes had a positive effect on students' comprehension, motivation, and class participation.

Hamed Ghaemi and Reza Taherian (2011) conducted a study to investigate the relationship between EFL teachers' critical thinking and their teaching success. The objective was to find out whether critical thinking ability has any significant relationship with teaching success or not. To carry out the study, the researchers asked at least 70 EFL teachers who teach in different English schools in Mashhad, Iran to answer the "Watson Glazer Critical Thinking Questionnaire". Besides, their students were asked to evaluate their teachers' performance via answering a questionnaire called the "Characteristics of Successful EFL Teachers". The results showed that there is a significant relationship between EFL teachers' critical thinking and their teaching success.

### Materials and Methods

In this study Oxford Placement Test Was used to make sure of the homogeneity of the groups. The writing section of TOEFL test was used as pretest and posttest of essay writing.

### Data Analysis Procedure

The results of post test were analyzed for further discussion via ANCOVA on the scores obtained from experimental and control group to see whether teaching critical thinking had any effects on EFL learners essay writing ability.

### Results

A descriptive statistical analysis was done on the collected data of OPT (Oxford Placement Test) test. The results are shown in Table (4-1).

**Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for the Proficiency Test**

N	Mean	SD
110	37.16	10.32

This table shows the result obtained from the proficiency test, OPT. The mean and standard deviation are presented.

Table (4-2) shows the number of students who took the pre-test and post-test. It should be mentioned that no one excluded.

**Table 2: Number of Students Participated in Pre-test and Post-test Cases**

Included N	Excluded Percent		Total N      Percent		N      Percent	
Pre-test*group	40	100%	0	0%	40	100%
Pre-test*group	40	100%	0	0%	40	100%

Forty participants were selected for this study. They were divided into two groups, experimental and control. The descriptive statistical analysis done on the collected data of pre-test and post-test is shown in table (4-3).

Table 3: Descriptive statistical analysis done on the collected data of pre-test and post-test

Group		Pre-test	Post-test
Experimental	Mean	59.9	68.4
	N	20	20
	SD	4.8	4.7
Control	Mean	58.45	58.1
	N	20	20
	SD	5.64	5.2
Total	Mean	59.15	63.25
	N	40	40
	SD	5.216	7.121

### Interpretive Statistics

Analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) is particularly appropriate when subjects in two or more groups are found to differ on a pre-test or other initial variable. In this case, the effects of the pre-test and/or other relevant variables are partialled out, and the resulting adjusted means of the post-test scores are compared. Through ANCOVA differences in the initial status of the groups can be removed statistically so that they can be compared as though their initial status had been equated. In this study, in order to investigate the research hypothesis "Teaching critical thinking has no effects on Iranian EFL learners' essay writing ability" the differences between mean scores of pre-test and post-test of control and experimental group were calculated through ANCOVA.

Table 4: Levine's Test of Equality of Error Variance

F	df1	df2	Sig
.26	1	38	.61

According to table (4.5) the calculated F is not meaningful. So there is equality of variances and ANCOVA can be run.

The data in table (4.6) are related to test of homogeneity of regression. Before running covariance, between-subjects effects of pre-test-group should be investigated.

Table 5: Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Source	Type III Sum of Square	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Corrected Model	1879.82	3	626.61	230.93	.00
Group (a)	17.86	1	17.86	6.6	.015
Pretest (b)	802.97	1	802	295.95	.00
Group*pretest(a*b)	.41	1	.41	.15	.7
Error	97.68	36	2.71		
Total	46200	40			

As table (4.6) shows, between -subjects effect (a\*b) is not significance ( $F=0.15$ ,  $Sig=0.7$ ). It shows that the data supports homogeneity of regression. Therefore, covariance should be run just for between - subjects effect of post-test and group to show whether mean scores of two groups are the same or not. The results of this analysis are demonstrated in table (4.7).



Table 6: Mean and Corrected Mean of Essay Writing Ability

Source	Posttest		Corrected Mean	
	M	SD	M	SE
Experimental	38.4	4.7	37.77	.36
Control	28.1	5.11	28.72	.36

Table (6) shows the corrected means of dependent variable essay writing ability. The data demonstrate that the means of experimental group are upper than control group.

Sum of analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) of essay writing ability in experimental and control group after eliminating between-subjects effect is demonstrated in table (7):

Table 7: Sum of analysis of covariance

Source	Type III Sum of Square	df	Mean Square	F	Sig	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	1879.415	2	939.71	354.48	.00	.95
Pretest	818.52	1	818.52	308.76	.00	.89
Group	805.42	1	805.48	303.84	.00	.89
Error	98.08	37	2.65			
Total	46200	40				

As it can be seen, the corrected model ( $f=00$ ,  $F=354.48$ ) is statistically significant. The results ( $F=303.84$ ,  $Sig=.00$ ,  $Eta=.89$ ) shows that there is a difference between two groups. It means that there is significant difference between experimental and control group. As a result the null hypothesis "Teaching critical thinking has no effects on Iranian EFL learners' essay writing ability." will be rejected, so it can be concluded that the students' essay writing ability can be improved by teaching critical thinking.

### Conclusion

The positive answer to the research question addressed in this study implies that using critical thinking techniques in an EFL classroom does improve the essay writing ability of the language learners. Therefore, improving the learner's thinking ability should be considered in designing courses and also in the techniques used by EFL teachers since critical thinking techniques are teachable and learnable.

The teachers working in the field of EFL should specify more time and effort in teaching writing skills to their learners. EFL teachers would also need to change their attitude to teaching English in general and writing in particular and change the perspective from focusing on making their learners produce correct grammatical and vocabulary forms to incorporating thinking skills in their teaching procedures since enhancing the learner's critical thinking can have a great impact on their not only language learning but also their whole academic success. Writing in particular should be regarded not only as a way of checking if the learners are able to use the right grammatical and vocabulary forms but also as a way of helping the students analyze the problems they face, and showing their point of view. Writing classes should not be passive ones in which students copy a previously prepared pattern and are never asked to try to improve the models given based on their own ideas. Instead they should always be asked to be active and comment on the process. They should be asked to think and write critically on the topics they are given. This can help them not only in their writing but also in the way they think and live their lives.

Since using critical thinking skills by the teachers depends on how much the teacher herself knows about these skills, it seems essential to incorporate teaching thinking skills in the teacher training curricula. Trained teachers who have learned to be critical thinkers can both instruct these techniques in their methodology and encourage and model thinking skills throughout the process of instruction to improve the critical thinking skills as well as the writing skills.

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# CLASSROOM INTERACTION AND TEACHERS' UPTAKE IN RESPONSE TO TEACHERS' REFERENTIAL AND DISPLAY QUESTIONS IN EFL SETTING

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## Abstract

One extensive strategy used for interaction in language classroom is teacher questioning. The types of questions used by teachers may very likely affect both the quality and quantity of the classroom interaction. In spite of the large number of students participating in EFL classes, there are few descriptive evidence on teacher talk in Iranian university English classrooms. This qualitative/quantitative study as a classroom research focused on two question types, display and referential to explore the questioning types and elicited responses by observing recurring patterns of questioning behavior and their interactive effects through non-participant observation. The audio-recorded data were transcribed using Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (1974) conventions. The findings revealed that the two most common and efficient questioning types used were probing and code-switching indicating that the use of different types of teachers' questions does not guarantee the responses elicitation. Put differently, attention must be paid to questioning strategies that can serve as good techniques to elicit responses and promote interaction.

**Keywords:** Classroom Interaction, Uptake, Referential Questions, Display Questions

## 1. Introduction

Teacher talk (TT), kind of language used by teacher for instruction in the classroom, is one of the major ways through which instructors can communicate with learners. It is also one of the primary means of controlling learners' behavior. Richards (1992: 471) defined TT as "that variety of language sometimes used by teachers when they are in the process of teaching. In trying to communicate with learners, teachers often simplify their speech, giving it many of the characteristics of foreigner talk and other simplified styles of speech addressed to language learners".

As a critical part of classroom teaching, TT did not arouse attention of academics as early as those studies on teaching (Ellis, 2008). The study of TT owes much to the development of classroom research, which investigates the process of teaching and learning as they occur in classroom setting Allwright & Bailey (1991) maintain that it

simply tries to look into what occurs inside the classroom. Its aim is to identify the phenomena that promote or hamper learning in the classroom. The growth of interest in the analysis of teacher language has been stimulated by the rejection of language teaching method as the principal determinant of successful learning (Richards & Schmidt 2010).

To confound the matter, it is compelling to say that quite a few researches have discussed the relationship between TT and language learning. Nunan (1991, p. 334) pointed out that teachers, through the language that they use in the classrooms, could achieve their objectives in regard with their teaching plan. Therefore, TT is of crucial important in the organization of the classrooms. On the other hand, in terms of acquisition, he believed that TT is also important because "it is one the major sources of comprehensible target language input the learner is likely to receive." The biggest issue in TT research is to determine what makes TT an aid to learning in the classroom. Thus, in order to investigate how to make TT comprehensible and available as a source of target language input, a number of descriptive studies on various types of formal characteristics and linguistic modifications of L2 TT have been done (Krashen, 1985; Morrel, 2004, 2007). Specifically, more recently, a much greater role has been attributed to interactive features of classroom behaviors, such as turn-taking, questioning and answering, negotiation of meaning, and feedback (Morell, 2004, 2007).

From among these interactive features of classroom Lee (2006,2007) and Dalton-Puffer (2007) sees questioning an important aspect of TT through which a variety of pedagogical and social actions are carried out, for example, introducing topics, demonstrating concepts, eliciting forms of reasoning, correcting grammar, or even reproaching. With the rise of communicative approach, much attention has been placed on the ways teachers involve learners in classroom interaction. Teacher questioning is a popular way of creating opportunities for interaction. The types of questions and questioning strategies used by the teachers to elicit responses may very likely affect both the quality and quantity of interaction.

Studies relating to ESL teaching have pointed out the need for teachers' questioning (Brown 2001; Nunan 1991). In second language classrooms, where learners often do not have a great number of tools, teacher's questions provide necessary stepping stones to communication. Questioning is reported as one of the commonly used strategies, and in some classrooms, teachers use more than half of the class time exchanging questions and answers. Moreover, in studies exploring the contribution of teachers' questions in second language classrooms, these questions play a crucial role in language acquisition. They can be used to allow the learners to keep participating in the discourse and even modify it (Richards & Lockhart 1994: 185; Walsh, 2002; Wu, 1993). The following are functions that questioning serves in the classrooms (Richards, 1996):

1. Stimulating and maintaining students' interest.
2. Encouraging students to think and focus on the content of the lesson.
3. Enabling a teacher to clarify what a student has said.
4. Enabling a teacher to elicit particular structures or vocabulary items.
5. Enabling teachers to check students' understanding.
6. Encouraging student participation in a lesson.

There are many ways to classify teacher questions, and each classification has its own criterion. An early study of L1 classrooms distinguished between "closed" and "open-ended" questions (Barnes, 1969, cited in Chaudron, 1988). Another way to categorize questioning is in terms of convergent questions or divergent questions (Richard, 1996).

Still another classification which has received much attention is that of Long & Sato's (1983) distinction between display and referential questions: display questions are those questions for which the answer is already known to the teacher, and referential questions are those for which the response is not known to the teacher. The supposition is that referential questions would promote greater learner productivity, and display questions would be less likely to promote more meaningful communication between the teacher and the learner.

A number of studies have been conducted on the use of teacher questions in the language classrooms. Long & Sato (1983) analyzed the forms and functions of classroom speech of 6 ESL teachers, as well as the speech of 36 native speakers in informal conversations with non-native speakers. By analyzing the language data collected through tape-recording and by comparing the findings of ESL teacher speech with those of 36 native speakers in informal conversation with non-native speakers, they found significant differences in the relative properties of the two types of questions asked in the two settings. The six teachers were found to ask significantly more

display questions (51%) than referential questions (14%). The native speakers in the informal conversational setting, on the other hand, asked a majority (76%) of referential and virtually no display questions.

Following Long & Sato (1983), Brock (1986) conducted an instructional experiment on the effects of these two types of questions on learners' target language production. The participants of this study were four teachers and twenty-four advanced ESL learners. Brock trained two teachers in the use of referential questions and encouraged them to use these to discuss a reading passage and a vocabulary lesson. The results showed that the treatment teachers obviously used significantly more referential than display questions (173 to 21), quite the reverse of control teachers (24 to 117). Most importantly, in addition to this finding, Brock found that referential questions can promote students to provide significantly longer and syntactically more complex responses than display questions.

The findings of Brock's study were consistent with those of Nunan's research (1987), where he showed that the use of referential questions by teachers resulted in more complex language by the students. Moreover, students' responses elicited by referential questions contained significantly more features characteristic of genuine communication in naturalistic settings than those elicited by display questions. Findings from the studies above suggest that open-ended, referential questions may increase the amount of speaking learners do and the complexity of students' responses in the classroom. According to Swain's (1993) output hypothesis, which argues that output may be an important factor in successful SLA, the implications which could be properly drawn from the studies above is that open-ended and referential questions may be important tools in language classroom, especially in those context in which the classroom provides learners their only opportunity to produce the target language.

In her study, Musumeci (1996) investigated teacher-learner exchanges in three college-level content-based language classrooms. Three 50-minute Italian lessons, conducted by three different teachers, native or non-native speakers of the L2, Italian, were videotaped and transcribed. The results revealed that teachers dominated classroom talk, speaking 33, 35, and 36 minutes out of 50, with remaining time devoted to student speech and silence. In addition, the three teachers initiated the majority of the verbal exchanges by asking display questions, accounting for 84%, 69%, and 90% of all teacher-initiated exchanges. While the teacher's preferred mode of initiating exchanges entailed the use of display questions, students, on the other hand, asked all referential questions to initiate requests.

Studies on teachers' questioning practice reviewed above all focused on ESL context. To examine teachers questioning practice in EFL context, Wu (1993) videotaped four English language lessons of four Cantonese teachers who taught in two secondary schools. Contrary to the conclusion reached by Brock (1986) and Nunan (1987), Wu (1993) found that neither display questions nor referential questions were effective in eliciting responses from the Hong Kong students. In addition, referential questions and open-ended questions are less effective than display and closed questions in eliciting responses from students. Wu's study suggests that in the Hong Kong context, referential questions may not result in more student output or better quality classroom interaction.

Classroom research has also demonstrated that certain types of questioning behavior have persisted over many years (Nunan, 1990; 1991). It has often been observed that teachers tend to ask more closed questions than open-ended questions, and more display questions than referential questions (Long & Sato, 1983; Musumeci, 1996). However, closed questions and display questions serve only to facilitate the recall of information rather than to generate students' ideas and classroom communication (Richard, 1996). Also, these questions may provide limited opportunities for students to produce and practice the target language. Open-ended and referential question, on the other hand, provide learners with opportunities to engage in meaningful communicative language use to effectively acquire a foreign language. Thornbury believed that answering referential questions demands a greater effort and depth of processing on the part of both teacher and learners. Further he argued that "referential questions touch parts beyond the reach of other types of question" (Thornbury 1996: 282).

Ellis (2008) explained that referential questions are questions which are genuinely information-seeking. Brock (1986) found that teachers who ask more referential questions generally receive longer and more grammatically complex responses from their students. Lynch (1991) argued that teachers should ask referential questions because (a) learners tend to give longer answers than they do to display questions and (b) learners will be less willing to answer questions if their purpose is always to test knowledge. Lynch (1991) added that only with referential questions can students practice initiating interactions.

According to Ellis (2008), in language lessons where the focus is on form, display questions are likely to predominate, whereas in content-focused lessons referential questions may be overwhelmingly used. Many studies (White & Lightbown, 1984; Lynch, 1991; Ellis, 2008; Pica, 1994) recommend the use of referential questions in place of display ones because of their authentic communicative value. Lightbown and Spada (2006) noted that teachers ask display questions not because they are interested in the answer, but because they want to get their learners to display their knowledge of the language.

By focusing on the sequential production of the questions and the interpretive choices and methods they enact, Lee (2006) demonstrated that display questions are of the essential resources whereby language teachers and their students collaboratively organize their lessons and produce language pedagogy as course of action. He further concluded that it would be premature to dismiss display questions as an ineffective teaching variable for language acquisition before looking into the process by which the teachers and students produce and use them, and what they accomplish in doing so. He proposed that close sequential analysis shows that it is in the production of interactional exchanges that display questions are made comprehensible; topics are introduced, meanings are clarified, answers are tried, and resources are produced.

Having examined the literature, we see that some mixed findings have been reported. Although the results would more tap into effect of the referential questions than into display questions, the scene is not devoid of counter-evidence like those found in (Wu, 1993), discussed earlier. The present study set out to examine classroom interactions through teachers' use of questioning in EFL classrooms which is quite rare in comparison with ESL classrooms. The study, specifically, aimed to investigate two types of questions, referential and display questions, asked by EFL teachers and learners' interaction in the classroom and the effect of these types of questions on classroom interaction and teachers' uptake. Based on the literature reviewed, we think that these two types of questions can, on the one hand, include other question types and, on the other hand, are more questioner-oriented than other classifications, where their focus is more on the respondents. Regarding the aim of the study and excluding other classifications explicated in the literature, the following research questions are formulated:

- 1) To what extent do teachers employ referential and display at university classroom interaction in EFL setting?
- 2) Which type of questions (referential or display) enhance teachers' uptake better at university classroom interaction in EFL setting?
- 3) Are teachers' questions facilitative or inhibiting with regard to the learners' responses?

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1 Participants

In this study, two lecturers at the Department of English at Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz, Iran, who were teaching in different sections of the Conversation II course in the Department, together with their students were selected as intact classes. The lecturers were two female Iranians, teaching English for an average of 13.6 years. The number of students, who had already passed Conversation I, were thirty male and female sophomore majoring in English.

### 2.2 Instrumentation

To investigate teachers' questioning, a research method called "naturalistic inquiring" (Allwright & Bailey, 1991) was adopted to observe what is really happening in our foreign language classrooms. "Naturalistic inquiry" refers to the researcher's trial not to intervene in the research setting and not to control naturally occurring events, because the research aims to describe and to understand the process rather than testing specific hypotheses about cause-and-effect relationship. For the purpose of this study, the following methods were used to collect research data: 1. Non-participant classroom observations of teacher/student verbal interaction, and 2. Audio-recording of classroom verbal interaction.

### 2.3 Theoretical framework

For the analysis of classroom discourse, a three-turn sequence, often referred to as IRF (Initiation-Response-Follow-up) by Sinclair and Coulthard (1975, 1992), or triadic dialogue by Lemke (1990, cited in Nassaji & Wells, 2000:379) was used. This model of analyzing classroom discourse proposes that classroom discourse can be divided into a series of levels. Starting with the largest, these levels are lesson, transaction, exchange, move, and

act. Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) have been most influential in describing the structure of exchanges, and especially teaching exchanges. They argue that a typical exchange is made up of three moves: first, an initiating move (I) typically made by the teacher; second, a responding move (R) from a student; and third a feedback move (F) by the teacher. Mostly found in classroom interaction, this sequence begins with the teacher's question followed by the student's answer(s) in the second turn. The turn routinely goes back to the teacher who offers feedback on the correctness or adequacy of the second turn answers.

The main reason for the use of Sinclair and Coulthard's (1975) framework for this study is that it can fit the goal of this study, namely, to identify the type of questions used by the teacher in EFL classroom. The focus is on the teacher talk itself and is not intending to examine goals more associated with ethnographic and sociocultural perspectives. While such issues are undoubtedly important, an understanding of the types and functions of questions would help greatly with interpreting the findings from any investigations into such issues. Taking question-and-answer sessions as parallel, ethnographic and sociocultural interpretations of such discourse are generally based on an assumption of the underlying IRF pattern identified by Sinclair and Coulthard (Hall, 1998). It is believed that a similar understanding of the patterns in questioning would aid further investigations, and this study can therefore be viewed as an attempt to provide a foundation for further ethnographic and sociocultural studies of instructions.

This type of sequential relation is quite prevalent in teacher-fronted whole class discussions (Nassaji & Wells, 2000:382). Various analytic examinations have been carried out to identify what types of questions are initiated in the first turn and to what extent they are pedagogically effective (Brock, 1986; Lynch, 1991). Equally essential in this sequence is the role of the third turn, because its position implicates the teacher's uptake of the students' second turn response. There have been several categorical formulations to capture the primary roles the third turn plays, such as offering evaluation, feedback, or follow-up on the student's second turn (Carlsen, 1991; Nassaji & Wells, 2000; Wells, 1993).

## 2.4 Procedures

The teachers' consent for observation of their classes was gained and they responded positively to the researchers' request. It should be noted that each class met twice a week, 13 weeks during the whole course, which made up fifty-two 90-minute sessions overall. These classes were audio-recorded and the interactions were transcribed accordingly, using simplified conversation analysis transcription conventions, adopted from Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson (1974). Sinclair and Coulthard's (1975) 'triadic dialogue' framework was used to identify the sequential patterns of classroom discourse. All of the moves were transcribed for analysis. To address the research question in this study, a discursual unit rather than isolated questions was used as the main unit of analysis in this study. Both quantitative and qualitative approaches were employed. On the qualitative scale, the tokens "Facilitative and Inhibiting" were used as nominal scales. On the quantitative scales, the data were tabulated in frequencies to have their percentages. Then, the data were compared by means of Chi-square procedure to note the significance of the differences between the two types of questions.

## 3. Result

### 3.1 Patterns of classroom interaction

The data revealed that the two lecturers dominated classroom talk most of time, and controlled the topic of discussion, with a little time devoted to student speech. Both teachers initiated the majority of their verbal exchanges with students by questions (87%), and called upon certain students or volunteers to answer their questions, but little student-initiated exchanges were found (13%). Students seldom asked questions in both classes, but in case they asked, they preferred to ask teachers in private; either in a small group setting or one-to-one exchange.

Upon examination, the pattern of classroom interaction found in this study confirmed the dominance of the IRF pattern of teacher-student discourse. An example below shows the three-part structure of classroom conversation:

#### Excerpt 1:

T1: What's the name of the new governor of California? (Initiation)

S1: Arnold. (Response)

T1: That's right. (Follow-up)

However, when the teachers' question (initiation) elicited incorrect response, or failed to elicit any response, the teachers employed other questioning strategies such as repetition, simplification, code-switching, and so forth to encourage the students' oral participation in class until the expected response is obtained. The following instance illustrates Teacher 2's questioning strategy of repetition to make his question comprehensible and answerable with the learners' linguistic proficiency so as to obtain the expected reply.

#### Excerpt 2:

T2: Number one, where does the writer's family live? (Initiation)

Ss: (Silent)

T2: This is the basic question from our story, right? Where does the writer's family live? (Questioning strategy)

S2: Langton. (Response)

T2: yes, that's correct. (Evaluation)

In the following exchange, Teacher 2 asked a referential question in the first utterance, where no answer could be elicited from the students in the second utterance. To encourage the students' oral participation in class, Teacher 1 employed a variety of questioning strategies such as repeating the original question and providing or-choice until the question was answered.

#### Excerpt 3:

T2: Ok. First of all what should Lorenzo do? Any suggestion? What should Lorenzo do?

Ss: (Silent)

T2: What's the suggestion?

S3: xxx

T2: Say little louder. How about your group? What should Lorenzo do? What do you think he should do? Who can give me an answer?

Ss: (Silent)

T2: Come on. Somebody gives me an answer or we just waste time.

Ss: (Silent)

T2: You don't know. Should he stay with his wife and children, or should he get divorced and to be with his lover?

Ss: (silent)

T2: What do you think?

Ss: (Silent)

T2: How would you feel if you were Lorenzo?

S4: he should divorce and...keep in touch with his children.

T2: Ok. Leave his wife. And keep in touch with his children.

### 3.2 Teachers' questioning types

Based on Long & Sato's (1983) classification, display questions ask the respondent to provide or to display knowledge of information already known by the questioner, while referential questions request information not known by the questioner. The following questions were found in the data:

#### Display questions:

T 1: Can anybody tell me another word for rich?

Number one, where does the writer's family live?

So can someone tell what the past tense of "think" is?

T2:

Adjective and adverbs, they're both used to describe. Which one goes with noun? Adjectives or adverbs?

What is synonym?

What is the meaning of blind date? What does it mean to go on a blind date?

#### Referential questions:

T1:

What are some ways to contact or keep in touch with old classmate?



Can anybody tell me other things that make you unhappy with your friend?  
Anyone has an example of persistent problems?

T2:

How about you? What characteristics should a good friend have?

What are your expectations from your mother? What about your father?

Table 1:  
Number and percentage of display and referential questions asked by two teachers

	Teacher 1		Teacher 2	
Display question	174	83%	146	53%
Referential question	36	17%	127	47%
Total	210	100%	273	100%

Table 1 demonstrates the number and percentage of display and referential questions asked by the two teachers in this study. It should be noted that it is not easy to calculate exactly how many questions were asked by each teacher since some of the questions involved questioning strategies such as repetition, paraphrasing, decomposition, probing, and so forth. To get the number of questions used by the teachers in this study as exactly as possible, questions that were paraphrased, repeated, and simplified were considered as the same questions, and questions that were decomposed, or probed, were considered as different questions.

As the table shows, Teacher 1 asked more display questions than referential questions (174 vs. 36). Teacher 1 asked more display questions in her class; she was not seeking information from the student but rather checking up on the students' comprehension or whether or not the students had done the class activity. It was found that most of her questions were directly from the textbook: questions about vocabulary, reading comprehension, grammar and so forth and most of her questions did not require much explanation or reflection but specific definite answer. Since the required answer was short, there was time for her to ask more questions and more students would have the chance to answer her questions. To sum up, the general pattern of her questioning practice in class was that she posed each question in teacher-fronted discussion and called on individual student to answer the question and then moved on the next question. Anyone who answered the questions in class could have extra point on classroom participation. Therefore, the students were willing to answer the questions in class voluntarily.

Like Teacher 1, Teacher 2 also used a number of display questions to check up on the students in some way to see if the students had done their work or had understood what he had said. One clear distinction making his questioning practice different from teacher 1 was that teacher 2 also used a number of referential questions to seek information from the students. It was observed that he often asked the students to discuss questions related to the topic in group discussion. During their discussion, Teacher 2 would circulate around and assist the students with vocabulary, translation, and so forth. Very often he posed his question in group discussion and elicited individual response. One interesting finding was that when asking the questions in the textbook or handout, Teacher 2 often expanded the questions to relate the students' personal experience. For instance, after asking the reading comprehension questions, he would pose another question by asking, "*What would you do if you were in his place?*" or "*What would you feel if you were her?*" By doing so, he let his students think and express their point of views in someone's situation.

### 3.3 Students responses

To determine the role of questions based on the research questions in this study, i.e., facilitative or inhibitive, in this paper, students' responses solicited by the teacher are classified into two categories: 1) restricted and 2) elaborate. A restricted response is defined by Wu (1994:57) as a word or a simple sentence, and in contrast, an elaborate response is defined as two or more sentences linked by various cohesive or coherent devices. Some examples of students' responses in this study are:

#### Restricted:

T1: Who can tell me what's one thing women want? What is one thing women want?

S5: Handsome.

T2: What's the name of the new government of California?

S6: Arnold.

#### Elaborate:

T1: Last question, Number 5. What are some ways to contact or keep in touch with old classmates?

S7: Send mail.

T1: Good. Send mail.

S7: Yeah. Contact on the cell phone.

T1: Cell phone.

S7: Yeah. And go to coffee shop to drink coffee.

T2: How about you? What do you think? Give us some example.

S8: He should go. And then he should stay and live with his children.

Table 2:  
Number of the students' restricted and elaborate responses

	Teacher 1		Teacher 2	
Restricted response	130	95%	156	90%
Elaborate response	7	5%	18	10%
Total	137	100%	174	100%

By analyzing the discourse of students in the two classes, it was found that the responses in both classes were overwhelmingly restricted to words and phrases, illustrating that the students tended to talk less. However, on closer examination of the classroom data, it was observed that the students in Teacher 1's class appeared to negotiate meaning more than those in Teacher 2's class because more elaborate responses and sustained negotiation were found in Teacher 1's class and they often occurred in group discussion but not in whole-class discussion. Furthermore, the students' elaborate responses in Teacher 1's class were often elicited by referential questions (about 95%). In other words, referential questions could better generate elaborate responses in Teacher 1's class, and could be considered as "Facilitative" questions in Teacher 1's class, which facilitate more interactions in her class.

Conversely, although there were 36 referential questions in Teacher 2's class, only one of them elicited one student's elaborate response. The students' elaborate responses in Teacher 2's class were often generated by display questions though their elaborate responses were not so many. About 83% elaborate responses in Teacher 2's class were elicited by the display questions, suggesting that display questions could better elicit the students' output production in Teacher 2's class, so it is this type of question which is called "Facilitative" in Teacher 2's class. In other words, the findings indicated each teacher's question type that elicited the students' elaborate responses was quite different. Table 3 illustrated the relationship between the students' elaborate responses and the question types.

Table 3:  
The relationship between the students' elaborate responses and the question type

	Elaborate responses in T1's class		Elaborate responses in T2's class	
Display question	6	83%	1	5%
Referential question	1	17%	17	95%
Total	7	100%	18	100%

## 4. Discussion

### 4.1 The patterns of classroom interaction

By examining the pattern of interactions, the sequences of both classes went like this: the teachers asked the students questions; the students answered; then the teachers reacted to the answers. The pattern of interaction was like IRF (Initiation-Response-Follow-up). However, it was observed that the sequence was not always

complete. Very often when the teachers asked the questions for the first time, the students might not answer. If there was no response at all, both teachers tended to employ an array of questioning strategies to help elicit the students' responses. Similarly, if the responses were inappropriate, the participating teachers would deploy a variety of questioning strategies to elicit possible answers from the learners. Despite these variations, it is obvious that, normally the teachers were in control of speaking turns. It was observed that both teachers dominated classroom talk, initiated the majority of their verbal exchanges with the students by means of a question followed by the selection of particular student to respond. In spite of their efforts to ask a lot of questions to give the students more opportunities to speak up, the investigated classes were teacher centered. Not only did the teachers talk a lot, but the teachers usually controlled the topics that were discussed in the classes. Although it was found that Teacher 1 tried to conduct her class in somewhat more student-centered fashion by engaging her students in pair and group work discussion, still, her talk dominated the whole-class participation. One possible reason that could account for both teachers' preference for this teacher-centered classroom might be the advantages of control and efficiency (Garton, 2002). However, according to Van Lier (1996, cited in Garton, 2002:48), the advantages may limit students' initiation. He mentioned the following consequences that might be encountered:

. . . this efficiency comes at the cost of reduced student participation, less expressive language use, a loss of contingency, and severe limitations on the students' employment of initiative and self-determination (p.184).

As mentioned in the literature review section, "within the IRF structure teachers usually holds the floor by controlling the turn-taking, presenting 'closed' questions to students and deciding who will answer and how, thereby providing little opportunity for student-initiated discussion" (Hardman & Williamson, 1998:6).

#### 4.2 Questioning types and students responses

Most responses in both classes were restricted to words and phrases, illustrating that the students tend to talk as little time as possible. This finding is consistent with Wu's (1993) clarifying the point that neither display questions nor referential questions were effective in eliciting responses from the Iranian students. However, through a closer inspection of the students' interactions, responses in both classes revealed that a number of elaborate responses occurred in Teacher 1's class and such elaborative responses were often generated by referential questions. That is, referential questions could better dig out the students' elaborate responses in Teacher 1's class. It appears that Teacher 1 tended to use this type of questions to seek information, to negotiate with the students to achieve genuine communicative purposes. Teacher 1's class findings also lend support to the previous studies that maintained referential questions could result in more complex linguistic production than display questions (Long & Sato, 1983; Brock, 1986). However, one might argue that if referential questions worked effectively in eliciting students' responses in Teacher 1's class, why 47% referential questions occurred in Teacher 1's only resulted in 10% elaborate responses. It seemed that some of the referential questions could not elicit any elaborate responses from the learners in Teacher 1's class. If that is the case, how one can state that referential questions are better eliciting students' responses in Teacher 1's class? Certainly, there were cases that referential questions failed to elicit any elaborate responses from the students in Teacher 1's class. However there were too many reasons accounting for why students kept silent or talked less in both classes observed. Students might be capable of answering teachers' questions but are simply unwilling to contribute verbally because of factors other than linguistic competence, and needless to mention that the analysis of the study only focused on the linguistic factors. In other words, the researcher only focused on the relationship between different types of questions asked by teachers and the elaborative responses elicited from students to explore how the students' second language production in class was influenced by the teachers' questioning practices.

Examining the classroom data in Teacher 2's class, however, it was found that referential questions did not work much as expected in Teacher 2's class since the referential questions often failed to elicit any of the students' elaborative responses in Teachers' 2's class, suggesting that referential questions might not necessarily result in more student output or better quality classroom interaction in certain classroom context. Display questions, on the other hand, prevailed and worked effectively in Teacher 2's class. It seemed that students in teacher 2's class favored the display questions because they required only one possible answer or very limited set of answers. Many reasons account for why Teacher 2 used a large number of display questions in her teaching. It can be postulated that the main purpose of Teacher 2's questions was either to do language practice

or to evaluate whether the students could understand the material they were reading. And display questions were good enough to serve this instructional purpose. Furthermore, it was found that Teacher 2 paid much attention to classroom management. Thus, it was better to put students under control than to give them opportunities to do free talking. That stands reason to why display questions in Teacher 2's class prevailed all his instruction. As Musumeci (1996) pointed out, display questions can serve several functions in the classroom. Not only can display questions test learners' knowledge of subject matter, maintain attention or arouse curiosity, but they can discipline, manage lesson, and, in the traditional language classroom, to elicit production of particular grammatical forms as well.

Findings in this study indicated that each teacher's questioning type to elicit elaborate responses from the students was quite different. In other words, both types of questions have their places in classrooms and teacher should use them adequately to achieve certain purposes. Otherwise, teachers' questions may hamper classroom interaction. As Carlson (1991, p.171) indicated: "teacher questions may, at times, discourage students from speaking"; therefore, it is important to implement question practices adequately. Moreover, the use of different types of teachers' questions does not guarantee to elicit the students' responses. Attention must also be paid to questioning strategies. In other words, it is not enough to focus on the types of teacher questions only; questioning strategies can serve good techniques to elicit the students' responses and to promote classroom interaction.

### 4.3 Whole-class discussion vs. group work

Compared to the students' responses in Teacher 2's class, more elaborate responses and sustained negotiation were found in Teacher 1's class. It is interesting to note that such elaborate responses in Teacher 1's class were often elicited in group discussion. One possible reason maybe that the students were afraid of speaking in front of the class, so the students tended to talk less in the whole-class discussion. This finding is consistent with Musumeci's (1996) finding that students preferred to talk during individual activities in small-group or one-to-one settings, rather than in front of the whole class. More importantly, such sustained negotiations taking place in the group discussion are believed to have a great deal of advantages for learning.

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# A CONTRASTIVE STUDY OF LEXICAL COHESION USED IN SPORT TEXTS IN WASHINGTON AND TEHRAN TIMES NEWSPAPERS WRITTEN BY ENGLISH NATIVE AND IRANIAN AUTHORS

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## Abstract

Establishing unified text which possesses distinct types of lexical cohesion is one of the challenging aspects of using a foreign language. This issue even becomes critical when producing the language in written form is of concern. The present study intends to contrast the frequency of the use of lexical ties in Washington Times and Tehran Times newspapers written by Iranian and native writers. Based on this purpose, the researchers selected two sets of corpora each consisting 40 newspapers: 20 written by native authors and the 20 corpus written by Iranian authors. In this research, the researchers examined the use of two types of lexical ties, i.e. reiteration and collocation in sport texts of Washington Times and Tehran Times newspapers. After collecting the data from the two sets of corpora, and density of lexical types the researchers estimated the frequency of lexical ties. Later on, to compare the use of lexical ties in the two sets of corpora, the researchers used two-tailed-test. The result indicated that there was a statistically significant difference in the use of lexical ties in sport text of newspapers. And also it revealed that In Washington times newspaper the density of lexical ties is more than Tehran times newspapers. The research finding have several implications for language instructors, university students and Iranian authors.

**Keyword:** lexical ties, sport texts, Washington Times - Tehran Times

## 1. Introduction

One of the most challenging aspect of literacy education is to familiarize with the act of writing. Actually, writing is a laborious activity since learners need to convey their mental meaning and ideas into language. A related definition has been proposed by Schunk (2004) in which writing was defined as translating ideas into linguistic symbols in print. It is assumed that when learners are entangled in the writing process they need to have access to their underlying knowledge. The knowledge that learners employ while writing is four types, i.e. topical, audiences, genres and language (Byrnes, 1996 cited in Schunk, 2004).

Writer's understanding of all these knowledge types is necessary since a lack understanding may make the task of writing even more frustrating and complicated. In other words, writers become perplexed when they need to bind these underlying pieces of knowledge and change them into linguistic symbols.

Irvin (2010) identifies some misconceptions that writers may face will trying to produce written texts. The first misconception is that writers may incorrectly wait for a completely ordered and step-by step framework for writing. In contrast Irvin (2010) assumes a recursive and non-linear format of writing process. The second problem is that most writers try to write only when they have everything in their mind. Irvin (2010) discards this

characteristic of writers and believes that writing should be initiated even with deficiencies in generating a complete text. The third misconception relates to writers idea that they should write well from the very early drafts. The next is that writers are usually disappointed when they are faced with their limited capacity for writing. Another major misconception proposed by Irvin (2010) is that of writers' misbelief about the fact that good grammar is good writing.

Thus, the task of writing is not an easy process; rather writers need to attend fully to the task of writing to produce valuable text. There are a number of key elements in writing which can enhance writers' ability to manage their writing. Attending to major constituents of written text is essential in every writing genre.

According to Raimes (1983), content, organization, originality, style, fluency, accuracy and using appropriate rhetorical forms of discourse are some of the basic elements of writing which need careful attention.

All writing follows specific conventions, cookbooks, letters, novels, lists and dictionaries all depend on a specific kind of language and presentation to be comprehensible and easy to use. Learning a second language need to be able to write in specific ways presumably, purpose for writing are different and it is this feature which highlights the specificity of the writing method. In other words, as it is mentioned by Reppen (1995) learners need to be able to write in different ways for different purposes. As mentioned by Hyland (2008), genre, which is one type of knowledge required for writing, represents how writers typically use language to respond to recurring situations.

Discourse which has attracted the attention of researchers in the realm of communication dates back to the 1960s when researchers became interested in extracting new discipline from linguistics, semiotics, psychology, anthropology and sociology. According to Johnstone (2008), the study of discourse is called discourse analysis and is concerned with the study of the relationship between language and the content in which it is used. Also, McCarthy (1991) believes that those who are involved in the analysis of discourse study language in use.

By language in use, McCarthy (1991) refers to written texts of all kinds and spoken data from conversation to highly institutionalized forms of talk. A discourse does not consist of words which are placed together in a random and haphazard fashion. The meaning of discourse is not conveyed by such randomness. Instead, writers need a number of linguistic markers to establish relationship among the words and sentences within the texts. Halliday and Hasan (1985) point out that such semantic relations manifest the texture of the text and provide the situation for establishing a coherent text.

An important contribution to coherence comes from cohesion which refers to a set of linguistic resources that every language has as part of the textual meta-function for linking one part of the text to another (Halliday and Hasan, 1985). Further, Halliday and Hasan (1985) claim that the term cohesive ties implies a relation. In other words, you cannot have a tie without two members and members cannot appear in a tie unless there is a relation between them. Also Nunan (1993) considers cohesive ties as text-forming devices which enable the writer or speaker to establish relationships across sentence or utterance boundaries and which help to tie the sentences in a text together. Besides Eggins (1994) defines cohesion as a term which refers to the way we relate or tie together bits of our discourse. There are five categories of cohesive ties proposed by Halliday and Hasan (1976). The five categories are reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction and lexical cohesion.

It needs to be mentioned that Halliday and Hassan's (1976) categorization of cohesive ties which is an umbrella term for lexical ties has been collapsed and later on in 1985 they introduced repetition, synonym, antonym, hyponymy and meronymy as the elements of lexical ties. This was not an end in the study and categorization of lexical ties because Halliday (1985, cited in Martin 1992) considered repetition and collocation as distinct categories, and grouped together synonymy, antonym, meronymy and hyponymy under a general heading of synonymy.

In the present study, the researchers considered lexical cohesion under two general headings: reiteration and collocation. Reiteration contains repetition, synonym, superordinate, and general word. The second type of lexical cohesion is the collocation and is defined by Richards and Schmidt (1992) as the way in which words are used together regularly. Lexical cohesion are necessary elements for any discourse and they are tools for producing coherent texts.

The concept of lexical cohesion and its use by second language learners have been of foci to many researchers and have been studied in recent years (Halliday and Hassan, 1976, Halliday and Hassan, 1985).

## 2. Review of the related literature

In the early seventies, when text analysis was still in its early stages, a number of important works were published dealing with the term cohesion. The most widely known study was that of Halliday and Hassan (1976) in which the devices available in English for linking sentences to each other were classified into references, ellipsis, substitution conjunction and lexical cohesion. In the following sections, theoretical and practical aspect of the use lexical cohesion will be partially discussed.

### 2.1. Identification of lexical cohesion

According to Halliday and Hassan (1976) Halliday (1985) and Hassan (1984), the type, number and degree utilization of cohesive devices used in the text contribute to the cohesiveness of a text. In spoken and written English discourse, accordingly, individual clauses and utterances are linked semantically by grammatical connections. McCarthy (1991) which make a text cohesive. For Hoey (1991) cohesion is a property of a text whereby certain grammatical or lexical feature of the sentences of the text connect them to other sentences in the text.

Cohesion is a semantic concept and it refers to relation of meaning that exist within the text and that define it as a text. So cohesion helps to create text by providing texture, according to Halliday and Hassan (1976), the primary factor of whether a set of sentences do or do not constitute a text depends on cohesive relationships between and within the sentences which create texture. A text has texture and this is what distinguishes it from something that is not a text ....

The texture is provide by the cohesive relation (1976) cohesive relationships within a text are set up "where the interpretation of some elements in the discourse is dependent on that of another. The one presupposes the other in the sense that it cannot be effectively decoded except by recourse to it (1976). Consequently a relation of cohesion is set up and presupposed and presupposing elements are integrated into a text. The presupposition and the fact that it is resolved provide cohesion between sentences and the create text.

Malmkjar (2004) is of the opinion that cohesion concern the way in which the linguistic items of which a text is composed are meaningfully connected to each other in a sequence on the basis of the grammatical rules of the language and formal devices signal the relationship between sentences. Cohesion is a necessary through not a sufficient condition for the creation of the text. The textual or text-forming the opinion that cohesion is one of the textual feature which makes the texture of a text and helps to its materialization cohesion connects certain grammatical or lexical features of the sentences to the text of the other sentences in the text.

Campbell (1994) argues that there are two major principles of cohesive elements by which the continuity aspect of coherence can be explained, 1. The cohesive principle of similarity. 2. The cohesive principle of proximity. The discourse producers influence recipient's sense of discourse continuity by manipulating the similarity and proximity of the full range of discourse elements. The cohesive principle of similarity acknowledges the cohesive effects of similar discourse elements, while the cohesive principle of proximity acknowledges the effect of the spatial and temporal proximity of discourse element. This latter principle acknowledges cohesive effect of deictic discourse elements.

Bex (1996) considers cohesion as residing in the semantic and grammatical properties of language. Cohesion guides the ways in which units of text are to be understood in relation to each other. Cohesion concerns the way in which texts can refer to themselves and is typically achieved through the use of grammatical devices and lexical repetition.

Halliday and Hassan (1976) argue that cohesion is expressed partly through the grammar and partly through the vocabulary, hence grammatical cohesion and lexical cohesion. It is necessary to consider that cohesion is a semantic relation but, like all the components of semantic system. It is realized through the lexicogrammatical system. The lexicogrammatical system includes both grammar and vocabulary of the cohesive types reference, substitution, and ellipsis are grammatical; lexical cohesion is lexical and finally conjunction is on the borderline of the two, mainly grammatical, but with a lexical component in it (Halliday and Hassan, 1976). The text is not the same as structural relation of the parts of sentences. In other words, cohesion is the non-structural resources for establishing relation within the text to construct discourse. These relations may involve elements of any extent from single words to a lengthy passage of text. Cohesive ties between sentences are the only source of texture while within the sentences there are structural relations. It is these intersentential cohesion that is important for the text. Within sentence relation since they bang together already, cohesion is not needed to make them hang together.



Cohesion expresses the continuity that exist between one part of the text and another one. This continuity is significant from two aspects. On the one hand, that continuity shows at each stage in the discourse the points of relations or contact with what has been said before. On the other hand the continuity provide by the cohesion helps the readers to fill in the gap in the discourse. To supply all the components of the message which are not present in the text but are important and necessary to its interpretation. There are some holes in a complete text because it is not possible for the writer to supply all the details. But the reader can supply all the details. But the reader can supply the missing points even though the text is not complete. It is so because the cohesion makes the interaction between reader and the text possible. Cohesion is used by both readers and writers to create coherence in the text. On the whole, cohesive devices contribute to texture, readability and comprehensibility of a text.

There are five major types of cohesive devices 1)reference, 2) substitution, 3) ellipsis, 4) conjunction, 5) lexical cohesion. The first four are grammatical and the last one is lexical. According to Halliday and Hassan (1976) lexical cohesion is “phoric” relation which is established through the structure of vocabulary and it is a reation on the lexicogrammatical level. Lexical cohesion comes about through the using of items that are related in some way to those that have gone before. In short, lexical cohesion occurs when two words in a text are related in terms of their meaning. Reiteration and collocation are two major types of lexical cohesion. Reiteration includes repetition, synonymy or near-synonymy, hyponymy (Specific-general) memorymy (part-whole), antonymy and genral nouns.

### 1. Repetition

Repetition of a lexical item is the most from of lexical cohesion, e.g dog in Reza saw a dog. The dog was wounded by the children.

In order for a lexical item to be recognized as repeated it need not be in the some morphological shape. Ali arrived yesterday. His arrival made his mother happy.

Inflectional and derivational variant are also as the same item.

### 1.2. Synonymy

Lexical cohesion is also created by the selection of a lexical item that is in some one.

What people want from the government is frankness.

They should explain everything to the public.

### 1.3 Hyponymy (Specific-General).

Hyponymy is a relationship between two words in which the meaning of one of the words includes the meaning of other words. For example, the words, animals and dog are related in such a way that dog refers to a type of animal, and animal is a general term that includes dog as well as other types of animals. A dog is a symbol of loyalty. That animal is mine.

### 1.4. Meronymy (Part-Whole)

In this kind of lexical cohesion, cohesion result from the choice of a lexical item that in some sense in part-whole relationship with a preceding lexical item.

An English daily Monday talk about the result of presidential election.

The edition described that pre-election speeches caused good results.

### 1.5. Antonymy

In this type of lexical cohesion, cohesion comes about by the selection of an item which is opposite in meaning to a preceding lexical items.

Ali received a letter from bank yesterday. He will send answer next day.

### 1.6. General Nouns

The general nouns including thing, person, do, ... are used cohesively when they have the same referent as whatever they are presupposing.

Saddam doesn't approve military action against Iraq. He said that moves was illegal.

### 1.7. Collocation

This type of lexical cohesion result from the association of lexical items that regularly co-occur. An example of collocation is as the following:

A huge oil beat polluted the sea. Many dead fishes lie along the beach.

Hoey (1991) argues that lexical cohesion is the single most important from a cohesion. According for something like forty percent of cohesive ties in texts. He continues that various lexical relationships between the different sentences making up a text provide a measure of the cohesiveness of the text. The centrality an important to the text of any particular sentence within the text will be determined by the number of lexical connections that sentence has to other sentences in the text.

### 2.2. The place of lexical cohesion in written texts

Since the introduction of cohesion by Halliday and Hasan (1976) a large number of studies were performed on cohesion analysis. Most of these studies analyzed the function of cohesion in text analysis. Recent studies in this field have mainly been dine on grammatical cohesion such as reference, substitution, ellipsis and conjunction of English written texts e.g., Bennet Kastor (1986); Coulthard (1994); Gutwinsk (1976); Parsons (1991); Pasons (1996); and Stotsky (1983).

In addition, other languages have been examined in this respect as well; e.g, Russian in Simmons (1981); English and Hindi in Kachroo (1984), Spanish in Mederos Martin (1988) and Casado Velarde (1997); English and Japanese in Oshima (1988); Persian in Roberts, Barjasteh Delforooz and Jahani (2009).

Noor-Mahammadi (1984) investigated a contrastive study on the application of cohesion devices in English and Persian. Kavooosi-Nejad (1993) explored ellipsis in noun phrases, verb phrases and sentence, and indicated the differences between ellipsis and substitution. Based on Halliday and Hasan (1976), Fazli-Ali (1995) explored ellipsis in Persian stories of Al-e-Ahmad and Daneshvar, and revealed that verbal ellipsis is less frequently.

Shoghsho' ara (1996) examined conjunctions as a cohesive device in Persian stories at children and adults level to see whether there are differences in the application of conjunctions in such texts. She concluded that writers at both levels use all four kinds of conjunctions. In addition, statistics showed that in both groups the frequency of additive conjunctions were higher that other conjunctions. The frequency of causatives in adults' stories was twice as much as children's. The use of adversatives was almost the same in the corpus. Furthermore, temporal ones in children's stories were 205 times more than their adults' counterparts. Therefore, he concluded that when writing a story, writers should pay attention to who are their audiences.

Mozaffar-zadeh (1998) analyzed ellipsis and substitution in science books at guidance level and concluded that Halliday and Hasan's classification (1976) on ellipsis and substitution can be extended to Persian. Tseng and Liou (2006) inquired about the effects .Of online conjunction materials on college EFL students writing. They argued that inappropriate utilization of conjunction in English, which leads to incoherent writing, is because of first language interface, misleading lists of connectors, and improper exercises.

Robert et al. (2009) following Dooley and Levinsohn's (2001) analytical methodology described different aspect of discourse analysis including an introductory description of discourse studies in Persian language. They have stated that their study is just an introductory work which guide people in knowing how discourse studies in Persian can be managed based on Dooley and Levinsohn (2001). In analyzing cohesive ties in English as a foreign language students' writing Rostami Abu-Saeedi (2010) investigated about the most frequently used cohesive device in his sample. He came to surprising conclusion. Poor students were expected to have low density of cohesion, because they could not combine sentences together coherently, e.g. by the use of conjunctions. So, he realized that, in his study, conjunctions are not a discriminating factor between good and poor students. Also it was observed that the frequently of additives were higher in both groups, followed by temporals. In addition, adversatives and causals had almost the same frequency of occurrence.

Seddigh, Shokr-Pour and Kafi-Pour (2010) analyzed lexical cohesion in English and Persian abstract based on Seddigh and Yarmohamadi's (1996) lexical cohesion framework.

They used the SPSS package for contrastive analysis. The results indicated that there were some similarities and difference in the application of lexical cohesion in their corpus. All sub-types had nearly the same occurrences in the two sets of data and the two-tailed t-test revealed that differences between their applications in English and Persian abstracts are not statistically significant. Both languages reported repetition as the most frequent sub-type, but synonymy and meronymy were the least used sub-categories. Gonzalaze (2011) investigated lexical cohesion in multiparty conversations. He presented an integrated model of lexical cohesion called associative

cohesion. His research data consisted of 15,683 word-corpus of broadcast discussions. The analysis of 11,199 lexical ties illustrated that repetition (59%) is the most frequent sub-category of lexical cohesion, followed by associative cohesion (24%) and inclusive relations (8.2%).

More recently, Yang and Sun (2012) explored the use of cohesive devices in argumentative writing by Chinese sophomore and senior EFL learners. The result of ellipsis and substitution analysis revealed that two devices were mostly found in spoken language and were seldom used in formal written discourse. About 65,67% of the sophomores and 70% of the seniors had not used these devices; because they had become aware of the inappropriateness of using ellipsis and substitution in formal writing. It is noteworthy that as for as the authors of the present study have searched, most of the studies on cohesion of language are based on Halliday and Hassan (1976). Also, Dooley and Levinsohn's (2001) framework is just an introductory work. Thus, the authors did not find any similar paper that have chosen Dolley and Levinsohn's (ibid) point of view. In order to compare their finding with the result of the present article, so, the authors' purpose is to illustrate the presented concepts of Dolley and Levinsohn (ibid), by examining further texts than those they have prepared, to see whether Dolley and Levinsohn (ibid) framework can be extended to Persian speech analysis or not.

### Research Questions

However, English writing tasks which are written by native versus non-native authors need to be studied in more detail. For this purpose, the following research questions and hypothesis were posed:

**Q1.** What are the differences and similarities be in sport texts of Washington Times and Tehran Times newspapers

**Q2.** What sub-types of lexical cohesive are frequently used in sport texts of Washington times and Tehran Times

**Q3.** Is there any significant difference between Washington times and Tehran Times newspaper regarding to density of lexical cohesion sub-types use?

### Research hypothesis

The above mentioned research questions are the basis for the following hypotheses:

**H1.** There are differences and similarities in sport texts of Washington times and Tehran Times newspaper .  
newspapers ?

**H2.** Sub-types of lexical cohesion are frequently used in sport text of Washington times and Tehran Times newspapers.

**H3.** There is significant difference between Washington times and Tehran Times newspaper regarding to density of lexical cohesion sub-types use.

### 3. Method

The following part presents the characteristics of the sample, the instrument, the procedure and the sort of the method employed in this study.

#### 3.1. Corpus of the Study

The data for this study consist of 40 Washington Times and Tehran Times newspapers. 20 written by English native and 20 written by Iranian authors will be selected. To have an almost equal amount of data in Washington Times and Tehran Times in sport texts, the number of 988 words from Washington Times and 944 from Tehran Times were analyzed. The total number of words analyzed will be about 1932 for each one roughly.

#### 3.2. Instruments and Materials

The use of lexical cohesion in sport texts of both Washington Times and Tehran Times newspapers written by English native and Iranian authors will be identified and marked. To analyze the text concerned a two-tailed - test is used. Then they will be analyzed based on Halliday and Hassan's framework (1976) and compared one by one in order to investigate the number of lexical cohesion sub-types use in Washington Times and Tehran Times for three months. Finally the data will be analyzed by SPSS program.

### 2.3 Procedure

Since it was important that the texts analyzed in this study be comparable, an effort was made to select news texts which according to the linguistic knowledge were on general topics and accordingly could be treated as being similar in some respects. That is, regarding the content it will not be far-fetched to categorize the two newspapers. And, in this regards, again it can be claimed that, the language used in both Washington Times and Tehran Times corpus is the same as unmarked variety of language which are comprehensible for ordinary native and non native English readers. The data of this study was collected from 20 texts taken from Washington Times and 20 from Tehran Times newspapers. In order to make the corpus comparable, 40 short texts were analyzed. The two texts under investigation were read carefully, then the use of sub-types of lexical cohesion in two newspapers will be read carefully, then the use of sub-types of lexical cohesion in two newspapers will be identified and marked to analyzed according to Halliday and Hassan's framework (1976) and compared one by one in order to investigate the number, degree, frequency and density of sub-types of lexical cohesion in Washington Times and Tehran Times newspapers.

This study is based on quantitative method and data analysis will be done by SPSS software. In order to determine the frequency of lexical cohesion pattern in both languages, the observed frequencies of each pattern will be counted and summed. Then the differences and similarities between them will be recognized. The data are put together in separate tables to allow one to make more valid comparisons between the lexical cohesion sub-types.

### 6. Analysis and Results

This section focuses on the quantitative analysis of the obtained data in this study. Such analysis was done using the SPSS software. Table (1,2) shows the frequency of lexical cohesion sub-types and the density of lexical cohesion sub-types in Washington Times and Tehran Times newspapers.

**Table 1 . shows the frequency of lexical cohesion sub-types in Washington times and Tehran times newspapers**

Type of lexical cohesion	R	S	M	C	G	H	A
English native sport texts	14/04	5/66	4/95	3/62	3/30	2/91	2/00
Tehran Times sport texts	14/33	6/33	4/41	3/50	2/91	2/30	2/00
T <sub>abu</sub> values	0/21	1/00	0/07	-0/26	-0/47	-0/37	0/00

Table 1. The average percentages of lexical cohesion sub-types in sport texts of Washington Times and Tehran Times.

$P < 0/5$ , two tailed

R=repetition      S=synonymy      M= meronymy      H=hyponymy      G=general noun      A=antonymy  
C=collection

**Table 2 . The density of lexical cohesion sub-types of Washington Times and Tehran Times newspapers .**

Group	A	C	G	H	S	R	Word number	Number of text	Group
Persian mean	20	944	401 14/3333	156 6/3333	60 2/3043	74 2/9167	87 3/5000	45 2/0000	121 4/9167
English (mean)	20	983	395 14/0417	178 5/6667	62 2/4167	79 3/3043	95 3/6250	45 2/0000	126 4/9583

As displayed in Table 1 and table 2 and 2 (see the appendix), sport text in Tehran Times newspaper repetition is the most frequently used sub-type of lexical cohesion. The next frequent sub-typed is synonymy followed by Meronymy and Collocation, General noun, Hyponymy, Antonymy, i.e. R, S, M, C, G, H, A. In the case of sport

texts in Washington Times newspaper repetition has the highest percentage of occurrence as well. The next frequently used sub-type is Synonymy followed by Meronymy, Collocation, General noun, Hyponymy and Antonym, i.e. R, S, M, C, G, H, A. It is noteworthy that the orders of the sub-types are almost the same in both languages. It can also be noticed that the densities of the sub-types vary within each group of text.

The result indicate the occurrences of all sub-types are almost the same in both languages. The two groups of all sub-types are almost the same in both languages. The two groups of text exhibit a general tendency toward the use of repetition, i.e. 14/33 vs. 14/04. But Hyponymy and antonymy play minor roles in producing cohesion in both languages (about 2%).

To see whether the differences between them percentage of lexical cohesion sub-types in sport texts in Washington Times and Tehran Times are statistically significant or not, for each case two-tailed t-test was run and the observed values soft were computed and compared with the t critical values at 0/5 level of significance. With regard to the number of degrees of freedom, is 46 in the t-distribution table.

As the figures in Table 1 show, in all cases the differences are not statistically significant, so, it can be concluded that the occurrences of sub-types are approximately the same in both group of texts. The densities of lexical cohesion in the texts were determined by dividing the total number of lexical cohesion in each language by the total number of sentences in that language. The obtained figures are 4/89 and 4/86 for sport texts in Washington Times and Tehran Times newspapers respectively. By doing two tailed t-test, it became clear that the difference is statistically significant. Thus, Washington Times are desert than their corresponding Tehran Times ones.

## 7. Conclusion and discussion

The contrastive study of lexical cohesion in sport texts in Washington Times and Tehran Times reveals that the occurrence of all the sub-types of lexical cohesion devices as well as their orders are almost the same in both languages. In Tehran Times sport texts, R, S, M, C, H, G, A and in Washington Times sport texts, R, S, M, C, G, H, A appear with decreasing percentages of occurrence, respectively. In both groups of texts, repetition is the most but Hyponymy and antonymy are the least frequently used sub-types. And finally, the densities of the texts regarding the use of lexical cohesion are not the same.

The application of a two-tailed t-test revealed that the difference was statistically significant and Tehran Times sport texts are denser than their corresponding Washington Times sport texts. and Yarmohammadi(1995)

This research is in line with Shahragard (1992) whose data is different ours. Sahragard,s data are selected from among contemporary Persian and English plays, as well as Persian translation of English plays. The other study is by Yarmohammadi(1995) whose data is the same to our research.Yarmohammadi,data consist of political texts in two newspapers published in Iran , i.e.,Kayhan International in English and Kayhan in Persian.What is important to note is that the result they obtained from their studies , are strikingly analogous to ours.

### 7.1. Applications and Implications

Reading is a process of interaction between the reader and the text in which the reader gets meaning from the text but not from isolated sentences. The fact is that there is a difference between a collection of unrelated sentences and a series of sentences comprising a text. This differences can be explained by the existence of some relationships between sentences including theme/rhyme, information structure, cohesive patterns , ... .

As elaborated by Yarmohamadi (1995), if a pattern of cohesion becomes evident while analyzing these relationships, it must be that this pattern is at least one factor in the explanation of the greater meaning of a whole text. So for the EFL and ESP learners knowing the fact that the sub-types of cohesive relations exist within different texts in different order and with different degree of utilization makes the interactions between them and the next easy.

Neglecting this pattern (cohesion) is one of the reasons that many Iranian students can't read and comprehend the text outside the class because reading is not treated as it is by Iranian teachers. The same is true for the students' writing skill. Many students who have graduated from high school can not write a coherent paragraph. Even though they can write correct sentences in isolation. But a coherent text not isolated sentences is frequently used. The issue that students can not communicate via written language can be explained by the assumption that sentences elements which create cohesion have not been taught. We should bear in mind that good writers are usually good readers.

## 7.2. Suggestions for Further Research

Based on the finding of present study following three proposals are offered:

- 1) Lexical cohesion can be investigated on different genres. written texts and , short story .
- 2) Lexical cohesion in English language can be comparison with different languages.
- 3) Relation lexical cohesion with skills of EFL learning can be studied in order to learning skills better.

Appendix (1)

	T EQUAL VARIANCE LEVEN'S		T EQUAL MEAN						
	F	Sig	T	df	Two - tailed	Mean	Standard deriation	The level of confidence	
								lower	Higher
equal Variance R unequal Variance	0/106	0/747	0/215 0/215	46 45/954	0/831 /831	0/2917 0/2917	0/35821 0/35821	-2/44227 -2/44234	3/02560 3/02567
equal Variance S Unequal Variance	0/521 0	0/474 0	1/001 1/001	46 43/224	/322 0/322	0/6667 0/6667	0/66576 0/66576	-0/67344 -0/67577	0/00677 0/00910
equal Variance C Unequal Variance	0/50 0	0/824 0	-0/264 -0/264	46 46/000	0/793 0/739	-/1250 - 0/1250	0/47324 0/47324	-1/07759 -1/07759	0/82759 0/82759
equal Variance M Unequal Variance	/021 0	0/895 0	-0/078 -0/078	46 45/908	0/938 0/938	- 0/0417 - 0/0417	0/53635 0/53635	-1/12127 -1/12133	1/03794 1/03800
equal Variance G Unequal Variance	0/05 0	0/824 0	-0/476 -0/476	45 44/998	0/636 0/636	- 0/3877 - 0/3877	0/81460 0/81393	-2/02836 -2/02702	1/25300 1/25106
equal Variance H Unequal	0/306	0/583 0	-0/370 -0/372	45 43/860	0/713 0/712	- 1/1123 -/1123	0/30356 0/30222	-0/72373 -0/72146	0/49909 0/49682

Variance									
equal Variance A	0/137	0/713	0/000	44	1/000	0/0000	0/38242	0/77072	0/77072
Unequal Variance		0	/000	43/713	1/000	0/0000	0/38242	0/77086	0/77086

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# DIFFERENCES BETWEEN L1 AND L2 ACQUISITION IN TERMS OF AFFECTIVE FACTORS AND MOTIVATION TO LEARN THE LANGUAGE

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## Abstract

This study tries to find the answer to this question that whether there is a difference between L1 and L2 Acquisition in terms of affective factors and motivation. It is an attempt to make a comparison and tries to examine an array of theories about first language (L1) acquisition and second language (L2) acquisition. Understanding the nature of L1 and L2 under the category of language acquisition needs various aspects to be considered, compared, and contrasted. Obtained results from these comparisons and contrasts truly have valuable implications for language practitioners who can help designing syllabuses, changing teaching processes and classroom activities. These results also enable the language teachers to understand their students' learning processes.

**Key Terms:** Motivation, syllabuses, affective factors

## Introduction

Meisel (2011) argues that the two acquisition types differ in fundamental ways and can be justified through various parallels and differences between first and second language acquisition. There is this fact that important differences (and parallels) can be observed in L2 studies. What is controversial among researchers is whether they just reflect superficial deviations from what is typically found in L1 development or whether they are essential in what they illustrate that the knowledge underlying those systems are distinct .

Bley-Vroman (1990, cited in Meisel, 2011) believes that there are 10 differences between the two types of language acquisition.

1. Lack of success
2. General failure
3. Variation in success, course, and strategy
4. Variation in goals
5. Correlation in age and proficiency
6. Fossilization
7. Indeterminate intuitions
8. Importance of instruction
9. Negative evidence
10. Role of affective factors.



Meisel (2011) in his paper argues that there is a contrast between L1 and L2 development and says "in contrast to L1 development, L2 acquisition is characterized by its lack of success and lack of uniformity a protracted rate of acquisition, and by the fact that the Logical Problem of second language acquisition does not present itself in the same way as in L1, because adult L2 learners can rely on native language knowledge and on a domain-general learning system. This lack of success could lead to demotivation for the L2 learners, something which is quite scarce in the process of L1 acquisition by children ."

There are many factors accounting for the essential differences between L1 and L2 acquisition, though, the primary focus of this paper is on two of them: those differences which are related in affective factors and motivation.

### **Affective factors**

The affective domain encompasses many influential factors such as inhibition, attitudes, anxiety, and motivation; this study will examine only the first two. Ipek (2009) claims that while anxiety and motivation are totally related to adult second language learning, child first language learners either do not developed or are just in the process of developing these affective factors. As inhibition creates no difficulty for youngsters who are acquiring their first or second language, it is believed that inhibitions may be intervening in adult second language acquisition. Inhibitions can be defined as ego boundaries the person builds in order to protect his or her ego. As the child grows and matures, he develops a sense of self-identity and towards puberty and adulthood (no exact time mentioned) it acquires the feeling to protect and save this self-identity, he also develops inhibitions which are heightened during puberty. Alexander Guiora (cited in Brown, 2006) explains the idea of the language ego as something which accounts for the identity of a person and develops in reference to the language he/she speaks, before puberty the child's ego is flexible and dynamic but as the child gets near puberty the language ego becomes protective because of physical, cognitive, and emotional changes which happens at this level or stage. The language ego which is related to native language tries to protect the ego of the young adult through sticking to the security of the native language. Acquisition of second language means acquisition of a whole new language ego which might be very difficult for adults, those who during time have developed inhibitions to protect their ego. As a result mistakes can be seen as threats to one's ego. With the fear of making mistakes the adult language learner strongly resists to speak in learning environment or the classroom. While L1 learners make a lot of mistakes (grammatical and regarding pronunciation) in the process of language learning. L1 learners' errors and mistakes are signs of learning and progress; it's not conceived as a threat .

Under the cognitive development of a person another affective factor, which is attitude, will be formed that can make second language acquisition difficult for an adult. Young children are not cognitively enough developed to possess attitudes towards races, cultures, minority groups, and languages. School age is the time children acquire attitudes. It is agreed that negative attitudes towards the target language, target language speakers, the target language culture, and the social value of learning a second language can impede and hinder language learning, however positive attitudes can enhance learning (Ellis, 1994; Brown, 1994).

These positive or negative attitudes toward another culture can be named under category of Social Distance which has been emerged as an affective construct. It refers to the cognitive and affective proximity of two cultures that come into contact within an individual. The word "distance" refers to dissimilarities between two cultures (Joyce Merrill Valdes, 2001, P 36).

Schumann (1976) explained about parameters of social distance:

- Dominance: in relation to Target Language group, is the L2 group politically, culturally, or economically dominant, non-dominant or subordinate?
- Integration: is the integration pattern of the L2 group assimilation, acculturation, or preservation? What is the L2 group's degree of enclosure which refers to its identity separate from other contiguous groups?
- Cohesiveness: is the L2 group cohesive? What is the size of L2 group?
- Congruence: Is the culture of two groups congruent, similar in their value and belief systems? What are the attitudes of the two groups toward each other?
- Permanence: what is the L2 group's intended length of residence in the target language area?

One of the five famous hypotheses of Stephen Krashen (1982) is "*The Affective Filter Hypothesis*" which accounts for the effects of affective variables on second language acquisition. He argues that affective variables can act as a mental block, also termed affective filter, and prevent comprehensible input to be absorbed. When the learner is not motivated and lacks confidence the affective filter goes up and impedes learning, on the other hand When

the learner is not anxious and wants to be a member of the group speaking the target language the filter goes down and the learning process occurs. He adds that children are at an advantage when learning a first or second language because their affective filter is low while adults are likely to have a higher affective filter due to events that occurred in adolescence, since L1 learners start their language acquisition process much sooner than the L2 learners it can be inferred that without this affective filter, L1 acquisition happens more easily. (Krashen, 1982; McLaughlin, 1987).

### Review of Literature

According to Dornyei (2005), L2 motivation research realm has been a thriving area within L2 studies with several books and hundreds of articles have been published on the topic since 1960. Providing a concise overview of the field needs a division of History into three phases:

- a) The social psychological period (1959–1990)—characterized by the work of Gardner and his students and associates in Canada .
- b) The cognitive-situated period (during the 1990s)—characterized by work drawing on cognitive theories in educational psychology .
- c) The process-oriented period (the past five years)—characterized by an interest in motivational change, initiated by the work of Dörnyei, Ushioda, and their colleagues in Europe.

### Motivation: Krashen (1982)

Over the last decade language learning has witnessed development of a variety of affective variables related to success in second language acquisition (reviewed in Krashen, 1981). Most of those can be placed into one of these three categories:

- Motivation. Performers with high motivation generally do better in second language acquisition (usually, but not always, "integrative")
- Self-confidence. Performers with self-confidence and a good self-image tend to do better in second language acquisition.
- Anxiety. Low anxiety appears to be conducive to second language acquisition, whether measured as personal or classroom anxiety.

Ehrman et al. (2003), defines integrative motivation as the positive attitude toward the foreign culture and a desire to participate as a member of that culture, whereas instrumental motivation refers to the goal of acquiring language in order to use it for a specific purpose, such as career advancement or entry to postsecondary education. (Ehrman, et al., 2003)

Gardner (2001) holds this view that L2 Motivation is the extent to which the individual works or strives to learn the language because of a desire to do so and the satisfaction experienced in this activity. (Cited in Ehrman, et al., 2003). According to Ellis (1994), Motivation is a modifiable personal factor .

### Integrative and instrumental motivation cited in Krashen (1982)

Integrative" motivation refers to that kind of motivation which shows the desire to "be like" speakers of the target language. In foreign language situations the performance of students with more integrative motivation is usually superior, especially over the long run (Gardner & Tremblay, 1994). Also there are situations in which there is some urgency in second language acquisition and/or there is less desire to "integrate", here the presence of integrative motivation may not relate to second language achievement. Rather, in these circumstances "instrumental" motivation, which is the desire to use the language for practical means, may predict success better (Gardner and Lambert, 1972).

Dornyei (1994) mentions components of foreign language learning motivation as follow

- Language Level, Integrative Motivational Sub-system, Instrumental Motivational Subsystem .
- Learner Level: Need for Achievement, Self-Confidence, Language Use Anxiety, Perceived L2 Competence, Causal Attributions, Self-Efficacy .

The instrumental side of this integrative/instrumental dichotomy is related to acquiring a language as a means for instrumental goals such as using language for improving a career, to read technical materials, and so forth. However, the integrative side is related to those learners who try to integrate with the culture of the second language group and community and be involved in social interchange with Target group (Masgoret & Gardner, 2003).

**Gardner's socio-educational model**

Gardner (1982, cited in Ipek, 2009) identified a number of factors involved in second language learning (L2), Gardner and Lambert (1959) in their work of second-language acquisition mention the social and cultural milieu, individual learner differences, the setting and context factors in language learning. In Gardner's model the most influential factors in second-language acquisition are the four individual differences as intelligence, language aptitude, motivation, and situational anxiety.

**Revised socio-education model**

By 2001 Gardner had presented a schematic representation of the model. There are four sections, external influences, individual differences, language acquisition contexts, and outcomes. In the socio-educational model, motivation to learn the second language encompasses three elements. First, the motivated individual expends effort to learn the language. Second, the motivated individual wants to achieve a goal. Third, the motivated individual will enjoy the task of learning the language.

**Role of motivation in language learning**

Crookes and Schmidt (1991) identified *Integrative Motivation* as the learner's orientation with regard to the goal of learning a second language which means learner's positive attitudes towards the target language group and the desire to integrate into the target language community. Instrumental Motivation as Hudson (2000) specified is the desire to obtain something practical or concrete from the study of a second language. Instrumental motivation underlies the goal to gain some social or economic reward through L2 achievement.

**Extrinsic and Intrinsic Motivation**

Another dimension of the motivation construct is related to intrinsically or extrinsically motivation of learners to be successful in accomplishing a task. Those kinds of activities which there are no apparent reward after accomplishing the task are Intrinsically Motivated. It is the activity itself which People seem to engage in the activities for their own sake and not because of an extrinsic reward. The aim of intrinsically motivated behaviors is bringing about certain internally rewarding consequences, namely, feelings of competence and self-determination. On the other hand, extrinsic motivation is fueled by the anticipation of a reward from outside and beyond the self, such as money, prizes, grades, and even certain types of positive feedback. Behaviors initiated solely to avoid punishment are also extrinsically motivated (Brown, 2007).

McKeachie (1999) believes that intrinsic motivation is a necessity of lifelong learning. As students leave school, external motivators for learning will be replaced by long-term goals and less immediate rewards. Intrinsic motivation encourages us to continue learning regardless of what rewards come our way.

**Theories of Motivation**

Motivation theories have been evolved over the course of decades of research, the following is explanation of motivation from three schools of thoughts: behavioral, cognitive and constructivists.

1. From a *behavioral* point of view, motivation is the anticipation of reward. It is driven to acquire positive reinforcement, and driven by previous experiences of reward for behavior, we act accordingly to achieve further reinforcement. As Skinner, Pavlov, and Thorndike put motivation at the center of their theories of human behavior. Behavioral point of view believes that performance in tasks and motivation to do so is likely to be driven by external forces such as parents, teachers, peers, educational requirements, job specifications, and so forth (Tavakoli, 2013).

2. In *cognitive* point of view, motivation puts emphasis on the individual's decisions, "the choices people make as to what experiences or goals they will approach or avoid and the degree of effort they will exert in that respect". Some cognitive psychologists see underlying needs or drives as the compelling force behind our decisions. Ausubel as mentioned in (Tavakoli, 2013) identified six needs undergirding the construct of motivation:

- a. The need for *exploration*, for seeing "the other side of the mountain," for probing the unknown
- b. The need for *manipulation*, for operating to use Skinner's term on the environment and causing change
- c. The need for *activity*, for movement and exercise, both physical and mental
- d. The need for *stimulation*, the need to be stimulated by the environment, by other people, or by ideas, thoughts, and feelings
  - e. The need for *knowledge*, the need to process and internalize the results of exploration, manipulation, activity, and stimulation, to resolve contradictions, to quest for solutions to problems and for self-consistent systems of knowledge

f. Finally, the need for *ego enhancement*, for the self to be known and to be accepted and approved of by others, or, what Dornyei (2005) calls the "self-system" (Tavakoli, 2013).

3. A *constructivist* view of motivation as Williams and Burden mentioned places even further emphasis on social context as well as individual personal choices. In order to motivate each person you need to act differently, and will therefore act on their environment in ways that are unique. But these unique acts are always performed within a cultural and social milieu and cannot be completely separated from that context (Williams & Burden, 1997). Abraham Maslow (1970) argued that motivation as a construct in which ultimate attainment of goals was possible only by passing through a hierarchy of needs, three of which were solidly grounded in community, belonging, and social status. Therefore, motivation, in a constructivist view, is derived both from our interactions with others and one's self-determination.

According to Clark (2003) different factors including Personality, social competence, motivation, attitudes, learning style, and social style in learners and speakers influence the way a child learns the second language.

Among these, according to Spolsky (1988) motivation can be considered the foundation of second language learning, since it means the difference between communicating and not communicating. Apparently it can be generalized into L1 learners because to some extent they learn the language to communicate, but the question is do they need to acquire the L1 language the same as L2 learners do or not? By motivation, Spitzberg and Cupach (1984, p. 119) mean the affective approach or avoidance response to a particular communication situation. Clearly, if a person avoids a particular situation, the opportunity to communicate simply will be vanished. Some second language learners choose not to communicate in a particular situation because they judge their capabilities is so poor that they find not communicating more rewarding than communicating. For others, symptoms of anxiety such as excessive perspiration, shakiness keep them from communicating. But this is not the case for L1 learners because they start communication when they are completely sure that they can make themselves understood to others, so they are less anxious and less worried.

Avoidance strategy at the motivational level reinforces the perception of incompetence because of the individual's position. They prefer not to put themselves in a situation which increases skill levels and to be evaluated positively by others. Indeed, many students may resort to skipping classes or dropping out of language programs completely. Scovel (1978) summarizes: "debilitating anxiety . . . motivates the learner to 'flee' the new learning task; it stimulates the individual emotionally to adopt avoidance behavior" (p. 139). There are times; students may rebel against the second culture/language because of culture shock. Dodd (1982, cited in Spolsky, 1988) suggests that foreigners sometimes may fight or flee the second culture during the transitional stage of culture shock. For instance, students either choose not to merge and associate with native speakers or use the second language to "fight" against the second culture. They are not motivated to use the language since they do not view this second culture in a positive light. Fighting against this culture shock is exactly something which it cannot be found in L1 acquisition, because these children are born to live within their culture. As a result in the absence of culture shock and much less anxiety of confronting others, children are able to learn their language better to put it in simple words, automatically. Others may use coping strategy such as withdrawing ("fleeing") from contact with the second culture to overcome with difficulties of culture shock. Meisel (2011) states that the motivation to learn and use the second language depends on students' perceptions of their abilities in the second language and their feelings toward the second culture. Again, students' responses to communication activities is related to the students' perceptions of the context of communication, including the culture within which the communication is to take place.

Language learners learn a language because of their need to acquire, use, and communicate with native speakers of that language. To learn a language, a learner should be motivated. Brown (2000) said "motivation is probably the most frequently catch-all term for explaining the success or failure of virtually any complex task" (p. 160).

A more recent offshoot of Maslow's view of motivation is seen in Csikszentmihalyi's investigations of the effect of "flow" on final achievement. Flow theory cast lights on the importance of "an experiential state characterized by intense focus and involvement that leads to improved performance on a task. Flow theory claims that as a result of the intrinsically rewarding experience associated with flow, people push themselves to higher levels of performance" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

### **Motivation: An impetus to initiate L2 learning**

According to Dornyei (2005), motivation provides the primary boost for initiating L2 learning and later it becomes the driving force to sustain the long and often tedious learning process; truly, all the other factors which are involved in SLA put motivation as their presupposition to some degree. Without motivation, even

high talented individuals cannot accomplish long term goals. Neither appropriate curricula nor good teaching cannot ensure student achievement .

Robert Gardner and Wallace Lambert (1972) started this debate, they argued that although language aptitude accounts for a considerable proportion of individual variability in language learning achievement, motivational factors can override the aptitude effect. They pointed out, that in certain language environments, where the social setting demands it, (e.g., when the L1 is a local vernacular and the L2 is the national language) many people, regardless of their aptitude differences, seem to master an L2.

### **The Neurobiology of Affect**

Schumann (1999) conducted an experiment and examined a number of foreign language motivation scales in terms of their neurobiological properties. He noted how certain questions about motivation refer to pleasantness ("I enjoy learning English very much"), goal relevance ("Studying French can be important to me because it will allow me to ... "), coping potential ("I never feel quite sure of myself when ... "), and norm/self-compatibility ("Being able to speak English will add to my social status"). His conclusion: "positive appraisals of the language learning situation ... enhance language learning and negative appraisals inhibit second language learning".

Schumann and Wood (2004) provided an explanation for the neurobiological bases of motivation and introduced *Sustained Deep Learning* (SDL), the kind of learning that requires an extended period of time to achieve. SDL, like intrinsic motivation, can be traced back in the biological concept of value. Value is a bias that leads humans to certain preferences and to choosing among alternatives. As Schumann and Wood say we humans all possess a feature called *homeostatic* value that promotes an organism's survival, and *sociostatic* value that leads us to interact with others, and to seek social affiliation.

### **Practical Implications in the Classroom**

Let us consider a few of the applications of intrinsic motivation in the language classroom. First, in a language course, extrinsic pressures are most often manifested in foreign language requirements set by the institution and in established standardized test scores that must be achieved (Brown, 2007). A second way to apply issues of intrinsic motivation is to consider how your own design of classroom techniques can have an added dimension of intrinsic motivation. A third and final suggestion is to consider the "10 commandments" for motivating learners that Dornyei and Csizer (1998) offered, following a survey of Hungarian foreign language teachers:

1. Set a personal example with your own behavior.
2. Create a pleasant, relaxed atmosphere in the classroom.
3. Present the tasks properly.
4. Develop a good relationship with the learners.
5. Increase the learners' linguistic self-confidence.
6. Make the language classes interesting.
7. Promote learner autonomy
8. Personalize the learning process.
9. Increase the learners' goal orientedness.
10. Familiarize learners with the target language culture.

### **Conclusion**

To account for how children learn their L1 language, Chomsky gives a delicate explanation without mentioning the concept of motivation. According to Chomsky (1993,p.519, cited in Lorenzo (2003), the child does not really do the language learning; it is a process which happens to the child when are placed in an appropriate environment, much as the child's body grows and matures in a predetermined way when provided with appropriate nutrition and environmental stimulation'. Regarding this fact it might be interpreted that that child unconsciously learns the language without any specific motivation. In fact it can be stated that children have no control over what they are going to do with language, rather when among the other member of the family or society, children unconsciously learn the language to be able to interact with others and meets their needs with no controlled intrinsic or extrinsic motivation.

Richards and Schmidt (2002, p. 472) assert that ,while comparing second and foreign language, concluded that Whether it be their first or second language, they need to learn it as a matter of survival, but the case is not true for the foreign language learners as studies show so far.

Overall, it seems that there is no easy way to make a comprehensive model for L1 and L2 language acquisition in terms of motivation. Dornyei (2005) says that truly we do not know comprehensive answer to all the outstanding questions related to the motivation of the language learners to acquire a language because of the nature of motivation which is a dynamic, ever-changing process; therefore its research should also evolve over time. Above all, the main concern of motivation is this essential question of why people think and behave as they do, and assuming we know the full answer is wrong.

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# GRAMMATICALITY IN SYNTACTIC THEORIES

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## ABSTRACT

As Chomsky asserts the main goal in linguistics is to study the structure of grammatical sequences. Grammaticality is therefore, as the cornerstone of syntax, one of the basic tenets of grammatical competence which came to be known under various terms throughout the history of syntax. The conditions bearing on grammaticality of structures which were syntax internal in pre-minimalist period were met in conformity with underlying principles of each syntactic theory. The present study is an attempt to investigate the ways in which the concept of grammaticality has changed in different theories of syntax ranging from traditional to optimality theory. In traditional and structural grammar, grammaticality was a function of word order and rules of usage. Generative grammar takes grammaticality as an integral part of syntactic competence into which subcategorization and selectional rules were incorporated. In GB theory, grammaticality was recognized as well-formedness determined in terms of principles and theories as projection principles, binding and bounding theories, case theory and theta theory. In the Minimalist program, however, grammaticality which was language external turned into legibility and convergence ensured by virtue of some other principles, including the principle of full interpretation. Finally, in optimality theory; a competition based model, grammaticality is defined in terms of hierarchically ordered well-formedness constraints evaluated by inviolability conditions.

**Keywords:** Syntactic theories, Syntax, Grammaticality, Well-formedness

## 1. Introduction:

Language is a string of words created in conformance with a set of rules known as grammar which evaluates the utterances produced by native speakers of a language in terms of grammatical conditions (Culicover, 2014). Grammaticality as the heart of syntax has been of pivotal importance in the architecture of grammar and in essence, the ultimate goal of any syntactic theories.

This notion however, has been addressed under diverse terms e.g. well formedness, principle of full interpretation, convergence, legibility conditions and non-violable conditions throughout the history of syntax.

This paper makes an attempt to trace the evolution of grammaticality and its realization in syntactic theories and is arranged as follows: section 2 begins by a brief background on grammaticality and grammar; then, grammaticality in traditional/structural linguistics is dealt with in 2.1; section 2.2 outlines the notion of grammaticality in generative grammar; in sections 2.3 and 2.4 grammaticality in government and binding as



well as minimalist program is presented consecutively; in section 2.5 we move on to grammaticality in optimality theory; and finally section 3 concludes the paper.

## 2. Grammar and grammaticality:

It appears that all native speakers have acquired an unconscious knowledge of the grammar. They are full well able to use, for instance, the article *a* or *an* correctly even though they may not be able to draw up the rule (Van Gelderen, 2002). Furthermore, grammar in its broad sense refers to the overall unconscious knowledge acquired by a native speaker of any given language enabling them to generate structures in accordance with syntactic rules (Sadighi, 2008). In other words, grammar is a system of rules governing the language which allows the speakers to produce and understand strings of words. Moreover,, it is an umbrella term encompassing all aspects of language structure.

This mental knowledge is also the key element of language extended in chomskyan paradigm to embrace the whole knowledge of language in the individual's mind (Cook & Newson, 2007).

According to Chomsky (1957), the main goal in linguistics is to distinguish grammatical structures from ungrammatical ones and to study the structure of grammatical sentences which are accepted by native speakers based on their intuitive knowledge which serves as a yardstick for grammaticality of sentences. That is to say, grammatically accepted or excluded structures are judged by linguistic intuition of speakers (Lees & Chomsky, 1957). In a similar vein, grammaticality is defined as constructing sentences in accordance with the rules as established by the grammar of a language. However, the description of intuitive notion of grammaticality is one of the goals of generative grammar (Chomsky, 1957). It is evident that intuitions about grammaticality are a basic part of grammatical competence. Hence, native speakers are able to make grammaticality judgments about structures in their language (Radford, 1997). In order to identify the grammatical sentences, one should be aware that the word "acceptable" differs from grammatical in that the former refers to performance while the latter belongs to competence. Hageman (1994) asserts that grammatical sentences are formed according to the grammar of English as constructed by the linguist, whereas acceptability specifies the native speakers' intuitions about the data. She also believes that it is the linguist's job to determine the degree of unacceptability of a sentence which is to be accounted for by grammar and also the factors involved.

Chomsky's classic examples (1) and (2) can clarify the distinction between the two. These two examples are nonsensical yet, the first one is grammatical (Chomsky, 1957).

1. Furiously sleep ideas green colorless
2. Colorless green ideas sleep furiously

Grammaticality is a theoretical concept (Newmeyer, 1983). Likewise, it is central to I-language and depends on levels of representations (syntax, semantics and phonology) which are integral to the structure of I-language. As a result (1) is syntactically well-formed but semantically awkward (Jacobsen, 1992). Additionally, the distinction between grammaticality and acceptability has not been of highly significance in syntactic theories until recently owing to the paucity of theories on the mechanisms other than syntax (Culicover, 2014).

Many syntactic theories have been formulated to explain how sentences are produced (Haegeman, 2009). These theories are concerned with the underlying principles of syntax based on which grammatically transparent structures are derived. Such principles being a part and parcel of grammar and in turn grammaticality take different forms and representations in the history of syntactic theories. In the forthcoming sections, grammaticality will be touched on in different syntactic theories.

### 2.1: Grammaticality in traditional / structural grammar:

The concept of grammar presented in section 2 was born out of Chomskyan paradigm. Linguistics prior to the era of generative grammar was prescriptive where rules of proper usage were to be heavily observed. The proscriptive rules of usage were to be avoided. Nevertheless, many good structural terminologies were invented including parts of speech which can still be found in the field.

Moreover, syntax within traditional grammar, was described by virtue of taxonomy, that is, a set of constituents belonging to a particular grammatical category (Radford, 2009). According to sadighi (2008), traditional grammar consists of a system of grammatical analysis to interpret structures based on the speaker's meaning and intention. Hence, the components (words, clauses, phases) constructing a sentence are defined in terms of their meaning or function. What's more, Hageman (1994) argues that the linguist's task in traditional grammar is to characterize the principles which specify the formation of English sentences whose description is meant to be the grammar which accounts for well/ill formed structures.

If a structure is prescriptively grammatical, it is constructed in accordance with rules of usage; on the contrary, ungrammatical structures breach those rules.

In a similar vein, Parsing in traditional grammar is practiced when words of a sentence are each assigned a part of speech and a grammatical function (Dowty et al., 2005). Furthermore, traditional grammar favors syntactic analysis or parsing with an account of the function, form and syntactic relation with the adjacent words.

Due to deficiencies of tradition grammar to describe language perfectly and scientifically, structural grammar came into play. In turn, Grammar was seen as an array of words constructed by a part- whole relationship to express meaning. Accordingly, a structure consisted of a sequence of words, each of which represented a word class. Substitution, word class and immediate constituents function as the syntactic component of this paradigm to account for structure building and grammaticality. The linguistic corpus in structuralism is of considerable importance, that is to say, what people say, counts not the intuition. Syntactic structures are the representations of syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations between words and linguistic elements.

However, structural grammar failed to account for the inter and intra sentential relations. *John is easy to please* and *john is eager to please* are two famous examples which show the inadequacy of this framework to account for syntactically ambiguous sentences (Searle, 1974).

## 2.2: Grammaticality in generative grammar:

Grammaticality gained attention in generative grammar where formalization of rules to distinguish grammatical from ungrammatical structures was the basic tenet.

Generative grammar is a theory of speaker's competence (Matthews, 2014). It is believed to generate only well-formed sentences. Native speakers are able to judge the syntactic well formedness or grammaticality of structures based on their syntactic competence. In essence, they have intuitions about grammaticality (Radford, 1988)

Finite state grammar, phrase structure rule were the first models proposed by Chomsky to generate grammatical strings of words. The latter was incorporated into the syntactic component of transformational grammar in the form of re- write rules.

The syntactic component of generative grammar contained a categorical component including x-bar principles, a lexicon, subcategorisation rules (Radford, 1988).Phrase structure rules, transformational rules and selectional rules are the other component of syntax in generative grammar.

Chomsky has postulated that examples as:

3. John found sad

4. Golf plays John

are ungrammatical and deviant as in (3) subcategorization rules and in (4) selectional rules have been violated.(Chomsky, 1964).However failing to generate structures in accordance with the rules, results in ungrammaticality. Ungrammatical strings necessitate an imposed interpretation or an analogy to grammatical sentences to be intelligible (Chomsky, 1964). The degree of grammaticality was firstly introduced by Chomsky holding that it is a gradient property. The idea of gradeness indicates the degree of deviance from grammaticality not the degrees of grammaticality (Zahedi, 2007). Hence, it is held that grammaticality is not an absolute property but is open to an interpretation. It entails some sort of deviation from the norm; it amounts to saying that ungrammatical structures are not necessarily ill-formed (Kac, 1992) .In addition, based on the degree of deviance of ungrammatical structures, sentences are ordered on grounds of ungrammaticality (Haegeman, 1994).Nonetheless, transformational grammar has undergone significant changes since its development, and consequently some of the transformations themselves play less important rules in the theory.

## 2.3: Grammaticality in Government and Binding theory:

Prior to GB theory, grammatical rules were confined to lexicon, transformational rules and phrase structure rules. Nevertheless, there was a need for more rules to moderate the previous ones, allowing them to be as simple as possible. X-bar theory as an example, previously operating on phrase structure component, replaced it for the purpose of simplification (Cook & Newson, 2007). As a result, grammaticality, in this framework came to be known as well-formedness met by virtue of a set of modules or theories determining well-formedness conditions (Zahedi, 2007).Grammar as a theory of linguistics comprised of four levels of representations: D-structure, S-structure, Logical form and Phonetic form, all of which except the last one formed the syntactic component.

The language rules and principles are posited to operate as underlying mechanisms for well -formedness of a structure, as a result, they are internally driven (Zahedi, 2007) Government then as the main grammatical

relation in GB theory is grammar internal. Likewise, it is argued that GB requires grammar to be equipped with more interacting modules to account for language faculty (Parker, 2006). Consequently, the Grammar in such a paradigm embodies a set of theories modularly organized from which the well-formedness of a sentence can be derived. Well formedness is then realized by virtue of a series of conditions which apply locally to each element of utterances (Lappin et al., 2000). In other words, according to Sadighi(2007) grammar as a repertoire of modules entails constraints as well as principles which govern well-formedness of structures.

The subsystems of principles include government theory, bounding theory, binding theory, case theory, theta theory and control theory. Moreover, as an element of Logical form, theta theory is considered to be a crucial aspect in the definition of well-formedness (Chomsky, 1993). In addition to the theories in question some principles namely projection principle and subadjacency condition which are in essence the basic tenets of GB account for well-formedness condition. Consider the sentences:

5. John likes football.

6. John likes

Sentence (6) has violated the projection principle, as the properties of lexical item *like* verb [-NP] ensure that the verb is followed by an NP in the sentence. Thus a well-formed Lf representation is not derived.

#### **2.4: Grammaticality in Minimalist program:**

Growing out of GB theory, Minimalist program - the most recent outgrowth of Chomskyan generative Grammar - intended to be more processing friendly, parsimonious and elegant. The elimination of D-Structure, S-Structure and phrase structure rules were in line with the principles of economy and simplicity. It implies that grammar is limited to bare minimum namely principle of full interpretation, economy of derivation and representation. The architecture of grammar is assumed to be comprised of a lexicon, a computational system and two interface levels.

The length of derivations and the amount of structures minimized in this schema play an important role in determining the well-formedness of sentences (Sag et al., 1999) though well-formedness has been re-defined.

The syntactic component chooses an optimal derivation from numeration and sends it off to the interface levels where the economy principle checks the efficiency of the mapping between LF and PF (Lappin et al., 2000). linguistic economy, that is, least effort economy formalizes notions including locality condition and well-formed conditions which portray that grammars are organized frugally (Epstein & Hornstein, 1999). The derivation is evaluated at interface levels, e.g. at LF in terms of full interpretation. Legible interpretations are said to be convergent but if interpretation is not successful at either interface level, the derivation will crash. As a consequence, it is evident that the terms grammaticality and well-formedness are not in vogue in Minimalist program and as Zahedi (2007) states, grammaticality or rather convergence is determined by means of full interpretation principle, bare output conditions and legibility conditions at both interface levels and consequently is met externally. In other words, interpretability imposes well-formed conditions on LF and PF externally (Lappin et al., 2000). In the earlier models, namely GB, grammaticality or well formedness was determined by language internal conditions (Zahedi, 2008).

The structure generated by syntactic component is then shipped to the PF component to be spelled out. In case the unvalued features are illegible to PF, the derivation will crash. It implies that every unvalued feature has to be valued in the course of the derivation, otherwise it will crash as PF fails to spell out the unvalued features (Radford, 2009). In this regard, a derivation is said to converge if all the features are valued at PF, and all the uninterpretable features are deleted at LF.

#### **2.5: Grammaticality in Optimality theory:**

According to Keller (1998) Optimality Theory (OT) differs from more traditional grammatical frameworks in the sense that grammaticality of the structures is not determined by its inherent properties, but by the set of structures it competes with. He holds the view that grammaticality is not an underlying component of Grammar but is determined in relation to violation of what he called soft and hard constraints.

According to McCarthy (2002), grammaticality in optimality theory is defined in terms of optimization over violable constraints. The overall architecture of OT can be defined in terms of three universal components: Gen, Con, and Eval. For a given input, a set of candidates are produced by the function GENERATOR (GEN). Therefore, the competing candidates are different realizations of the same input.

What's more, McCarthy (2007) argues that "GEN functions something like the optional transformations in the Chomsky and Lasnik model or GB's Move  $\alpha$ " (p. 4). One property of GEN is its 'freedom of analysis', in that all linguistic operations are employed by GEN freely, optionally, and repeatedly. In order to ensure that all of the

options exist in the candidate set, GEN must consider various ways used by languages to transform a given input.

Then, the function EVALUATOR (EVAL) evaluates the candidates produced by GEN regarding their constraint satisfaction. In other words, after receiving the candidate set from Gen, it is evaluated by the EVAL in accordance with some constraint hierarchy. Then, the most harmonic or optimal member is selected with respect to this ordered hierarchy as the output of the grammar. In a similar vein, optimal forms are grammatical while nonoptimal forms are considered to be ungrammatical (Grimshaw, 1997)

The process is marked by taking the orderings imposed by different constraints in order to form a larger ordering. Therefore, grammars are rankings of constraints in OT theory. Nevertheless, the violable constraints of the EVAL result in conflicting demands on the output structure.

CON as a set of universal well-formedness constraints includes two types of constraints; namely, markedness and faithfulness constraints.

Markedness constraints can be considered as the surface-structure constraints evaluating the well-formedness of the outputs. By examining the marks assigned by the universal constraints to all the candidate outputs for a given input, we can find the least marked or optimal one. The candidate that satisfies the constraints in an optimal way is considered to be the grammatical output. The hierarchical ranking of the constraints unique to a language determine optimality.

As a result, grammaticality of an optimal candidate is determined not in isolation; rather, in comparison to other candidates. As Vikner & Engels (2014) mention, "the optimal candidate is considered to be the one violating to the smallest extent the highest ranking constraint, on which it disagrees with a competing candidate" (p. 29). Faithfulness constraints require the output of the grammar to be like its input. Markedness constraints are often in conflict with the faithfulness constraints, since they choose some linguistic forms rather than the others. This conflict is called constraint conflict.

Taken together, grammaticality in OT is not constructed by the internal properties as it is in traditional grammar paradigm. It is determined in terms of constraints which are violable and relative, that is to say, grammatical structures may be subject to constraint violations (Keller, 1998). The violation of higher ranking constraints which are inviolable results in fatal violation and thus, the structure generated will be ungrammatical.

### 3. Conclusion:

The present paper set out to provide an overview of the concept of grammar and grammaticality and its development within syntactic theories from traditional to optimality theory. To this end, an overall architecture of syntax in different syntactic theories was presented. We argued that that the concept in question took different representations and labels namely well-formedness, legibility, convergence and inviolability in the history of syntax. Furthermore, the conditions ensuring grammaticality, well formedness and legibility were elaborated. Hence, the rules, principles and theories governing each syntactic theory deemed to be important in determining grammaticality was also delineated.

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# THE EFFECT OF USING L<sub>1</sub> ON IRANIAN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS' READING COMPREHENSION ABILITY

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## Abstract

This Study Aimed To Investigate The Effect Of Using L1 In Schema Activation Tasks On Reading Comprehension Ability Of Iranian High School Students. The Participants Were Selected From A Population Of High School Students Attending The Second Grade. An OPT Was Administered In Order To Level Off The English Proficiency Level Of The Subjects. Then, The Participants Were Divided Into Two Groups Of Experimental And Control Group. A Pre-Test Was Applied To Both Groups And The Results Were Recorded. During The Following Weeks The Researcher Provided The Experimental Group With The Treatment, Which Was Pre-Reading Tasks In Form Of Schema Activating Exercises In L1, And The Control Group With A Placebo, Which Was The Traditional Approach To Preparing Students For A Reading Passage With A Few Warm-Up Questions. The Treatment Lasted 10 Sessions At The End Of Which A Post-Test Was Administered. The Result Of The Post-Test And A Comparison With Those Of The Pretest Showed That There Was A Significant Change In The Performance Of The Experimental Group Which Lead To The Proving Of The Existence Of The Effect Of Pre-Reading Schema Activation Tasks On Reading Comprehension Ability.

**KEYWORDS:** Schema Activation, Reading Comprehension, First Language in Second Language Classroom, Reading strategies, Warm up Strategies, Word Map (Semantic Mapping)

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Students are constantly confronted with new information, especially once they advance to the upper elementary grades and transition from "learning to read" to "reading to learn" (Chall, 1983). To read to learn efficiently, students need to integrate new material into their prior knowledge base, make new understanding, and adjust existing conceptions and beliefs as necessary. Proficiency at these tasks is essential to literacy (Davis & Winek, 1989; Squire, 1983; Weisberg, 1988). However, students who lack sufficient background knowledge or are unable to activate this knowledge may struggle to access, participate, and progress throughout the general curriculum, where reading to learn is a prerequisite for success.

Teachers can facilitate their students' literacy success by helping them to build and activate background knowledge. The purpose of this section is to introduce the topic of background knowledge and identify effective, research-supported instructional approaches for its development and activation. After defining the term schema, we identify background knowledge instructional approaches and compare their reported effectiveness based on a review of the K-12 research literature between 1980 and 2013.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1.A Historical View of the Issue

A look at the history of L1 use in the L2 classroom quickly shows regular changes in the way it is viewed (Auerbach, 1999, p12). Several centuries ago bilingual teaching was the standard, with students learning through translation. The use of L1 to study L2 was almost global and willingly accepted, partly because language teaching prioritized on the written word over the spoken word. In the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, this trend slowly reversed itself (towards a monolingual approach), in part due to a shift towards an emphasis on the spoken word. The

effect of immigration, colonialism and a boost in research in the field, would rather strengthen the Monolingual Approach in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

The mass migration of peoples to other countries, especially from Europe to America was significant because it forced educators to revise their lessons, from smaller translation-oriented classes to bigger classes, and perhaps more noticeably, from students with a shared L1 to students with a different L1 (Hawks, 2001, p47). The only way to teach was to make use of the L2 as the medium of instruction.

Experiences collected by the many teachers who went abroad during the colonial teaching period would further help the monolingual principle to develop. (Phillipson, 1992, p186) As English became the dominant culture in the British colonies, those who were not a part of it, were forced to integrate if they wished to improve their life or be a part of the ruling elite. Those moving to America also had to integrate, if they wished to establish a life for themselves in the new country. This led to the perceived dominance of English above all other languages and in the end would lead to a commonly held assumption that English was the only medium that must be used in the English-language classroom.

The spread of an English-only classroom for political and practical reasons consequently caused the exclusion of the student's L1. The students using L1 in the classroom punished or shamed for doing something wrong (Phillipson, 1992, p187). The idea of bilingual education was viewed as impractical or inefficient (Pennycook, 1994, p136). Perhaps contributing to the desire for an English-only policy was the fact that many teachers themselves were native speakers of English. "They could not, nor did they perceive the need to speak the L1 of their students." (Phillipson, 1992, p188) By obliging an English-only policy, the teacher could call control of the class, and would naturally be in a position of power. On the other hand, by using L1 in the classroom, the teacher would lose dominance, as the students being the better speakers, of L1 would control the communication.

The emphasis on monolingual teaching of English also would essentially implied that the native speaker was the ideal teacher. This was closely related not only to political agendas, but also to the economics of the global EFL field (Pennycook, 1994, p176). English speakers could monopolize all the employment opportunities, by being viewed as the 'ideal teacher'.

The emergence of the Direct Method of teaching just over century ago also enhanced the idea that to the consolidation of the idea that all L1 languages should be excluded from the classroom (Harbord, 1992, p350) & (Pennycook, 1994, p169). The principle of the Direct Method was that second language learning reflected first language acquisition: lots of oral interaction, little grammatical analysis and no translation. The Direct Method would soon lose credit when it failed in the public education system (Brown, 1994, p44), but it would leave a continuous influence on ESL/EFL classrooms.

## 2.2. Support for the Bilingual Approach

In spite of increasing opposition to the English-only approach, its proponents stay firm in their determination to use English as the target language and the medium of instruction (Auerbach, 1993, p9) even though there are few specific references referring to actual advantages gained from excluding the L1 from the classroom (Hawks, 2001, p48).

One reason why monolingual teaching has been so willingly accepted is because of the "language myths of Europeans", and the belief in their natural superiority over non-European languages (Pennycook, 1994, p121). Indeed the stigma of bilingualism in the ESL context begins force the strong belief of the importance of English, and the disregard shown towards other languages (Pennycook, 1994, p137). English-only is also brought about by the blind acceptance of certain theories, which benefits native speaking teachers (Weschler, 1997, p1). However, there is now a belief by some that the use of L1 could be a useful tool for teachers and that significant attention and investigation should be focused on it (Atkinson, 1987, p241). There is also convincing proof that it is popular and students prefer teachers who understand their L1 (Briggs, 2001, p1). A study by Schweers, 1999 found 88.7% of Spanish students studying English preferred L1 used in the class because it makes learning easier. Students also wanted up to 39% of class time be spent in L1 (Schweers, 1999, p7).

Much of the effort to undermine the Monolingual Approach has focused on three points: it is unrealistic, native teachers are not essentially the best teachers, and exposure on its own is not enough for learning.

The biggest issue with the Monolingual Approach to teaching is that it is very impractical (Phillipson, 1992, p191). One reason the exclusion of L1 is not sensible is that the majority of English teachers are not native

speakers (Hawks, 2001, p50). Sometimes these teachers themselves do not have perfectly good common of English, and by demanding an English only policy, we can extremely undermine their ability to communicate and as a result their ability to teach. Another reason it is impractical is that to oblige the use of the TL only can often cause a less than acceptable performance on the part of the teachers, and the isolation of students from the learning procedure (Pachler & Field, 2001, p85). Not only that, but excluding L1 can bring about a higher dropout rate in ESL schools, whereas when L1 is allowed, researchers and teachers alike report much more positive results (Auerbach, 1993, p18). Monolingual teaching can also make tension and a obstacle between students and teachers, and there are many situations when it is unsuitable or impossible (Pachler & Field, 2001, p86). When a part of a lesson is not being comprehended, and is then clarified through the use of L1, that barrier and tension can be lifted.

The Monolingual Approach also promotes the idea of the native teacher as being the ideal teacher. This is definitely not the case since simply being a native speaker does not necessarily mean that the teacher is more qualified efficient (Phillipson, 1992, p194). In fact, non-native teachers might even be better teachers because they themselves have gone through the process of learning an L2, therefore gaining an insider's view on learning the language (Phillipson, 1992, p195). By excluding them and their knowledge or experience from the learning procedure, we are wasting a priceless resource. Furthermore, the word 'native teacher' could be problematic. There are many variations of English around the globe, and as to what makes an authentic native English speaker, is open to endless debate. "Ultimately though, there is no scientific validity to support the notion of a native teacher being the ideal teacher." (Phillipson, 1992, p195)

Another problem with the Monolingual Approach is its tenet that exposure to language causes learning. Excluding the students' L1 for the sake of extending students' exposure to the L2 is not as productive as it makes seen. In fact there is no proof that teaching in the TL directly brings about better learning of the TL (Pachler & Field, 2001, p85). Evidently the quantity of exposure is important, but other factors like the quality of the text material, trained teachers, and acceptable methods of teaching are more important than the volume of exposure to English (Phillipson, 1992, p210). This is particularly clear with struggling elementary students. Increasing the amount of L2 in place of a simple explanation in L1 would possibly have a negative effect and simply worsen the frustration on the student's part (Burden, 2000, p6). Teaching in the TL has certain advantages but teaching in the TL alone, will not ensure learning among the students (Pachler & Field, 2001, p101), but excluding it, may hinder learning (Auerbach, 1993, p16).

Besides trying to discredit the Monolingual Approach, some researchers have demonstrated the positive effects of using L1 and have categorized when it should be used. Humanistic approaches of teaching have stated that students should be permitted to express themselves, and while they are still learning a language it is only natural that from time to time they will move back into their mother tongue, which is more convenient for them. They will also naturally evaluate what they are learning with their L1 so trying to delete this process will only have undesirable consequences (Harbord, 1992, p351) and hinder learning.

One often widely misconceived notion which supporters of L1 use (such as Auerbach, 1993) have been criticized for is that they are encouraging the random and wide use of L1 in the classroom. "Supporters of the Bilingual Approach have been quick to clarify by stating that they do not support widespread and indiscriminate use of L1 in the classroom." (Auerbach in Polio, 1994, p157) In fact much research has been done on the certain situations in which L1 should be used, and in which certain situations it should not be used. Mitchell 1988, studied teachers and found that circumstances where grammar was being clarified were the area that most teachers felt L1 use was allowed. Other issues such as disciplining students, giving instructions for activities, and providing background information were also where L1 use was considered agreeable (Mitchell, 1988, p29). "Other researchers have suggested the use of L1 in situations such as eliciting language, checking comprehension, giving instructions and helping learners cooperate with each other." (Atkinson, 1987, p243) Harbord, 1992, came to the conclusion that there are three reasons for using L1 in the classroom. They are: facilitating communication, "Facilitating teacher-student relationships, and facilitating the learning of L2." (Harbord, 1992, p354). Cook explained further by stating teachers should use L1 to provide meaning and keep the class organized. "Students can use it for scaffolding (building up the basics, from which further learning can be processed) and for cooperative learning with fellow classmates." (Cook, 2001, p410) Perhaps the biggest reason for using L1 in the classroom though, is that everyone can avoid a lot of time wasting and confusion it can save a lot of time and confusion (Harbord, 1992, p351).



While supporting the choice of using L1 in the classroom, most researchers have at the same time warned against the excessive use of it (Burden, 2000, p9), because it can create an over dependence on it (Polio, 1994, p153), and can make differences between the two languages seem too simple, cause laziness among students and at fail to maximize English (Atkinson, 1987, p247).

Others though, have shown that the proportion of L1 to L2 use in the classroom, does not define the maintenance of L1, or the acquisition of L2 (Chaudron, 1988, p124). Still others have stated that even when L1 is used frequently at the start, it gradually gives way to English as the students' make progress (Auerbach, 1993, p19).

One rather surprising finding is that the nature users of L1 in the classroom are often the teachers, not the students (Chaudron, 1988, p123).

Although the Monolingual and Bilingual Approaches are theoretically very opposed each other in theory, it is commonly known that many teachers can actually be categorized somewhere in the middle, using mostly the TL, but also using L1 when necessary.

"In conclusion then, researchers have found that evidence for the practice of English-only is neither conclusive, nor pedagogically sound." (Auerbach, 1993, p15) In fact it is often hindering to the learning process (Chaudron, in Polio, 1994, p159). The findings presented here indicate that the use of L1 in the classroom can be useful, and is perhaps essential in specific situations (Auerbach, 1993, p9), (Hawks, 2001, p51) & (Zhou, 2003, p5).

"Although the mother tongue is not a suitable basis for a methodology, it has, at all levels, a variety of roles to play which are at present, consistently undervalued". (Atkinson, 1987, p247)

### 2.3. Reading Comprehension

Reading is defined as the deciphering of words for its meaning; comprehending the meaning the writer intended of the writer, and the skill of learning via text. In order for the readers to comprehend a passage, they should be able to decipher prints and symbols and constructing meaning from it. The readers interact with the text by using the knowledge in the text and connect it with their background information to make sense of the passage. The text itself does not hold any meaning without the readers' interaction with the text because meaning is fabricated through an interaction between the text and the reader and not the text by itself. (Cooter and Flynt, 1996:27)

### 2.4. Theories of Reading

The cognitive processes involved in reading are quite complicated and most of them are performed subconsciously. Reading is an invisible procedure. According to Manzo et al, (2001:27) "we can see what goes in, and test comes out, but what goes in between can still be known only in the form of theory". We could try to make sense of how reading proceeds based on three models of reading process that are classified primarily as 'bottom-up', 'bottom-up', 'top-down' and 'interactive'.

### 2.5. Bottom -up Models

Bottom-up processing is activated through new information the data. It depends on the data that are presented in the text. The information is analyzed from letter features to letters to words to meaning. However, building of item by does not create meanings in the passage. The message or the text presents only one of the essential sources of knowledge and the rest of the information is elicited from the reader's previous knowledge, which is store in long-term memory (Sloan and Whitehead, 1986:15). Reading is not simply turning letter into words into sentences. Letters are easily identified when they are in words and words in sentences because letters and word identification are assisted by meaning. As pointed out by Eskey (1968:11) "a reader process by moving his eyes from left to right across the page, first taking in letters, combining these to form words, then combining the words to from the phrases, clauses, and sentences of the text".

### 2.6. Top-down Models

In the top-down models, reading is identified as a meaning-driven procedure. According to Sloan and Whitehead (1986:15-16) the top-down theories emphasize that "reading begins in the head of the reader because the reader's knowledge is the starting point for recognizing a text and without prior knowledge, meaning cannot be made from print".

Readers will call on their intelligence and experience in order to comprehend the passage. they make predication about the passage using their previous knowledge to get the meaning intended by the writer. As further elaborated by Stanovich (1980:34) top-down models all view of a fluent reader as being actively involved with hypothesis testing as he proceeds through text. Readers make meaning by picking out the most and the least productive indication or items of information from the text. The connection between the print and prior knowledge of the readers has brought about the construction of meaning. (Sloan and Whitehead, 1986:16).

### 2.7. Interactive Models

An interactive model states that readers can be instructed to tune their reading strategies flexibly, choosing the most strategy to meet their goal for reading and the requirements of the passage (Sloan and Whitehead, 1986:17). Focuses two notions of interactive approaches, which are the interaction between the reader and the text and the interaction between bottom-up and top-down processes.

The connection between the readers and the text has made it possible to construction meanings. Readers communicate with the passage through their own background knowledge in order to comprehend the meaning does not just reside in the text itself. For fluent reading, it incorporates decoding which is the bottom-up process and the interrelation, skills which are the top-down process. As elaborated by Nuttall (1986:17) "in practice a reader continually shifts from one focus to another, now adopting a top-down approach to predict the probable meaning, then moving to the bottom-up approach to check whether that is really what the writer says". The writer further points out that through conscious choice the two methods can be utilized because both are vital strategies for readers. According to Khemlani and Lynne (2000) cited in Parviz Ajideh (2003:4)

"since the late 1969s, a number of theories (Goodman, 1970; Smith, 1978) have great importance on the role of the reader and the knowledge he or she brings to bear on the text in the reading process. These interactive theories, Which now dominate reading research and strongly influence teaching practice heavily on Schema theory"

### 2.8. Brainstorming

Hood and Soloman (1985:45) describe brainstorming as "the stage when the teacher provides a cue, associated with a text, and elicits from students any word or phrases that come to mind". The tips might be in different forms like words or phrases, general ideas, or other contextual clues. This activity can stimulate the readers to build up connection of words and ideas where they have to think about the context of the text. Hood and Solomon (1985:50) further explain "brainstorming activities aimed to make use of students' own experience and knowledge and also a way to introduce some of the vocabulary items from the text in a meaningful way". When teacher uses brainstorming, he or she can encourage students to share their own knowledge and opinion in association with the topic discussed.

### 2.9. Concept mapping

According to Wilson (1991, concept mapping is a approach which graphically organizes and represents the likes or connections between topics. This activity can be utilized to establish background information. They give students who hooking points to which new materials which they will experience can be grappled.

Willson (1991) points out that concept mapping can contribute to learners' ability to "organize and represent their thoughts". Readers will be able to connect ideas and concepts they already know to the new concepts that they will learn. In addition, according to the writer it is seen as useful for triggering and retrieving previous knowledge relative to the topic that is being read.

### 2.10. What is a Schema?

A schema (plural schemata) is a hypothetical mental construct for representing generic concepts stored in memory. It's a kind of framework, or design, or script. Schemata are fabricated through experience with people, objects, and events in the world. When we face something repeatedly, for example a restaurant, we begin to make generalization across our restaurant experiences to produce an abstracted, generic set of expectations about what we will encounter in a restaurant. This is helpful, because if someone tells you an anecdote about eating in a restaurant, they don't have to give you all of the details about being seated, giving their order to the waiter, leaving a tip at the end, etc., because your schema for the restaurant experience can fill in these missing specific details.

Schemata can be viewed as the organized background knowledge, which makes us expect or foresee aspects in our understanding of discourse. Bartlett (1932) believed that our memory of discourse was not based on direct reorganizing, but was constructive. This Constructive process utilizes information from the experienced discourse, along with knowledge from past encounter related to the current discourse to construct a mental reflection. The past experience, Bartlett argued, cannot be an accumulation of successive individuated events and experiences, it must be organized and made manageable –“the past operates as an organized mass rather than as a group of elements each of which retains its specific character (1932; p.197). What gives discipline to that organized mass is the schema, which Bartlett did not defined as a form of arrangement, but as something which remained dynamic and expanding (1932; p.201). It is this dynamic nature of discourse that causes the constructive procedures in memory (p. 249).

For Yule (1985) the key to the concept of coherence is not something which can be found in the language, but in people. It is people who create meaning what they read and hear. They try to arrive at an understanding which is relative to their experience of the way the world is. Indeed, our ability to define what we read is possibly only a fraction of the general ability we possess to make sense of what we perceive or experience in the world.

Cook (1989: 69) states “The mind stimulated by key words or phrases in the text or by the context activates a knowledge schema.” Cook means that we are not necessarily working with conscious procedure, but rather with automated cognitive responses to external stimuli. This outlook exemplifies that schemata are activated in one of two ways:

- Recent information from the outside world can be cognitively perceived and connected with previously known information stored in memory through retrieval .In this case, new notions are integrated into existing schemata which can be changed or developed;
- New data can be appointed by new mental constructs. In this situation inar, in absence of already existing schemata, new knowledge creates new schemata.

According to Plastina (1997), in both cases, the individual is connecting pieces of knowledge together, in an attempt to comprehend them. It is also mentioned that too major characteristics of schemata are flexibility and creativity. Schemata are flexible meaning they circulate actively and economically, i.e., knowledge is stored in memory and accessed when needed with the least amount of energy spent. They are creative in the sense of being used to represent all types of experiences and information, i. e.; they are specific to what is comprehended.

Carrell and Floyd (1989) state that the ESL teacher must provide the student with proper schemata s/he is lacking, and must also instruct the student how to make connections between existing knowledge and new knowledge. Accordingly, the building of bridges between a student's existing knowledge and new knowledge needed for text comprehension.

### 2.11. Semantic Mapping

According to Chia (2001), many teaching procedures have been produced to utilize student's background knowledge for efficient top-down processing in order to help with reading comprehension. Several of them have been proven to be helpful through observation, but some have not. “Surprisingly, pre-reading vocabulary exercises, despite widespread use, do not improve overall comprehension.” (Hudson, 1982; Johnson 1982). In fact according to Johnson, vocabulary study may bring about in a word-by-word, bottom-up approach that is hindering to comprehension. But direct vocabulary instruction does not necessarily involve teaching certain words rather providing learners with techniques essential to increase their vocabulary. It is mentioned that a majority of vocabulary is acquire in context, but that the learning- from-context approach is at its pick for teaching learning-to-learn skills not for teaching vocabulary (Steinberg.1987; Oxford and Scarcella,1994). Williams (1987) proposes that pre-teaching vocabulary probably needs that the words to be learned in semantically and topically connected set so that word meaning and background knowledge expand simultaneously. Zimmerman (1997) mentions that direct vocabulary teaching focusing on semantic mapping as an acquisition strategy is considerably more effective than vocabulary acquisition activities that teach only words rather than strategies for acquiring words.

According to Wallace (1992), one very common type of pre-reading task is “brain storming”. This usually takes the form of present in the class a specific key word or key concept.

Students are then asked to say words and concepts they personally connote with the keyword or words provided by the teacher. Brainstorming has many merits as a classroom procedure. First, it needs minimum teacher preparation; second, it indulges with learners considerable freedom to bring their own previous

experience and opinions to bear on a particular issue; and third, it can include all the students. No student feels threatened need feel threatened when any word other than his/hers is accepted and added to the collection. For example, these are the kinds of associations which might be called up by the key word money: 'coin', 'bank', 'poverty', 'pay day', 'interest', 'purse', and etc. These indicate reflect a variety of categories and levels of generalization. However, the beginning random association can be categorized 11. The outcome this kind of task resembles what has been called "semantic mapping".

## 2.12. Significance and Purpose of the Study

The current research offers a new perspective on reading comprehension by considering the effect of using L1 in pre-reading tasks of schema activation. Therefore it can contribute to the bulk of the research that will be done in this domain in the future.

This study has more of a practical aspect than theoretical. Due to its direct effect on the way English is taught in Iran's educational system, it's quite necessary to seek an answer to the question presented by this research.

First and foremost, this study addresses one of the most important issues in the EFL classes in Iran's educational system; the students' collective failure in reading comprehension. The aforementioned problem impairs the students' progress in language learning and performance all throughout the junior high school up to the final stages of their higher education, namely academia.

The next point would be the importance of emphasizing L1 as a medium of instruction in L2 classrooms. Over the past few years, as a result of a growth in the number of language schools all around the country, more students are sent to these institutes to study English independently from their school subjects. However, the number of students with a successful background in language acquisition/learning is still quite unsatisfactory as many of these very same institutes, due to certain reasons, are either unable to improve the students' language proficiency or have a destructive role in changing their attitude toward learning a foreign language altogether. That being said, using L2 in attempting the schema activation task might, in fact, raise affective problems resulting in creating a high anxiety/low confidence atmosphere in the classroom.

Last but not least, schema activation and its related tasks have been chosen for the study because of their cognitive significance which is indisputably an important aspect of language acquisition/learning to deal with.

"Some students' apparent reading problems may be problems of insufficient background knowledge" (Carrell, 1988b:245). Where this is thought to be topic-related, it has been suggested that 'narrow reading' within the student's area of knowledge or interest may improve the condition (see Carrell & Eisterhold, 1983:86). Similarly, where schema shortcomings are culture-specific, it could be useful to provide local texts or texts which are developed from the readers' own experiences (op.cit.:85).

On the other hand, Carrel and Eisterhold (1983:89) also suggest that "every culture-specific interference problem dealt with in the classroom presents an opportunity to build new culture-specific schemata that will be available to the EFL/ESL student outside the classroom." Hence, rather than trying to nullify texts, it would seem more suitable to prepare students by "helping them build background knowledge on the topic prior to reading, through appropriate pre-reading activities" (Carrell, 1988 b:245).

First, it is important to understand here that using L1 is not taken for granted, but it is resorted to when there is a need for it such as explaining difficult terms and some grammatical points with some sort of comparison to L1 counterparts. As for the amount of L1 used for this purpose, the time, the place and the manner, it may have to do with how successful the teacher is in conveying the message and when he needs to clarify certain constructions, as well as the different learner styles and abilities.

Atkinson (1987), states that using L1 might be helpful for three reasons: Translation is preferred by learners, and it helps them to express their feelings. Also, building on differences between the L1 and the L2 through translation helps to prevent negative transfer. Furthermore, it is a valuable technique for saving class time. He then identifies the following uses for L1, which include: checking comprehension, giving instructions, enhancing co-operation among learners and improving presentation and reinforcement.

More than that, a comparison of English and the mother tongue might be an useful experience. In other words, when similarities and differences of both languages are found, the target language learning is enhanced.

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1. The Design of the Study

The current research was a true experimental study as it included a pre-test and post-test which was administered to an experimental group and control group after the former had received the intended treatment and the latter the placebo.

### 3.2. Participants

The participants of the study included 50 students, aged between 16 to 17, attending the second grade of high school which can be interpreted as intermediate level. The subjects were randomly selected and sampled. The subjects' background and experience in learning English must be taken in to consideration also.

### 3.3. Materials

The instruments of the study included an OPT (Oxford Placement Test), pre-test and a post-test in reading comprehension and the subjects' EFL course book of the second grade of high school.

OPT is a standardized and widely known and employed placement test which is published by Oxford University Press and consists of items of several types in order to measure the students' level.

The pretest and post-test of the study were similar in form, both consisting of multiple choice, short answer questions and true/false items. The subjects' performance on the test was calculated out of 20.

The EFL course book of the second grade of high school consisted of 7 units each including a vocabulary introduction section, a reading passage, with comprehension questions, structure and grammar lessons, speaking tasks and pronunciation lessons. Based on the content of the book, the structure of its passages and the level of vocabulary, it was deemed to be of a pre-intermediate to intermediate level.

### 3.4. Procedure

First an OPT (Oxford Placement Test) was administered to the sample population in order to set a balance in the level of the participants. Those who scored the highest and lowest were removed from the sample.

The subjects were randomly divided into two groups namely experimental and control, for the former to receive the intended treatment and the latter the placebo. However before the process began, a pretest in the form of a reading comprehension test including multiple choice, short answer questions and true/false items was administered and the result recorded.

The procedure of treatment took 7 sessions each lasting 60 minutes during the beginning 10 minutes of which the experimental group received the treatment in the form of schema activation tasks in L1 as a warm-up exercise before engaging the reading comprehension activity while the control group received what the researcher had assigned as a placebo in the form of introducing synonyms/ antonyms for the new words by writing them on the board as a pre-reading activity.

As a warm-up activity, the reader wrote a select number of words taken from the passage in pairs on the board, encouraging the students to figure out the relation between each pair in L1. The relation of the pairs ranged from synonym to metonymy to semantic relations based on the meaning of both. A metonymy is a semantic relationship that pertains to the parts of an object referred to by a word; for example, for the word car, both engine and wheels are metonymies because they refer to parts of a car.

At the end of the duration of the treatment, a post-test with a similar structure to the pre-test was administered to measure the progress of the participants. The results were then recorded to be compared with the pre-test. The mean of the scores of the two groups in both pretest and post-test were finally compared in order to see which group had performed better.

### 3.5. Methods of Analyzing Data

A T-test was run to show the difference between the means of the two groups. Then a one-way ANCOVA formula was applied to show the degree of progress from pre-test to posttest in each group.

## 4. Results

### 4.1. 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 (4.1.) shows the descriptive analysis for the Experimental (+L1) and the Control (-L1) groups of the study:

Table 4.1. Descriptive analysis of the data of the Groups of the study.

				Std.	Error
	L1	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean
Reading	+L1	25	17.7200	1.88237	.37647
	-L1	25	14.5600	2.64701	.52940

As is indicated in table (4.1.), the number of participants has been 25 in each group ( $N_{EX} = 25$ ;  $N_{CON} = 25$ ). The mean for the experimental group scores was shown to be 17.7200 ( $\bar{X}_{EX} = 17.7200$ ) as compared to the mean for the control group scores which was 14.5600 ( $\bar{X}_{POE} = 14.5600$ ). As for the standard deviations obtained for the experimental group, there seems to be more variability among the control group scores than the scores in the experimental group. This may give an image of the participants' scores being more homogenous after conducting the treatment of the study (treating with L1 texts).

#### 4.2. The Inferential Analysis of the Data

This section focuses of the inferential analysis of the obtained data of this study. Such analysis was done using the SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Science) from which the 'Compare Means', 'Independent Samples Test' for calculating the t value, also, 'General Linear Model' and 'Univariate' windows for calculating the One-Way ANCOVA were selected and used.

Table 4.2. The T-Test result of the study

		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Reading	Equal variances assumed	6.047	.018	4.864	48	.000
	Equal variances not assumed			4.864	43.330	.000

As is indicated in table (4.2.), the t-value of the study was calculated between the posttests of reading the participant in the experimental and the control groups. The observed t value was calculated as to be 4.864 ( $t_{obs} = 4.864$ ), and the degree of freedom was 43.330 ( $df = 43.330$ ). The reason why the degree of freedom here was not calculated based on the common formula of  $df = N-1$  was that the SPSS calculated the degree of freedom while considering the variances of the participant posttest groups as unequal instead of equal. Finally, the level of significance was calculated as to be 0.00 ( $p = 0.00$ ) which has been used in interpreting the data for the rejection or support of the hypothesis of the study in the next section.

The next inferential analysis of the data of this study was related to the degree of relationship between the pretest and the posttest of reading in each participant group. This was indicated by calculating the Pearson Product Moment Correlation as well as by analyzing the Covariance between the pretest and the posttest scores in each group of the study. The results have been illustrated in the covariance table (4.3) and the table (4.4) below:

Table (4.3): The One-Way ANCOVA table between the pretest and the posttest scores of the experimental group of the study

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	199.847 <sup>a</sup>	1	199.847	66.816	.000
Intercept	5.825	1	5.825	1.948	.176
Posex	199.847	1	199.847	66.816	.000
Error	68.793	23	2.991		
Total	4572.000	25			

Corrected Total	268.640	24
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According to table (4.3.), the covariance between the two sets of pretest and posttest scores in the experimental group is 66.816 ( $F = 66.816$ ).

Table 4.4. The One-Way ANCOVA table between the pretest and the posttest scores of the control group of the study

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	75.108 <sup>a</sup>	1	75.108	38.345	.000
Intercept	.320	1	.320	.163	.690
Poscon	75.108	1	75.108	38.345	.000
Error	45.052	23	1.959		
Total	6173.000	25			
Corrected Total	120.160	24			

According to table (4.4.), the covariance between the two sets of pretest and posttest scores in the control group is 38.345 ( $F = 38.345$ ).

A comparison between the F value in the experimental group and the F value in the control group is that the degree of statistical distance between the pretest and posttest scores in the experimental group is higher than the control group which is representative of the closeness of the scores in the control group; thus, it can be concluded that the control group of the study has undergone a significant change as a result of being treated without L1 texts.

The significance level was calculated between the pretest and the posttest of the experimental and the control groups of the study were calculated as to be 0.000 ( $\text{Sig}_{2\text{-tailed}} = 0.000$ ) which means that the results of the effect of the independent variable of the study (+L1) were not by chance but because of the effect of the treatment.

### Results of Hypotheses Testing

In this section, the results of testing the hypotheses of the study have been presented and elaborated. In order to give a detailed analysis, attempts were made to take advantage of the results of the study (see section 4.1 here) as evidence to determine the rejection or support of the hypothesis. In addition, the rejection or support of the hypothesis was justified by explaining the consequences of such rejection or support, i.e. what would happen if the hypothesis of the current study was rejected or supported. Before analyzing the hypothesis, it will be repeated below:

Hypothesis (H0): Using L1 does not affect Iranian high school students' reading comprehension ability. The hypothesis of the study which targeted the effect of using L1 texts on Iranian EFL learners' reading ability was rejected. Evidence from various sources of data could help to verify the rejection. The results of the T-Test of the study (see table 4.2.) could be employed to confirm this analysis, accordingly, the observed t value calculated by the SPSS was 4.864 ( $t_{\text{obs}} = 4.864$ ) while the critical value of t determined on the basis of considering the 2-tailed significance level of ( $P = 0.05$ ) was 2.02 ( $t_{\text{crit}} = 2.02$ ). Thus, the observed t was higher than the critical t and high enough to reject the null hypothesis of this study.

The second evidence to verify the rejection of the hypothesis was the value of the level of significance calculated by the SPSS to be 0.000 ( $\text{Significance}_{2\text{-tailed}} = 0.000$ ). Since this value was lower than 0.05 (based on the SPSS regulations), the difference between the means of the pretest and the posttest of each group of the study could not be by chance, and thus, the rejection of the hypothesis of the study indicated that using L1 texts would enhance the reading ability of the participants of the experimental group of the study.

The rejection of the hypothesis of the study could also be supported by showing the experimental group participants' progress from the pretest to the posttest. Tables (4.3.) and (4.4.) provided the evidence for this support. According to the One-Way ANCOVA tables the covariance value between the pretest and the posttest scores in the experimental group was significantly higher than that of the control group. This meant that the posttest scores of reading were significantly distant from the pretest scores in the experimental group and indicated that using L1 texts affected the participants' reading ability and caused the posttest scores to stand higher. A further evidence for the rejection of the hypothesis of the study was the control group participants' lack of progress of from the pretest to the posttest. Tables (4.4.) provided the evidence for this support. According to the table, the covariance value between the pretest and the posttest scores in the control group was lower than that of the experimental group. This meant that the posttest scores of reading were closer to the pretest scores in the control group; and indicated that not using L1 texts did not result in the participants' reading ability and caused the posttest scores to stand as close as possible.

## Discussion

### 5.0.Introduction

In this section, the general and specific findings of the research will be discussed. There were a number of limitations that proved to be quite an obstacle in conducting the research at an optimal level which will also be brought to attention.

Accordingly, once these obstacles are removed, the future investigations will hopefully lead to different results. Suggestions for further researches are also included in this section which proposes alternative views toward the research and its subject matter.

### 5.1. General Discussion

In the process of reading, "comprehension of a message entails drawing information from both the message and the internal schemata until sets are reconciled as a single schema or message" (Anderson et al. in Hudson 1982:187). It is also claimed that "the first part of a text activates a schema... which is either confirmed or disconfirmed by what follows" (Wallace 1992:33) but the process begins much earlier than this: "The environment sets up powerful expectations: we are already prepared for certain genres but not for others before we open a newspaper, a scholarly journal or the box containing some machine we have just bought." (Swales 1990:88)

The reading process, therefore, involves identification of genre, formal structure and topic, all of which activate schemata and allow readers to comprehend the text (Swales 1990:89). In this, it is assumed that readers not only possess all the relevant schemata, but also that these schemata actually are activated. Where this is not the case, then some disruption of comprehension may occur. In fact, it is likely that "there will never be a total coincidence of schemas between writer and reader" (Wallace 1992:82) such that coherence is the property of individual readers.

Reading comprehension is arguably one of the most important aspects of language teaching. One that many students lag behind in due to many factors such as lack of proper preparation before the task begins.

It was proven that the group with the treatment in schema activation in L1 had performed better on the reading comprehension test than the one following a traditional routine of preparation.

### 5.2. Implications of the Study

The findings of this study, as was mentioned before, can proceed to have a decisive effect on the way reading comprehension is approached in high schools of the country.

Many students and teachers are now aware that the traditional approaches to teaching and preparing students for reading comprehension no longer work. As a result of this, new approaches and theories are being considered as replacements.

A major difference between the present study and what many institutions and free-lance teachers are applying to their classes is that unlike what is being done in those situations, which is mainly a trial-and-error procedure where learners' time and the institution's resources are wasted, this study has in fact conducted and applied a scientific approach to research and the results are professionally reliable.



What this study, along with many others, has proven is that using L1 in L2 classes can facilitate learning and save time and energy on both fronts. But more important than that is the important role of schema activation in helping students achieve their goals in reading comprehension tasks.

It is the hope and goal of the researcher that such practices of schema activation can further be used in TEFL context in order to enhance the performance of learners across the TEFL contexts in the country.

### 5.3. Limitations of the Study

This study, due to its nature and subject, faced a number of limitations first and foremost of which was the limitation of time. The schools which the subjects of the study were attending at the time of the research had not been able to provide the researcher with ample enough time devoted to applying the treatment. Therefore, the researcher believes that the study could have benefited from a longer period of treatment which was the original intention.

Another important factor that should be considered here is the background knowledge and previous language learning experiences. Some of the subjects could have been attending outside English language classes which would definitely affect their performance on the test.

It was also the intention of the researcher to conduct a research whose subject consisted of both sexes, as gender is often considered an important learner factor, but unfortunately in the short time that the research was granted, it proved unlikely and impractical.

### 5.4. Suggestions for further Research

Having mentioned the limitations and obstacles that the researcher had encountered, it couldn't be helped but think that similar researches viewing the issue from a different angle could possibly develop different results which might lead to more insight into the notion at hand.

The participants of the study were high female high school students and gender has always been an important learner factor in the field of EFL. Although no research has claimed conclusive proof that one gender can or has outperformed the other, there certainly exist specific differences in the way each approaches issues in learning. Therefore, a study of a similar nature on the opposite sex or a mixture of both might lead to better or at least different results.

Time, the greatest limitation of this research, is another factor that could change the outcome. Perhaps a longer period of time for the treatment to take effect can lead to different results.

The researcher would also like to point out that the level of proficiency of the learners could present an alternative point of view. Whereas the intermediate level has its own merits and demerits, advanced and elementary levels could be worked on as well for perhaps a comprehensive and thorough procedure.

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# MOTIVATION AND ATTITUDE TOWARDS LEARNING ENGLISH: A CASE STUDY OF RASHT ISLAMIC AZAD UNIVERSITY

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## Abstract

The current study aimed at investigating the two most important social psychological variables: The motivation and attitude towards learning English. A random sample of 145 BA and MA students majoring English at Islamic Azad University, Rasht, Iran was surveyed using the Attitude/ Motivation Test Battery. The eight domains used to achieve the aim of the study were: (1) interest in foreign languages (2) parental encouragement (3) motivational intensity (4) degree of integrativeness (5) degree of instrumentality (6) attitudes towards learning English (7) attitudes toward English-speaking people and (8) desire to learn English. The findings showed that there is a relationship between motivation, attitude, and language learning. In addition, the findings indicated that there is not any difference between male and female and also undergraduate and postgraduate students' motivation and attitude toward learning English at Islamic Azad University of Rasht. Finally, the study reported some pedagogical implications that would help tap the students' motivation and attitude.

**Key Words:** Attitude, English learning, intrinsic, instrumental integrative, extrinsic, motivation

## Introduction

Language learning is regarded as the cornerstone of human existence. Knowing the language can help us to express our opinions, hopes, and even our dreams (Tavil, 2009). In a foreign language context, the learning process is affected by various factors such as motivation, attitudes, anxiety, learning achievements, aptitudes, intelligence, age, and personalities, (Gardner, 1960; Lehmann, 2006, cited in Shams, 2008). Among these, affective factors such as motivation and attitude are very decisive and essential contributing. Therefore, the instructors and educators should take these factors into account. The progressive works by Gardner and Lambert since 1959 onwards are dependable proofs that these factors have a great bearing.

Motivation is the driving force by which humans achieve their goals. In fact, it is the combination of effort plus desire to achieve the goal of learning the language which leads to a conscious decision to act, and which gives rise to a period of sustained intellectual and/or physical effort in order to attain previous set goals. Second and foreign language motivation has been researched in different paradigms and numerous language learning contexts in the past decades (Dörnyei, 2005). As we all know, motivation is one of the most important factors that will influence students' English achievements or performance. It has a close relationship with students' success or failure in English teaching in college.

Gardner and Lambert (1972) mentioned two types, or better to say, two orientations for motivation: integrative-oriented motivation and instrumental-oriented motivation. The former applies to cases when

language is learned as a desire to integrate into the target language community; and the latter refers to cases where language is learned with the intention of achieving a certain external reason like getting a job. Integrative motivation refers to a wish, by a learner, to integrate into, become an accepted member of the community whose language that person is learning.

Harmer (1983) categorized motivation into two major types; extrinsic and intrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation deals with behavior performed for its own sake, in order to experience pleasure and satisfaction, such as a sense of achievement, self-esteem, pride in solving the problem, enjoyment of the class, being able to use the languages desired. On the other hand, extrinsic motivation involves performing a behavior as a means to an end and usually involves other consequences of success on the task: such as prizes for doing well, getting the job of one's choice, a higher position, gaining some certificate on a test score.

Another influential affective factor influencing the success of students in learning a language is attitude. Holmes (1992: 346) states that "people develop attitudes towards languages which reflect their views about those who speak the languages, and the contexts and functions with which they are associated. Kara (2009) stated that attitudes towards learning besides opinions and beliefs have an obvious influence on students' behaviors and consequently on their performance.

Wenden (1991) suggested a broader definition of the concept "attitudes". He says that the term attitude contains three components namely, cognitive, affective and behavioral. A cognitive component is made up of the beliefs and ideas or opinions about the object of the attitude. The affective one refers to the feeling and emotions that one has towards an object, 'likes' or 'dislikes', 'with' or 'against'. Finally, the behavioral component refers to one consisting of actions or behavioral intentions towards the object.

### Literature review

Motivation research had received much attention in the past decade. Results of research reported by Liuoliene and Metiuniene (2006, p.96) on second language learning motivation revealed that "students' wishes and needs to work independently depend on their motivation, attitude and responsibility. The higher motivation, the more autonomous learning students want to have in this learning process." They further concluded, learning motivation is a driving force in learning a foreign language.

Qashoa (2006) conducted a study among secondary school students in Dubai. The study aimed at (a) examining the students' instrumental and integrative motivation for learning English, and (b) recognizing the factors affecting learners' motivation. The findings showed that students have a higher degree of instrumentality than integrativeness. Also, the results indicated that difficulties with the subject (English) aspects such as vocabulary, structures and spelling were found to be the most de-motivating factors for the student.

Another study was that of Al-Quyadi (2000) who looked at Sana'a University English majors' motivation and attitudes towards learning English; it was carried out to investigate the psycho-sociological variables in the learning of English in the faculties of Sana'a in Yemen. The results showed that the students had a high level of both instrumental and integrative motivation toward the English language. With regard to their attitudes, the findings indicated that the students had positive attitudes towards the English language and the use of English in the Yemeni social and educational contexts.

In the non-Arab EFL context, Vijchulata and Lee (1985) investigated the students' motivation for learning English in University Putra Malaysia (UPM). The findings revealed that UPM students are both integratively and instrumentally oriented towards learning the English language. Vaezi (2008) claimed that Iranian students had very high motivation and positive attitudes towards learning English and they were more instrumentally motivated. Whereas Moivaziri (2008) claimed that students in her study were highly motivated in both instrumental and integrative orientation.

In an experiment, Hassanpur (1999) administered a background questionnaire and an inventory for learning strategy to 102 science students studying English as a special course at Shiraz University. Although the strategy mean of students with positive attitude was higher than that of those with negative attitude, the difference was not found significant ( $P < .05$ ). In her study she found that integratively-motivated students employ more memory and cognitive strategies than instrumentally-motivated ones.

Carreira (2011) conducted a study on Japanese children's motivation for studying the language and found a developmental decline in intrinsic motivation for studying in English lessons. However, as Dornyei and Schmidt (2001) have pointed out, L2 motivation research has reached maturity. Motivational basis of second language acquisition is a fertile ground for research. In 2009, Dornyei and Ushioda confirmed that L2 motivation

is currently in the process of being radically re-conceptualized and re-theorized in the context of contemporary notions of self and identity.

Makrami (2010) examined the effects of motivation and attitude on Saudi university learners in English for specific purposes (ESP) compared to a sample of students learning English for general purposes (EGP). Results showed that the learners' achievement on English, measured by their scores on the final English test, correlated more with the attitude, motivation, and anxiety of the EGP group than the ESP group.

Shams (2008) conducted a study attempting to investigate students' attitudes, motivation and anxiety towards learning of English. The findings underlined that the students had affirmative attitudes and high enthusiasm towards English. This also highlighted that most of them showed positive attitudes towards English language and its learning which, in turn, emphasized the value of English language efficiency in the daily life.

Momani (2009) also investigated the secondary stage students' attitudes towards learning English as a foreign language and their achievements in reading comprehension. The findings showed that the respondents had neutral positive attitudes toward learning English. Also, there was a strong correlation between the students' attitudes toward learning English and their performance in reading comprehension.

Regarding the gender variable, Fakeye (2010) investigated the correlation between attitude and achievement in English among 400 senior secondary students. The findings revealed that there was a significant relationship between attitude and achievement. Additionally, it was explored that students' attitude is not gender-related. Thus, there was not a statistically significant difference in the attitudes of male and female students.

Musa (1985) investigated the EFL students' attitude toward studying English in the United Arab Emirates using a five-point scale questionnaire. The findings underline that students had positive attitudes and extreme eagerness towards learning English; they valued English language efficiency in the daily life. Besides Musa, Suliman (2006) studied the students' attitudes towards and motivation for learning English in the UAE state secondary school. The findings reveal that the UAE students had a higher degree of instrumental motivation and that students had unfavorable attitudes towards learning certain areas of the language.

Xiong (2010) found in her study that the girls were more interested in English and their motivations in learning English were stronger than the boys'. Many of the girls answered in her study that they liked English or were interested in the language while most of the boys were not interested in English, which shows that the school girls' internal motivation is stronger than the school boys' when studying a second language.

### Statement of the Problem

There are many factors that might cause students' low proficiency in English. One might be attributed to students' motivation towards the English language. The other one is students' attitude toward English as a second language. Students of English as a foreign language in Iran generally graduate with different capabilities. Such levels of success can be attributed to many factors among which motivation and attitude towards English have a crucial role. For students of English as a foreign language in Iran, for example, learning English has always been a great challenge due to the limited contact with target-language speakers and the lack of opportunities to practice English in their everyday lives. Many students are only exposed to English in the classroom. Most of the students in Iran are found to be passive and unenthusiastic in speaking English. In this context, motivation is an essential factor that plays a major role in achieving many fundamental goals in a student's academic life. It is the pushing wheel of the learning vehicle that students ride to reach their educational objectives. Learners need positive attitude and high motivation to study English and that may influence their achievement in English as a foreign language.

Rasht Islamic Azad University was established in 1361 and now with 13000 students is one of the biggest university branches in Guilan province. Students are studying different kinds of fields of study in Rasht Azad University. English is one of the field in which many students are studying. English itself consists of four branches including, literature, teaching, translation, and linguistics. In this study we want to investigate motivation and attitude of the undergraduate and postgraduate students of teaching and translation group to see whether they are motivated to learn English and also to gauge attitude toward learning English. In addition, the paper tries to find out if there is a difference in terms of motivation and attitude in undergraduate and postgraduate students (male and female)

### Research question

To achieve the objectives, the following corresponding questions were formulated for the present study:

RQ1: Is there a relationship between motivation or attitudes and learning English?

RQ2: Is there any difference between male and female students' motivation in learning English?

RQ3: Is there any difference between male and female students' attitude in learning English?

RQ4: Is there any differences between undergraduates' and postgraduates' motivation and attitude level in learning English?

### **Hypothesis of the study**

HO1: There is no relationship between motivation or attitudes and learning English

HO2: There is no difference between male and female university students in terms of their motivation and attitude toward English learning.

HO3: There is a difference between undergraduates' and postgraduates' students of Islamic Azad University motivation and attitude towards learning English.

### **Methodology**

#### **Design of the study**

This study adopted a descriptive and inferential survey design to investigate the motivation and attitude of English teaching and translation students towards learning English.

#### **Participants**

In this study 100 undergraduate and 45 postgraduate university students both male and female were selected, sampling from the total population of English language students of Islamic Azad University of Rasht, during academic year 2014/2015. The 145 participants were composed of 35 males and 110 females.

#### **Instrumentation**

The motivational questionnaire was adopted from the Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) (Gardner, 1985), (see Appendix) with integrative and instrumental orientation scale. The questionnaire consisted of 6-point Likert scale format ranging from 'Strongly agree' to 'Strongly disagree'. Some items in the questionnaire were either modified or removed to suit the study population. Since the students came from almost the same academic background, they were all students of English teaching and translation, the questionnaire was administered in English and they were given 30 minutes to complete it.

The questionnaire consisted of two parts: The first part included some general information of respondents: gender, age, year of study, credit unit they passed, previous term average, fields of the study. The students' demographic data in this study served not only as general information, but also as a criterion to categorize the respondents for later analysis. The second part contained the questionnaire items.

#### **Data collection Procedures**

The questionnaire was administered to MA TEFL students as well as BA students of teaching and translation groups of Islamic Azad University of Rasht. The questionnaire was administered in English because all of the participants were students of English literature and translation. The Participants were asked to check the question carefully, read thoroughly, and if there were some questions regarding the comprehension of the questions, they were allowed to ask either in native language or target language. The allotted time to fill the questionnaire was 30 minutes. The Participants had enough time to complete the task.

AMTB items are made up of 12 scales: However, as the major focus in this study was on different types of motivation (intrinsic and extrinsic), orientations (instrumental and integrative) and the students' attitudes towards the language, speech community and its culture, some of the items of AMTB included were either removed (including English class anxiety, English teacher evaluation, English course evaluation and, English use anxiety) or modified to suit the study population. Accordingly, only 8 domains were included in the statistical procedure (including interest in foreign languages, parental encouragement, motivational intensity, attitudes towards learning English, attitudes towards English-speaking people, integrative orientation, instrumental orientation, and desire to learn English).

#### **Data analysis**

The participants' responses to the questionnaire were analyzed in terms of descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics (mean, frequency & standard deviation) were carried out for all items involved in the study and the inferential tool used was Mann-Whitney U test.

### Result

The main purpose of the current research was to investigate EFL students' attitudes and motivation towards English language learning at Azad University in Rasht. Moreover, it aimed to examine the possible differences between male and female EFL students in terms of their motivation and attitudes of learning English language and whether there was a difference in motivation and attitude toward learning English between postgraduate and undergraduate students of Islamic Azad University of Rasht.

Descriptive statistics including means and standard deviations were computed for the items of the questionnaire (the eight sections). Additionally, Mann Whitney U test was run on the results of the questionnaire (male and female) and also level of education (undergraduate and postgraduate) to examine the possible difference between Iranian EFL males and females' motivation and attitudes toward learning the English language and also if there was a difference between undergraduates' and postgraduates' motivation and attitude toward learning English. This section presents the results of data analyses in order to provide answers to the above questions and to test the research hypotheses.

To analyze the Likert-scale responses for general attitudes and motivation towards learning English, frequency distributions and percentages were determined through the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS, version 22)

Table 1. Summary of Item Statistics for Correlations of items

	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Range	Maximum Minimum	Variance	N of Items
Item Means	4.128	1.224	5.684	4.461	4.645	1.452	46
Inter-Item Correlations	.106	-.461	.717	1.178	-1.556	.043	46

As it is observed, the total mean of the whole items of the questionnaire came to 4.128 which indicated that the positive answers were more than the negative answers. The total standard deviation of all items equaled 1.2 and the inter item correlation was computed as .106. The description of the eight domains of motivation and attitude test battery were analyzed and the questionnaire items are provided in the appendix.

The first domain which was interest in foreign language was descriptively analyzed. The total mean of the positive answers of this domain came to 5.125 with the standard deviation of 1.707 which shows a relatively consistence performance on the questionnaire. The total mean of the negative answers was achieved as 1.703 with the standard deviation of 1.377. The chi square for positive items equaled 4.615 and it was 0.336 for negative items. It can be derived that more participants answered positive items rather than the negative ones. This indicates that most participants had interest in the foreign language that is English in this case.

The total mean of the positive answers of the second domain that is desire to learn the foreign language came to 4.858 with the standard deviation of 1.286. The total mean of the negative answers was achieved as 2.376 with the standard deviation of 1.704. The chi square for positive and negative items Chi ( $X^2$ ) = 262.767. This shows that generally the participants have a desire to learn English with a higher mean of 4.858 compared with the mean of 1.286 for negative answers.

The third domain is parental encouragement. As it is observed, the total mean of the items equaled 4.114. Most participants agree that their parents give priority to English. This item had the highest mean score in parental encouragement items which was equaled 3.496.

The fourth domain which is motivational intensity has some positive and negative items. The total mean score of the positive answers equaled 4.341 which was relatively higher than the total mean of the negative answers which equaled 3.496.

Domain five belonged to attitudes towards learning English. The total mean score for the positive part of the domain came to 5.271 and for the negative part 2.188. This shows that most of the sample participants had a positive attitude toward the English language.

Domain six is attitudes towards English-speaking people. The overall mean score for this domain came to 4.558 with the standard deviation of 1.31. The highest mean belongs to item in which the respondents like to have more English friends. The lowest mean belonged to item which mentioned English speaking people are

very friendly and easy to get along with. Generally, most of the participants preferred to have a native English friend.

Domain eight is the degree of integrative motivation. This domain had a total mean of 6.281. The highest mean of 5.26 belonged to the item which stated they like to read magazines and newspapers in other languages.

Having compared instrumental with integrative motivation in terms of their total mean score, we observed that integrative motivation received a higher mean of 6.281 than that of instrumental with a mean of 4.721.

### Result of hypotheses testing

The Durbin-Watson correlation test was administered to find out the correlation between motivation attitude and language learning. In addition to find out whether male and female and also undergraduate and postgraduate students' motivation and attitude are in the same level Mann-Whitney U test was conducted.

The hypothesis proposed in this study was:

H01: There is no relationship between motivation or attitude and learning English among the students of Islamic Azad university of Rasht.

H02: There is no difference between male and female students of Islamic Azad University in terms of their motivation and attitude and English learning.

H03: There is a difference between undergraduate and postgraduate students of Islamic Azad University regarding their motivation and attitude toward learning English.

Regarding the first hypothesis, the following analysis was conducted.

Table 2. Durbin-Watson Correlation Test between Learning English and Motivation and Attitude

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics						Durbin-Watson
					R Change	Square F Change	df1	df2	Sig. Change	F	
1	.712 <sup>a</sup>	.506	.500	.57413	.506	75.879	1	74	.000	2.073	

a. Predictors: (Constant), independent

b. Dependent Variable: depend

The Durbin-Watson statistic is a test statistics used to detect the presence of correlations between values separated here as motivation and attitude and language learning. As it is obvious from the analysis, the significance level equalled .000 which is meaningful. .000 is smaller than .05.

Also R = 0.712 which shows there is a cause and effect relationship between the variables. The Durbin Watson indicates 2.073 which prove the existence of the relationship between motivation and attitude with language learning. Accordingly, the first null hypothesis is rejected and it is concluded that such relationship exists. To answer the first research question, we can state that there is a relationship between attitude and motivation and learning a foreign language.

Table 3. Mean Ranks of Male and Female Participants

	gen	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
	1	12	42.13	505.50
independent	2	62	36.60	2269.50
	Total	74		

The Ranks table is the first table that provides information regarding the output of the actual Mann-Whitney U test. It shows mean rank and sum of ranks for the two groups tested in terms of their gender.

Table 4. Mann-Whitney U Test for Relation between Gender and Motivation and Attitude

	independent
Mann-Whitney U	316.500
Wilcoxon W	2269.500
Z	-.814
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.415
a. Grouping Variable: gen	

Table 4 shows the actual significance value of the test. Specifically, the Test Statistics table provides the test statistic, *U* statistic, as well as the asymptotic significance (2-tailed) *p*-value.

Regarding the second hypothesis of the study, as the first table above shows, the gender was regarded as an independent variable which was taken as 1 and 2 to represent different genders of male and female. The ranks of the scores were compared with each other, and in the second table a Mann-Whitney U test was conducted. The table shows the significance level as .415 which is smaller than .05 and proves the null hypothesis that there is no significant difference between males and females in terms of their attitude and motivation toward learning English.

Accordingly, to answer the second and third research questions, based on the second hypotheses result we can state that there is no difference between male and females regarding their motivation and attitude.

In order to investigate the variable of level of education (undergraduate students vs. postgraduate students) for third hypothesis, the following table explains if there is any relationship between the education level and motivation and attitude toward learning English. At first it was necessary to have the rank table to gain information on the output of mean rank and sum of ranks for the two groups tested in terms of their education.

Table 5. Mean Ranks of graduate and Postgraduate Participants

	Education	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Independent	MA	35.2	304
	BA	64.8	333.978
	Total	145	

Table 6. Mann-Whitney U Test for Relation between Education and Attitude and Motivation

independent
-------------



Mann-Whitney U	418.98
Wilcoxon W	4648.0
Z	-.419
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.213

a. Grouping Variable: education level

Table 5 shows the relationship between the variables of education level and motivation and attitudes of the population. Education was regarded as an independent variable. The ranks of the scores were compared with each other. In the second table 6 a Mann-Whitney U test was conducted, indicating that the significance level was computed as .213. This amount is also smaller than .05 which ascertains that the population of the study with different educational backgrounds did not show any significant difference in their attitudes and motivation. As such there was no relationship between the level of education and the attitude and motivation of the participants in the present study.

### Discussion

This section provides answers to the research questions. The first question of the study investigated the EFL students' attitudes and motivation towards English language learning at Azad University in Rasht. And the second question was to find possible differences among males and females regarding their attitudes and motivation. As the analysis shows, the significance level equaled .000 which is meaningful. .000 is smaller than .05. Also  $R = 0.712$  which shows there is a cause and effect relationship between the variables. The Durbin Watson indicates 2.073 which proves the existence of the relationship between motivation and attitude with language learning. Accordingly, the first null hypothesis is rejected and it is concluded that such relationship exists. To answer the first research question, we can state that there is a relationship between attitude and motivation and learning a foreign language.

The results demonstrated that integrative motivation received a higher mean of 5.181 than that of instrumental with a mean of 4.721. Most of the participants preferred to have a native English friend. More participants have a positive attitude toward English when we compare the positive total mean as 5.271 with that of negative mean as 2.188. Regarding participants' motivational intensity. The total mean score of the positive answers equaled 4.341 which was relatively higher than the total mean of the negative answers. This shows that generally the participants have a desire to learn English with the higher mean of 4.858 compared with the mean of 1.286 for negative answers. Most participants had interest in the foreign language. To answer the second and third research questions Mann-Whitney U test was conducted which showed the significance level as .415 which is smaller than .05 and proves the null hypothesis that there is no significant difference between males and females in terms of their attitude and motivation toward learning English.

### Conclusion

The present study attempted to analyze Rasht Islamic Azad University students' motivation and attitude towards learning English. The study revealed that very few of the learners possessed negative attitudes towards learning English, majority of them possessed moderately positive attitudes and few had strongly positive attitudes.

The participants of the study had moderate levels of motivation, integrative and instrumental orientations. It was also disclosed that there was no difference in male and female motivation and attitude towards learning English.

Although the results of the present study cannot be generalized to other language learners due to its being a small-scale research study, the study can be considered to be a first step in analyzing students' attitudes, motivation and respect to their gender. Teachers or researchers interested in attitudes and motivation can benefit from the present study in developing insights into the attitudes, motivation and gender differences, and

the study can be exploited to investigate similar research questions in larger number of students with different methodological tools and it may also encourage researchers to pursue results that can be generalized to all language learners studying in Iran.

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## Appendix

### Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB)

Gender : Male                      Female Age : .....Year of study : .....

Dear Student: The following questions ask about your motivation in and attitude toward learning the English language. Remember there is no right or wrong answer; just answer as accurately as possible. Use the scales below to answer the questions.

Numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 indicate the degree of your agreement / disagreement with the ideas given. Please mark only ONE choice:

1= Strongly disagree, 2=Moderately disagree, 3= Slightly disagree, 4=Slightly agree, 5=Moderately agree, 6= Strongly agree

Table A. Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB)

1. I wish I could speak many foreign languages perfectly.	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. My parents try to help me to learn English.	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. I don't pay much attention to the feedback I receive in my English class.	1	2	3	4	5	6
4. Learning English is really great.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5. If Iran had no contact with English-speaking countries, it would be a great loss.	1	2	3	4	5	6
6. Studying English is important because it will allow me to be more at ease with people who speak English.	1	2	3	4	5	6
7. I have a strong desire to know all aspects of English.	1	2	3	4	5	6
8. My English class is really a waste of time.	1	2	3	4	5	6
9. Studying English is important because it will be useful in getting a good job.	1	2	3	4	5	6
10. Studying foreign languages is not enjoyable.	1	2	3	4	5	6
11. I make a point of trying to understand all the English I see and hear.	1	2	3	4	5	6
12. Studying English is important because I will need it for my career.	1	2	3	4	5	6
13. Knowing English isn't really an important goal in my life.	1	2	3	4	5	6
14. I can't be bothered trying to understand the more complex aspects of English.	1	2	3	4	5	6
15. I hate English..	1	2	3	4	5	6
16. I wish I could read newspapers and magazines in many foreign languages.	1	2	3	4	5	6
17. My parents feel that it is very important for me to learn English.	1	2	3	4	5	6
18. I don't bother checking my assignments when I get them back from my English teacher.	1	2	3	4	5	6
19. I really enjoy learning English.	1	2	3	4	5	6
20. Most native English speakers are so friendly and easy to get along with.	1	2	3	4	5	6
21. Studying English is important because it will allow me to meet and converse with more and varied people	1	2	3	4	5	6
22. If it were up to me, I would spend all of my time learning English.	1	2	3	4	5	6
23. I really have no interest in foreign languages.	1	2	3	4	5	6
24. I keep up to date with English by working on it almost every day.	1	2	3	4	5	6

25. Studying English is important because it will make me more educated.	1	2	3	4	5	6
26. When it comes to English homework I just skim over it.	1	2	3	4	5	6
27. I'd rather spend my time on subjects other than English.	1	2	3	4	5	6
28. I wish I could have many native English speaking friends.	1	2	3	4	5	6
29. Studying English is very important because it will enable me to better understand and appreciate the English way of life.	1	2	3	4	5	6
30. I would really like to learn many foreign languages.	1	2	3	4	5	6
31. My parents feel that I should continue studying English all through my life	1	2	3	4	5	6
32. I put off my English homework as much as possible.	1	2	3	4	5	6
33. English is a very important part of the school program.	1	2	3	4	5	6
34. My parents have stressed the importance English will have me when I leave university.	1	2	3	4	5	6
35. I plan to learn as much English as possible.	1	2	3	4	5	6
36. I would like to know more native English speakers.	1	2	3	4	5	6
37. I really work hard to learn English.	1	2	3	4	5	6
38. To be honest, I really have no desire to learn English.	1	2	3	4	5	6
39. I think that learning English is dull.	1	2	3	4	5	6
40. I enjoy meeting people who speak foreign languages.	1	2	3	4	5	6
41. I love learning English.	1	2	3	4	5	6
42. Studying English is important because other people will respect me more if I know English.	1	2	3	4	5	6
43. When I have a problem understanding something in my English class, I always have my teacher for help.	1	2	3	4	5	6
44. I wish I were fluent in English.	1	2	3	4	5	6
45. Studying English is important because I will be able to interact more easily with speakers of English.	1	2	3	4	5	6
46. I tend to give up and not pay attention when I don't understand my English Teachers explanations of something.	1	2	3	4	5	6

# AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GESTURES AND SPEAKING SKILL FOR IRANIAN EFL LEARNERS

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## ABSTRACT

This study examined the effect of teaching English with gestures on the EFL Iranian school students' achievement in speaking. Forty Iranian EFL learners participated in this study. On an opt, they were divided into two groups: one control group and one experimental group. For two months, teaching with gestures was done on the experimental group as a treatment. Gestures were regarded as a treatment and as one of the common tools of the nonverbal communication. In the treatment, gestures were used to determine if they had an effect on the students' achievement in speaking. A speaking placement test was given to the experimental group and the control group as the pretest and the posttest, too. According to the results obtained by the statistical calculations, the effectiveness of the treatment was not very noticeable. This study suggests that teaching English with gestures cannot be a very effective technique in teaching English. However, they can help students develop some ways to overcome their communication problems to some extent; moreover, they can be regarded as their natural responses to the situations.

**KEYWORDS:** teaching English with gestures, speaking skills, nonverbal communication, speaking placement test

## Introduction

Today, virtually every book on communication explains how you communicate and miscommunicate when you fold your arms, cross your legs, stand, walk around, move your eyes and mouth, and so on (Brown, 1992). Babies enter the world of language through their eventual use of spontaneous hand movements that are taken as pointing and are responded to by someone in their environment (Orton, 2007). Language is a systematic means of communicating ideas or feelings by the use of conventionalized signs, sounds, gestures, or marks having understood meanings (Abedian, 2013). Therefore, it can be understood that gesture is one of the main ways to convey the meanings. Gestures are typically defined as symbolic movements related to ongoing talk or to the speaker's expressive intention (Gullberg, 2008). Nonverbal and verbal communication (i. e. gestures) are normally inseparable, which, for example, is why it may seem so difficult to use the telephone in a foreign language (Darn, 2005).

Gesture, as defined by Longman dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics (Richards, Platt & Platt, 1992), is "a movement of face or body which communicates meaning, such as nodding the head to mean agreement." Many spoken utterances are accompanied by gestures which support or add to their meaning. Many of the learned items may be easily forgotten after the class. It may be mentioned that the way of teaching

may be regarded as an important tool in this area. The study of the role of gestures in communication is part of the nonverbal communication. Moreover, gesture, as defined by Webster's new world college dictionary, is "a movement or movements collectively, of the body or of part of the body to express or emphasize ideas, emotions, etc."

One very obvious aspect of nonverbal behavior which helps to reflect power-solidarity is the physical distance among the concerned people, the subject matter of proxemics (Hudson, 1996). Eye contact is not only to be considered as a tool for teachers to convey messages but as a means to interpret the messages students can display nonverbally via their eyes, mimics and gestures (Zeki, 2009). Communicative style is a matter of language in the broadest sense, certainly verbal language (words), but also all other aspects of the complex bodily performance that constitutes political style (gestures, facial expressions, how people hold themselves and move, dress and hairstyle, and so forth) a successful leader's communicative style is not simply what makes him attractive to voters in a general way, it conveys certain values which can powerfully enhance the political message (Simpson, 2011). Learning-centered pedagogists do not believe in teaching language skills-listening, speaking, reading, and writing-either in isolation or in strict sequence, as advocated by language-centered pedagogists. The teacher is expected to integrate language skills wherever possible (Kumaravadivelu, 2006).

Apart from adapting their language, teachers also use physical movements and gestures (these are quite exaggerated), such as shrugging the shoulders for 'who cares?' or scratching the hand to show puzzlement (Harmer, 2007). Gee (2011) has stated that context includes the physical setting in which a communication takes place and everything in it; the bodies, eye gaze, gestures, and movements of those present; what has been said and done by those involved in the communication; any shared knowledge those have, including shared cultural knowledge. Acts of speech are physical acts which often involve the whole body, so pronunciation does not work in isolation from other factors. In addition to employing our voice, we also use eye movement, mime, and gesture (Schmitt, 2012). McNeill (2005, cited in Atkinson, 2011) showed that, along with expressing motion events through speech, speakers simultaneously gesture to co-express movement. English speakers often express manner of motion with complex manner verbs while producing a synchronized gesture. In Spanish-like languages, on the other hands, gestures used in such contexts synchronize with path verbs.

There have been very little work on the effect of using gestures in teaching English to the Iranian EFL learners/students on their achievement in speaking. This paper (Author, 2015) has been aimed to see that whether using gestures in teaching English can have an effect on Iranian EFL learners/students' achievement in speaking or not. Therefore, forty Iranian school students who were trying to learn English as a foreign language have been studied and wanted to see whether using gestures in teaching English have an effect on their achievement in speaking or not. To do so, the author gave them an OPT to have them divided into two groups of the control group and the experimental group. The teachers in the experimental group were requested to use gestures as an additional tool to clarify the concepts, while in the control group, the teachers were requested not to use gestures; instead, they had their routine programs in the classes. A speaking test was given to them as the pretest and the posttest. By doing the statistical operations on the data, gathered from the pretest and the posttest, it has been found that using gestures cannot improve the students' abilities and achievement in speaking; however, it may develop the students' approaches and ways to learn new materials.

### Literature Review

According to Petrovici (2012), when two persons discuss, it can often be noticed that they have similar attitudes, respectively the posture, mimics and gestures blend, and, in some situations, even some elements of the paraverbal (tone, volume, rhythm etc.) match. They complete mutually and when one stops the other one continues. The teacher sits next to the whiteboard and slowly reads the story to the learners. Initially, most sentences are read twice and are read slowly. All the time the teacher is watches to see that the learners understand what they hear. When words come up that the learners might not recognize or which might be unknown to the learners, the teacher quickly writes them on the board and gives a quick explanation, using a translation, a gesture, pointing, a quick drawing, or a simple second language definition (Nation & Newton, 2009). McNeil (1992, cited in Roth, 2001) believes that we have four types of gestures, named beat, deictic, iconic, and metaphoric gestures. Beats are simple and non-pictorial gestures that can include the up and down flick of a hand, or the tapping motions used to emphasize certain utterances. Deictic gestures are used in concrete or abstract pointing. Iconic gestures, also referred to as representational gestures and covered by lexical gestures, include those hand/arm movements that bear a perceptual relation with concrete entities and events.

Metaphoric gestures are similar to iconic gestures in that they make reference to a visual image; however, the images to which they refer pertain to abstraction. There is no separate gesture language alongside of spoken language; instead, as McNeill (1992, cited in Taleghani & Nikazm, 2008) argues, they are an integral part of language as much as are words, phrases, and sentences—gesture and language are one system.

The study of Tellier (2007) aimed to examine the effect of gesture reproduction on the long-term memorization of L2 vocabulary in children. As hypothesized, the gesture group did significantly better than the picture group at least in the assessments measuring the active knowledge of the vocabulary. It appears that when gestures are re-produced and act as a motor modality, they have a stronger impact on memorization than pictures (a visual modality). Orton (2007) says that several scholars over some decades have made categories of gesture type. We can gesture with our hand, arm, head, eyes, nose, mouth, foot, and even whole body, so one first boundary to the drawn is which part of the body will be included for consideration. In keeping with most second language scholars in the field, the reference for gesture in this article will be movements of the hand. Another boundary to note in any discussion of the word 'gesture' is the level of standardization.

Saitz (1969) in his study has aimed to clarify the conditions of gestures in the language classrooms and the principles. To do so, he conducted a descriptive study by observing different gestures of language teachers. As Munger (2008) has stated, gestures can be broken down into two distinct categories: deictic and representational. Deictic gestures are those that refer to something around the child; pointing, showing an object, or reaching for something. Representational gestures have meaning independent of the objects around the child: nodding yes, holding a fist to the ear to mean "telephone," and so on. An international group led by Jana Iverson carefully observed three Italian infants and three American infants during the critical early period of language learning, from 10 months to 24 months old. The babies were videotaped for 30 minutes each month doing three activities: playing with their own toys, playing with a standard set of toys provided by the experimenter, and at mealtime. Speech and gestures were carefully categorized. In a study, Munger (2008) examined the way in which infants acquire/learn their first language by some gestures and clarified two distinct categories of gestures. Allen's pioneering experiment (1995, cited in Tellier, 2007) seems to be the only study on the impact of gestures on memorization of L2 sentences. However, it has two limitations. First, the L2 sentences were always given to the subjects with the L1 translation, but the sentences to be memorized were French idiomatic expressions which are not always directly translatable. Second, subjects were asked during the posttest to give the L1 equivalent of the L2 sentences that were only used as stimuli. The study thus does not assess how many expressions in L2 subjects have remembered with gestures, but rather how many expressions they can translate. The experiment therefore dealt mainly with passive knowledge of the vocabulary, that is, the ability to recognize and translate but not to produce the L2 items. It is therefore not clear whether gestures affect active knowledge of L2 vocabulary. It is also not known whether gestures affect the memorization of lexical items in L2 in child learners. The current study therefore examines precisely these issues. Nyberg, Persson & Nilsson (2002, cited in Tellier, 2007) have demonstrated the positive effect of enactment encoding on memorization for different populations (including demented patients and patients with frontal-lobe dysfunction) and for different age groups ranging from 35 to 80 years of age.

This paper (Author, 2015) has been aimed to examine the role of using gestures in teaching English to the Iranian EFL learners/students and the effect of it on their achievement in speaking. In some aspects, this work is different and has been worked out in general speaking. The aim of this paper has been to find a better technique in teaching English as a foreign language. It has been found out that using gestures cannot be such an influential technique, but can help students/learners to find new ways to overcome their problems in learning.

## Methodology

### *Design*

This study followed a quasi-experimental design. The participants of the current study were Iranian EFL learners/students who were selected based on their scores on an OPT. The students were divided into two groups of twenty students: twenty in the experimental group and twenty in the control group. In the experimental group, English teaching was accompanied by some gestures; while the control group had no gestures. A speaking placement test as a pretest (face to face oral placement test, Cambridge university press, 2013) was administered to the experimental group and the control group. In the experimental group, using gestures was considered to be the treatment. The teacher in the experimental group was requested to teach English with gestures; while in the control group, the teacher was requested not to use gestures. Their classes

were held two sessions per week. At the end of a period of two month or fifteen fifty-minute sessions, the same speaking placement test as the posttest was administered to the experimental group. After the treatment, the data was analyzed to see whether or not using gestures was effective in teaching English.

### Participants

The participants (aged 13-16) who took part in this study were forty intermediate level EFL students in an institute in Rasht, Iran. They were divided into two groups of twenty students in the control group and twenty in the experimental group. Most of these participants were the students in the nongovernmental schools in the Sama center, Rasht. All of them were male students. They showed the eagerness to learn and speak in English. They were all Persian natives. They had enough time to give answer to the requested questions. In this study, the teachers of the two classrooms spoke with the participants to make them prepared to answer the questions; so that these students had no problem with the procedures of the teachers. The students got familiar with the goal and the way of research during the study. The name of their book was Project (Huttchison, 2013). In the book, there are some parts to speak about their past.

### Results and Discussion

In this study, the following findings from the control group are obtained in the pretest. They are illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1 The frequencies for the pretest in the control group

Scores	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39
Frequencies	2	4	2	2	1	3	1	2	1	2

Table 1 shows the results of pretest in the control group in which one student got 34, 36, and 38; the score 31 was obtained by four students; the scores 30, 32, 33, 37, and 39 were achieved by two students, and the score 35 was obtained by three students. Here, the mean was 33.95 and the score of mode was 31. The same scores have been got in the control group in the posttest.

In this study, the following findings from the experimental group are obtained in the pretest. They are illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2 The frequencies for the pretest in the experimental group

Scores	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39
Frequencies	3	1	3	1	3	1	2	3	2	1

Table 2 shows the results of pretest in the experimental group in which one student got 31, 33, 35, and 39; the scores 36 and 38 were obtained by two students; the scores 30, 32, 34, and 37 were achieved by three students. Here, there was no mode, and the mean was 34.25.

The results of scores and the frequency for the experimental group in the posttest are illustrated in Table 3.

Table 3 The frequencies for the experimental group in the posttest

Scores	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39
Frequencies	2	0	1	2	3	3	4	2	2	1

Table 3 shows the results of posttest in the experimental group in which one student got 32 and 39; the score 36 was obtained by four students; the score 30, 33, 37, and 38 were achieved by two students, and the scores 34 and 35 were obtained by three students. Here, the mean score was 34.9 and the score of mode was 36.

Based on the results gathered from posttest, since the analytical results show that the difference between the variance of the experimental group in the first test and in the last test is not more than 2, it can be concluded that



this hypothesis is rejected. Based on the statistical operation, it can be said that because the results of running the posttest on the control group and experimental group could not yield a significant difference, the hypotheses to these questions are null. Therefore, these questions and hypotheses have been mentioned:

1. Does using gestures in teaching English have an effect on Iranian school students' English achievement in speaking? In answering this question, it can be said that because the range of the students' scores have not been increased, using gestures in teaching English has no effect on Iranian school students' English achievement in speaking.
2. Is there any relationship between teaching English and using gesture regarding Iranian school students' English achievement in speaking? In answering this question, it can be said that because using gestures cannot differentiate between the scores of the experimental group (having been taught with gestures) and the control group (having been taught without gestures) and the mean of two groups were not so significant, there is no relationship between teaching English and using gesture regarding Iranian school students' English achievement in speaking.

Table 4 shows the descriptive statistics for the experimental group in which the number, minimum, maximum, mean of scores, mean of the standard error, and the standard deviation are displayed:

Table 4. The descriptive statistics						
	N Statistic	Minimum statistic	Maximum statistic	Mean Statistic	Std. Error	Std. Deviation Statistic
Pretest	40	30.00	39.00	34.1000	0.46105	2.91592
Posttest	40	30.00	39.00	34.42500	0.43396	2.74458
Valid N	40					

Table 4 shows that the statistic numbers are 40 and 40, and the minimum scores are 30 and 30, the maximum scores are 39 and 39, the means are 34.100 and 34.425, the standard errors are 0.46105 and 0.43396, and the standard deviations are 2.91592 and 2.74458 for the control group and the experimental group in the pretest and the posttest, respectively.

Table 5 shows the statistics, the numbers, the mean, the standard deviation, and the mean of the standard error for two groups.

Table 5. The group statistics of the scores in the pretest				
Subject	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
The control group	20	33.9500	2.98196	0.66679
The experimental group	20	34.9000	2.46875	0.55203

In Table 5, the scores of the pretest and post-test are calculated for the experimental group. Because this is the comparison of two dependent samples (before and after training) and these scores are dependent on each other, a paired sample t-test can be used.

Table 6 illustrates the number, correlation, and sigma of the pretest and posttest in the experimental group.

Table 6 The record of paired sample test			
Paired sample correlation			
		The experimental Pretest	The experimental posttest
The experimental pretest	The Pearson Correlation	1	0.961**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000
	N	20	20
The experimental posttest	The Pearson Correlation	0.961**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000
	N	20	20

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

Table 6 shows that there are twenty statistical units in the experimental group in the pretest and posttest whose value regarding the Pearson correlation is equal to 0.961\*\*, with the significance of 0.000. The mark \*\* shows that the correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 7 illustrates the mean, standard deviation, mean of standard errors, interval confidence of the difference (lower and upper), tail, difference, and significance of the paired sample test and the paired differences test in the experimental group.

Table 7 The record for the paired samples test

Paired Samples Test  
Paired Differences  
95% Confidence  
Interval of

Group	Std Devi	Std. Error	Difference			Sig. t	df.	(2-tailed)
	Mean	ation	Mean	Lower	Upper			
Ex	34.1000	2.46875	0.86565	-2.70241	0.80241	-1.097	38	0.279
-	34.4250	2.46875	0.86565	-2.70441	0.80441	-1.097	36.721	0.280

In this part, the t-test statistics is calculated. Table 7 shows that the mean differences of the pretest and post-test for the experimental group are equal to 34.1000 and 34.4250; it means that mean scores of the participants in the pretest is between -2.70241 and 0.80241 and in the posttest is between -2.70441 and 0.80441; and the standard deviation for this mean difference is 38 in the pretest and 36.721 in the posttest; and also, the standard error mean is 0.86565 in the pretest and the posttest; and assuming the 95% confidence of interval difference, because the confidence index is 0.5000 and the results indicate that it is about 0.279 and 0.280, it means that the assumption is accepted about the sameness of scores between the pretest and the post-test from the other side, the significance of the t-test is about 0.279 and 0.280; and it is lower than 0.05. So, the assumption about the sameness of mean scores of the two groups is rejected. Therefore, the results of the pretest and posttest are accepted. If the obtained score by the operations is lower than the measured meaningful level of (0.05), the assumption of zero will be rejected; that is, our treatment has its meaningful effect on the students' achievement; but here, since our assumption of zero is approved; therefore, we can conclude that our treatment (using gestures) does not have the meaningful effect on the students' achievement.

The overall bar graph of the means of the control group (control) and the experimental group (experimental) is illustrated in Figure 1.

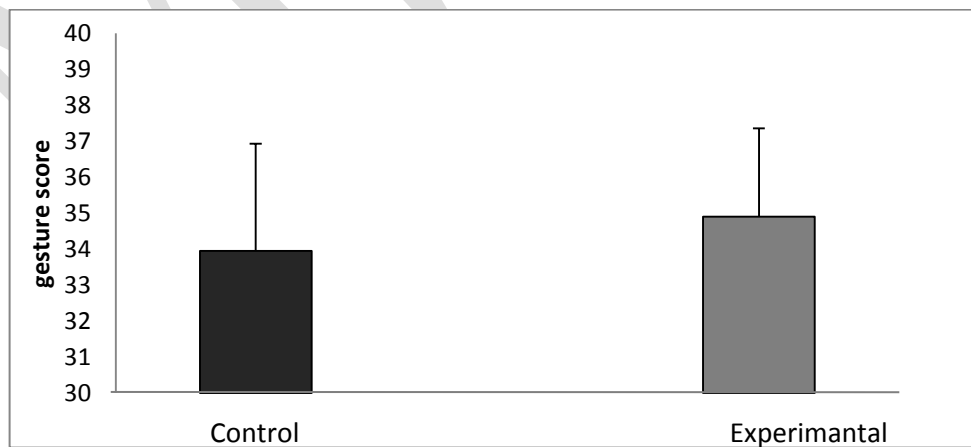


Figure 1. The mean scores of the control and experimental groups

Figure 1 illustrates the mean scores of the control group and the experimental group in the bar graph in which the horizontal axis stands for the groups and the vertical axis stands for the scores. The black bar stands for the control group and the gray bar stands for the experimental group.

### Conclusion

The findings of this study do not completely support the claim that using gestures in teaching English has an effect on Iranian EFL school students' achievement, but in some aspects, the influences of teaching English with gestures on the Iranian EFL students are obvious and undeniable. The findings of this research showed that the experimental group which is taught with gestures outperformed in speaking and comprehending the materials and in their achievements. The findings of this study also showed that it is the same as the views of some scientists and linguists such as Marianne Gulberg, Marion Tellier, and Robert Saitz; even though the relationship between teaching English with gestures and without gestures has caught the attention of linguists and educators to minuscule.

This paper examined the role of gestures on teaching English. By regarding the results obtained from the statistical operations, it can be said that although the gestures do not play a significant role in teaching English as a foreign language, they can be regarded as useful tools in improving communication. It also increases the teachers' information on the role of gestures in teaching English. Moreover, it can shed a light on teaching other subjects by using gestures. Besides these, knowing how to gesture can help learners to get information from a gesture. Hence, teaching with gestures can increase learners' awareness of these new ways of teachings. Like every other studies, this study may have its own limitations. Some of the limitations may be like these: this study deals with males in the upper intermediate level of proficiency in the age of thirteen up to sixteen years old. Studies may show different results with different conditions. For future work, it seems relevant to study more gestures in teaching English. There might be a difference in the list of gestures (common gestures in explaining the ambiguous conceptions and the required information). There might be a difference in the selected sex, range of age, etc. It has been suggested that clapping, pointing to somewhere, face motions, the kinds of the expressions, and nodding head have been more accepted and repeated by the students.

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# INVESTIGATING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SELF ESTEEM AND READING PERFORMANCE OF IRANIAN EFL LEARNERS

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## Abstract

The present study was implemented to investigate the possible relationship between self-esteem and the reading performance of intermediate Iranian EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners. Instruments for this study included English placement test, Rosenberg's questionnaire and test of reading task. A total of 64 Intermediate female learners studying at Nourelahi Language Institute in Tabriz, participated in the current study. The subjects were asked to fill the, Rosenberg's questionnaires to be categorized as either high or low self-esteem. To test the research hypothesis set forth in the present study, Pearson Correlation Coefficient was run as the main statistical analysis. The results indicated that, there was a significant relationship between self-esteem and the reading performance of learners. The scores of reading ability had a positive relationship with the high self-esteem of subjects, that is, the higher self-esteem the subjects, the better their performance on reading.

**Keywords:** Self-esteem, Reading Comprehension, Task, Proficiency, Acquisition, Language Learning.

## 1. Introduction

Reading is an important skill for most students and teachers of English throughout the world, especially in countries where foreign language learners do not have the opportunity to interact with native speakers but have access to the written form of that language (Rivers, 1968). In the past, reading was considered as a language learning process in which the teacher used reading materials to teach vocabulary and grammar, but nowadays it is considered as a communicative process in which reading for meaning, is the core objective. Reading can be considered as a source of information, as a pleasurable activity, and as a means of extending one's knowledge of the language (Rivers, 1968).

In order to provide effective sensitive instruction, teachers of second or foreign languages need to learn to identify and understand their students' significant individual differences (Ehrman & Oxford, 1995b; Ehrman, 1993). Among personality factors, self-esteem is also potentially important factor in the learning of a second language.

On the other hand, a number of studies have suggested that learning, in general, cannot be achieved without careful consideration to psychological factors (Carter & Nunan, 2001; Derville, 1966). In all educational environments, students get different grades. Some believe that they get either higher or lower grades than expected to. Most of these problems are closely related to psychological factors out of which self-esteem is an overwhelming issue that has determining effects on language learning, specifically reading comprehension. What all this points to is that the importance of self-esteem as a crucial factor affecting motivation should not be underestimated. It could be claimed that no activity will be carried out successfully without self-esteem (Huitt, 2004; see also Brown, 1994; Heyde, 1979; Khodadad, 2003; Powers & Sanchez, 1982).

Few studies have been carried out on the effects of self-esteem on language learning in general terms (Kamarzarrin, 1994; Demo & Parker, 1987; Khodadad, 2003, among others). These studies reveal

that the role of self-esteem as a psychological independent variable in language learning has been underestimated.

Demo and Parker (1987) believe that in real situations both self-esteem and language learning are interacting variables, in the sense that language learning can affect the degree of self-esteem and vice versa; that is to say, by strengthening one, the other factor will be strengthened. In the light of the above considerations, the present study is an attempt to verify the relationship between self-esteem and reading comprehension of Iranian EFL learners

## 2. Literature Review

There are few researchers attempted to investigate the relationship between self-esteem and English achievement in terms of different skills or sub-skills. Also, as same as the context of this study, some researchers examined this topic in different contexts and on EFL learners' achievements. Some of these studies are mentioned below:

Talebinezhad and Banihashemi (2013) examined the relationship between emotional intelligence and self-efficacy of 83 EFL students of an English institute based on Bandure's (1986) contention. At the end of the study, they concluded "there was a significant relationship between EFL learners' EI and their self-efficacy beliefs, and this positive correlation is not affected by gender differences" (p. 1966).

Gahungu (2007) conducted his PhD dissertation on investigating the relationship between self-esteem and language ability of 37 university students studying French. The data of the participants' self-efficacy were gathered through a questionnaire with 40 questions to measure their level of confidence, and a cloze test to measure their level of proficiency in French, and also some interviews and observation. In the end, he reached the positive effects of self-efficacy on language learning.

Hetthong and Teo (2013) searched the relationship between writing self-efficacy and writing performance and explored whether students' overall writing self-efficacy predicts their overall writing performance. The participants were 51 third-year students of a Thai university, and a questionnaire and a paragraph writing test were used. The results showed "there is a significant positive relationship between writing self-efficacy and writing performance both at the section level and the sub-skill level. Furthermore, the overall writing self-efficacy predicts the overall writing performance" (p. 157).

Raoofi, Tan and Chan (2012) examined the role of self-esteem on second or foreign language learning contexts. They reviewed the related empirical literature and at last found "several factors enhance the level of students' self-efficacy, and self-efficacy is a strong predictor of performance in a different language skills and tasks" (p. 60).

Hosseini Fatemi and Vahidnia (2013) examined the relationship between self-efficacy and motivation of 93 Iranian B. A. and M. A. university students. Also, some positive relation between their self-efficacy and intrinsic motivation were found, "Moreover, a motivation, among the subscales of motivation, was found to be negatively related to students' self-efficacy (p. 79).

Ghonsooly and Elahi (2010) studied the effect of self-efficacy of learners in their reading. The participants of this study were 150 sophomore Iranian university students majoring in English literature. The instrument used in the study to meet this goal was an author-designed scale on EFL learners' self-efficacy in reading comprehension. The results showed "high self-efficacious participants achieved higher scores in reading comprehension course than low self-efficacious participants" (p. 45).

Kalanzadeh, et. al. (2013) examined the impact of Iranian EFL students' self-esteem on their speaking skill. The participants of this study were selected by using a questionnaire in order to diagnose the high and low self-esteem ones. After that, a standard oral proficiency test was used in order to measure five sub-skills related to speaking: vocabulary, structure, pronunciation, fluency, and comprehensibility. After analyzing the data, the results showed a statistically significant correlation between the participants' self-esteem and speaking ability.

Rahimi and Abedini (2009) in a study examined the relationship between self-efficacy and listening comprehension of Iranian EFL learners based on their listening comprehension test performance. The results showed a statistically significant correlation between high and low self-efficacious students and their rate of listening comprehension. Furthermore, self-efficacy in listening was significantly related to listening proficiency.

Therefore, the purpose of the present study was to find the relationship between personality type and reading performance of EFL learners in Iran.

## Research Question and Hypothesis

The research question and hypothesis posed in this study are as the following:

**Research Question:** Is there any significant relationship between the self-esteem and the reading performance of Iranian EFL learners?

**Null hypothesis:** There is no significant relationship between the self-esteem and the reading performance of Iranian EFL learners.

## 3. Methodology:

### 3.1 Design of the study

In order to find appropriate answers to the posed questions, the researchers followed certain procedures and made use of certain instruments, which are reported

### 3.2 Participants

The participants of the current study were initially 100 female Iranian intermediate learners of English, studying in Nourelahi Language Institute, Tabriz. In order to be included in the final subject pool, participants who included the age range of 18-24, were requested to attend all phases of the study. However, 36 participants were not qualified enough to be included in the analysis and were consequently eliminated from the total sample. Accordingly, out of the original pool of 100 participants, merely 64 were found qualified to be included in the final analysis of data.

### 3.3 Materials

To tap the required data, Rosenberg's questionnaire was administered to learners as the chief data collection instrument, which was aimed at determining which participants were high self-esteem and which ones were low self-esteem. One TOEFL reading comprehension test was also used to determine the subjects' reading performance. And a language placement test to measure the learner's proficiency level. The following section is devoted to the provision of an ample description of language placement test, Rosenberg's questionnaire (RQ), and a TOEFL reading comprehension test used in this study.

#### 3.3.1 Oxford Placement Test by Allen (1985)

This test consists of 50 short items, each with three alternative choices from which the testees have to choose the correct response. The first 20 items are meaning-wise independent of one another, the remaining 30 items, however, are sequential.

#### 3.2.2 Rosenberg's Self-esteem Questionnaire

Rosenberg's standardized questionnaire of self-esteem was used to evaluate individual self-esteem, thus it was investigated through using item response theory. The Rosenberg self-esteem scale consisted of 10 questions and each question contained 4 choices, all of which were presented in Persian language to avoid any confusion for the Iranian learners.

#### 3.3.3 Test of Reading Comprehension

Three reading tasks of general topics, including Transcription (questions 1-12), Nursing (questions 13-24), Skyscrapers (questions 25-36), were selected from TOEFL test (Barrons's, 2007).

### 3.4 Procedures

First of all placement test was administered to the 100 subjects in order to come up with a group of EFL learners at approximately the same level of language proficiency. Then, those whose score fell in one standard deviation above and below the mean of the sample were selected. The outcome was a homogenized group of 64 female learners. The given time was 40 minutes.

Then to determine self-esteem of the learners the Rosenberg's self-esteem questionnaire was given to the participants in order to measure their degree of self-esteem. All participants were required to complete Rosenberg's Questionnaire of Self-esteem (QSE). The QSE consisted of 10 items and each item had five points Likert scales. The total grade that each student received was considered as her self-esteem score. Total self-esteem scores thus could be ranged from 0 to 30. Higher scores indicated higher self-esteem. Scores below 15 showed low self-esteem. Correlation coefficients between self-esteem and English language reading scores of the EFL learners were conducted by the use of SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences). After determining the self-esteem of the learners, the test of reading tasks was administered. The test contained 36 items in three parts which was administered in one different session in 30 minutes.

After administering the tests and gathering the data, the Descriptive Statistics were estimated then Correlation coefficients between self-esteem and English language reading scores of the EFL learners were conducted by the use of SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences). The level of significance for the statistical analysis was set at 0.05

### 4. Results

In this study, descriptive statistical is used for both Self-esteem and English Reading Performance Test. Data analysis used based on the correlations between self-esteem and English Reading Performance, in addition, Quantitative analysis is used to answer the research question.

The descriptive statistics for Self-esteem Questionnaire (SEQ) and English Reading Performance Test (ERPT) are reported in Table 1.

**Table-1.** The Mean and Standard Deviation of self-esteem questionnaire (SEQ) and English reading performance test (ERPT) based on descriptive statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. deviation
SEQ	64	8	27	18.36	4.94
ERPT	64	11	22	16.39	2.42
Valid N	64				

The table 1 showed mean score obtained from SEQ test is 18.36 and its standard deviation is 4.94 whereas the mean of ERPT is 16.39 and its standard deviation is 2.42.

According to Pearson Correlation, in table 2, the correlation between self-esteem scores and reading performance scores of EFL learners is .685. The result of the computed correlation coefficient showed that the positive relationship between the self-esteem questionnaire (SEQ) and English reading performance test (ERPT) was statistically significant.

**Table-2.** The Correlation between self-esteem questionnaire (SEQ) and English reading performance test (ERPT)

	SEQ	ERPT
Pearson Correlation	1	.685
Sig.(2-tailed)		.031
N	64	64
Pearson Correlation	.685	1
Sig.(2-tailed)	.031	
N	64	64



According to Pearson Correlation, in table 2, the correlation between self-esteem scores and reading performance scores of EFL learners is .795 with the level of significance being .031. The result of the computed correlation coefficient showed that the positive relationship between the self-esteem questionnaire (SEQ) and English reading performance test (ERPT) was statistically significant.

## 5. DISCUSSION

In this paper, the relationship between self-esteem and reading performance of Iranian female learners was analyzed. The statistical analysis of the collected data revealed that there is significant relationship between self-esteem and reading performance. It can be said that there was a significant positive relationship between the two factors. When the learners' self-esteem was increased, their achievement in English reading. As the study shows, Learners with higher levels of self-esteem had higher reading, but learners of low self-esteem had lower reading achievement scores.

Based on the relationship between self-esteem and reading performance, it should be said if teachers are given more guidance regarding their own behaviors and attitudes to boost students' self-esteem that of course at the same time is a motivate for developing their reading ability. The more they feel secured in class the more they are encouraged to participate in reading activities. Furthermore, teachers are required to develop great willingness to appreciate students' efforts in the process of reading, because it helps, if they show any kind of progress in the course of their reading, and brings them a high level of self-esteem, as well. Programs can be arranged to enhance teachers' abilities to positively interact with students to individualize and utilize a wide variety of teaching methods; to invite collaborative assistance which can positively impact on students' achievement from the first day of their reading course. Based on these findings, EFL reading instructors are encouraged to teach students how to reflect upon their own leaning as well as to improve their strategic knowledge in EFL reading. Comments from teachers of reading often include suggestions; the way a student feels about himself affect, and is affected by, how he or she reads. Therefore, as it is found in this research and concerning the mutual relationship of self-esteem and reading we can also add this fact that teachers by providing students with regular reading instructions and students' everyday practice on reading, which starts from a short story to a long essay can expect their self-esteem and self-value; their belief in their capabilities will astonishingly flourish and turn them into students that now with support of their self-esteem are able to read very well.

## 6. Conclusion

The main aim of this study was to investigate the relationship between self-esteem and reading performance of Iranian EFL Learners. In order to obtain evident confirmation for this relationship, the collected data were analyzed through Pearson Correlation Coefficient test. The results showed that self-esteem has important role in Iranian EFL learners' readings. It can be used as one of the educational factors in order to help students in promoting their knowledge in learning target language.

To run this study researchers faced some limitations. One can be the fact that most the respondents to the self-efficacy questionnaire are tended to show themselves socially a desirable one by showing a good picture of themselves by their responses, so the validity of their responses is always questionable (Hancock & Flowers, 2001; Rosenfeld, Booth-Kewley, Edwards & Thomas, 1996). Further research can take this limitation into account in order to have a comprehensive role of different measures of self-efficacy, self-concept, and self-esteem on learners' improvement.

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# INVESTIGATING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PERSONALITY TYPE AND LISTENING PERFORMANCE OF IRANIAN EFL LEARNERS

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## Abstract

The present study was an attempt to investigate the relationship between personality type, measured by Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (EPQ-R, 1999), and listening performance. A Total number of 70 intermediate male participants took part in this study at Nourelahi Institute in Tabriz. The Aim of this study was to explore the relationship between personality type and listening performance of Iranian EFL learners. Some Parts of the data were collected by Eysenck Personality Test questionnaire to determine the participants' personality type. Another part of the data which was the participants' listening performance was gathered by listening administered twice. The collected data went through Pearson Correlation Coefficient test and the results of statistical analysis showed that there was a statistically significant relationship between personality type and listening performance.

**Keywords:** personality type, listening, extroversion, introversion, Eysenck Personality Test, second language acquisition.

## 1. Introduction

English language teaching is an interdisciplinary profession which has evolved from the side-by-side development of linguistics and psychology (Mangal, 2007). In the middle of the twentieth century the world witnessed a close connection between linguists and psychologists who were trying to present scientific and theoretically defendable methods of teaching language. It did not take a lot for psychologists as well as the language teachers to realize that it is almost unreasonable to prescribe a single method of teaching for all teaching contexts here and there. Among numerous factors which made each teaching situation unique and specific, personality types were absolutely significant. As we move onward on the timeline, we can understand that the newer methods of teaching have been accentuating the role of personality type.

Educationalists, teachers, language institution managers and others in the profession of language learning and teaching try to provide the same facilities and situations for the learners of a class or group. What is surprising at the end of the course is the big difference between the minimum and maximum scores of the students. When the same teacher, the same textbook and the same setting lead to diverge results, the idea of *Individual Differences* pops up. Individual differences (IDs) are too broad to measure or analyze accurately; therefore it has been divided into some factors (Ellis, 2008). Age, motivation, aptitude and personality are more important factors and researchers have developed strong tools to measure any of these human features.

As an independent variable in second language research, the personality type affects the learners' performance in language use and it has been clearly shown in various research projects that specific personality types are weak in one skill and competent in another one. Hence, among the manifold personality factors, the researchers have opted for the analysis of one of the paramount dichotomous cases widely known as introversion/extroversion, and its would-be go-togetherness with the learners' listening performance.

As far as language assessment is concerned, many variables should be considered. For instance, as a teacher who aims to assess the listening performance of learners, one might be aware that this ability depends on many

variables, among which the personality characteristics may be the most important ones. The present study finds possible relationship between introversion/extroversion personality type and listening comprehension performance.

This research is significant in terms of helping listening instructors gain more knowledge about affective domain of language learners. By studying the results of this investigation, the listening instructors will learn about the relationship between personality type and listening performance of the learners and they will understand to what extent the personality type of a learner can contribute to success or failure of learners in listening skill. Also the results are important in terms of opening new horizons in future research fields about individual differences.

## 2. Literature Review

As language teaching has moved toward comprehension-based approaches, listening to learn has become increasingly important in the English as a second language (ESL) classroom (Van Duzer, 1997), and is seen as a core component of many language programmes (Richards, 2005). The central role of listening in this discipline has generated a lot of research into the processes involved in second language listening and comprehension (Field, 1998; 2004). Considerable attention has also been given to the development of techniques and tools to encourage the development of skills in this area (Wilson, 2003; Hulstijn, 2003).

The study of personality factors, in general, and extroversion/introversion, in particular, with regard to second language acquisition has recently begun to attract increasing attention. Several studies have been carried out to investigate if extroversion/introversion personality trait plays any role in the process of language learning. Robinson, Gabriel & Katchan (1994) in a study found strong correlation between language learning ability and extraversion scores of their subjects. In this current study it was expected that extroverts would show better reading and listening skills than introverts.

Nasrabadi (1996) examined the role of extroversion-introversion personality dimension in EFL listening comprehension in Iran. He found significant results for extroverts. Daneshvari (1996) also examined the role of E/I in EFL listening comprehension in Iran. He concluded that extroverts were better listening strategy users in

comparison with introverts. Brown (1994) "claims that extroversion may be a factor in the development of general oral communicative competence, which require face to face interaction, but not in listening, reading, and writing" (p. 174). But, Tucker, Hamayan and Genesee (1976) found that the more outgoing adventurous students in a one-year late (grade 7) French immersion program performed better on tests of listening comprehension and oral production than did the quieter students. Busch (1982, cited in Brown, 2000) tried to determine whether there would be any relationship between extroversion/introversion and English proficiency among the EFL students in Japan. The study came out to reject the hypothesis that the extraverts are more proficient than the introverts. The study clarified that extroversion had negative correlation with proficiency and the introverts had better reading comprehension and grammar proficiency than the extraverts.

In personality psychology, a consensus has emerged that the most important differences in personality can be reduced to combinations of 5 basic dimensions, known as the 'big five' (Ely, 1983; Komarraju & Karau, 2005; Allik, et al., 2010), which are said to be derived by several independent factor analyses of very large numbers of personality variables. The most important of these is the renowned dichotomy of introversion/extraversion. Intuitively, extroverts are characterized as outgoing, gregarious and fun-loving, whereas introverts are seen as more quiet, reserved and pensive. To this intuitive distinction between types of social behavior, Eysenck (1999) has added a biological dimension. According to Eysenck's theory, which has been confirmed by a number of experimental findings (Heyde, 1991), introverts are characterized by a higher level of intrinsic activation or arousal in the brain cortex. As any individual operates ideally with a moderate level of cortical arousal, the more extroverted will be inclined to look for external stimulation to reach an optimal level, whereas the more introverted people would rather try to avoid strong stimuli in order not to raise their activation level too much. This means that typical introverts are highly sensitive, reacting strongly to relatively mild stimulation, whereas typical extroverts are excitement-seekers, with a much higher endurance for loud noise, strong light, and other forms of external stress. Extroverts and introverts also seem to have different reminiscence capabilities (Eysenck, 1999).

Although the importance of task-based teaching has been accepted by scholars like Skehan (1996);

Willis & Willis (2001); Nunan (1991) in the field of language teaching, and despite the research projects (ex: Bangalore Communicational Teaching Project, 1979-1984, by Prabhu, & Ramani-cited in Long and Crookes-1992) done on the influence of task-based instruction on listening performance, to the best knowledge of the present researchers, no important and substantial research has been conducted on studying the relationship between personality types (Extroversion/Introversion) and performing listening and tasks. Therefore, the purpose of the present study was to find the relationship between personality type and listening performance of EFL learners in Iran.

### Research Question and Hypothesis

The research question and hypothesis posed in this study are as the following:

**Research Question:** Is there any statistically significant relationship between the personality type and the listening performance of Iranian EFL learners?

**Null hypothesis:** There is no statistically significant relationship between the personality type and listening performance of Iranian EFL learners.

### 3. Methodology:

#### 3.1 Design of the study

This quantitative study attempted to investigate the effect of personality type on listening performance. Personality type was the independent and listening score was the dependent variable of this study. Participants of this study were intermediate learners of English as Foreign Language at Nourelahi Institute in Tabriz. They were explained that their responses to the questionnaire, etc. will be used only for research purposes. Then by using a language placement test (Oxford Placement Test by Allen 1985), two listening comprehension tests to listen (adopted from TOEFL) and a questionnaire measuring the personality type (EPQ-R), the data were collected. The achieved data went through Pearson Correlation Coefficient test so that the research question was answered.

#### 3.2 Participants

The participants of the current study were initially 110 male Iranian intermediate learners of English, studying in Nourelahi Language Institute, Tabriz. In order to be included in the final subject pool, participants were requested to attend all phases of the study. However, 40 participants were not qualified enough to be included in the analysis and were consequently eliminated from the total sample, mainly on account of the levels of language proficiency. Finally 70 learners could meet the requirements of this research study who included the age range of 18 – 22.

#### 3.3 Materials

The materials used in this study were a language placement test, Eysenck Personality Test (EPQ-R) and two listening comprehension tests which are explained in depth below.

##### 3.3.1 Oxford Placement Test by Allen (1985)

This test consists of 50 short items, each with three alternative choices from which the testees have to choose the correct response. The first 20 items are meaning-wise independent of one another, the remaining 30 items, however, are sequential.

##### 3.3.2 Eysenck Personality Questionnaire

To examine the individual trait in question, i.e. extroversion/introversion, the researchers used Eysenck Personality Test (EPQ-R) (Eysenck, 1999), which is the shortened version of the last Eysenck test

(1999). This test consists of two criteria known as psychotism and extroversion/introversion, and a total of 12 yes/no questions is allocated to gauging each criterion. It should be explained that the questions used in the present study are only those which have been developed for determining introversion and extroversion. According to what Eysenck reports in the test manual, the reliability of the questionnaire is 88% and 84% (for extroversion and introversion scale) and 61% and 62% (for psychotism scale) for males and females, respectively

### 3.3.3 Tests of Listening Tasks

Two kinds of listening tests were constructed by the researchers and consisted of 100 items each one. Each test consisted of 6 kinds of listening tasks as follows:

Listening Cloze Tasks, Information Transfer Tasks, Communicative Stimulus-Response Tasks, True/ False Listening Tasks, Matching Tasks, Multiple Choices Listening Comprehension Tasks.

### 3.4 Procedures

To run the research, three sets of data were needed to conduct the present study: a test of language placement test, a questionnaire to determine personality type and two listening tests to measure listening performance.

After the arrangements with the officials of the institute, the data were collected from the intermediate classes. The researchers explained both to the officials and the learners that their answers would be used only for research goals. Then, all participants were given the pack of instruments. It should be explained that all the participants were told to write a code, 1,2,3, etc. instead of their names on the instruments in order not to affect their honesty in answering. For completing the Eysenck Personality Test which was a part of the data, the allocated time was 20 minutes. And then the participants had 40 minutes to answer the language placement test as the next part of the data. A total of 110 language learners with the age range of 18 – 22 were given the instruments needed to collect data. Among them, 40 participants were not qualified enough to be included in the analysis and were consequently eliminated from the total sample, mainly on account of the levels of language proficiency. Finally 70 introvert/extrovert learners could meet the requirements of the study who included males at intermediate level.

The Listening tests were selected first in the process. It was made sure that the tests were standardized tests and then they were adapted for the purpose of this study. The validity of the test was checked by two linguists. After this procedure the test was administered to the sample. The tests were objective in nature. . In two different sessions, the researcher administered the tests of listening tasks. Each test contained 100 items and was administered in 1 different session. It took 75 minutes in each session to administer each test. After two days the participants had next listening test. This (second listening test) would be done in order to provide more exact and accurate scores of the participants' listening performance.

The participants listening tests were rated by a rater. So for each participant there was a number (ranging from 0 to 100) which showed his listening performance. Since scoring listening task has an objective nature, therefore the mean score of two listening were marked as the final listening score.

Data then were entered into SPSS statistical software. In order to test the research hypothesis in the current study, Pearson Correlation Coefficient was run to see whether the interaction relationship is significant. The level of significance for the statistical analysis was set at 0.05.

## 4. Results

This study was aimed to find the relationship between personality type and listening performance of EFL learners on task of listening. In this study the personality type (introversion/extroversion) was the independent variable, and the performance of students on listening task was dependent variables and the level of language proficiency (intermediate level) and gender (male) were control variables.

Table 1 and its reveals the frequency of subjects' introversion and Extroversion. Drawing on the information given there, 34.3% of subjects (24 learners) were found to be extrovert and 65.7% (46 learners) were marked as introverts.

Table1. Descriptive Frequency Distribution of Subjects Regarding Introversion and Extroversion

Personality	Frequency	Percent
<b>Extroversion</b>	24	34.3
<b>Introversion</b>	46	65.7
<b>Total</b>	70	100

Moreover the finding pertinent to subjects' listening performance is presented in Table 2. Based on the descriptive statistics reported, the mean listening performance for extrovert subjects is 62.35 and the standard deviation is 11.02, whereas the mean listening performance for introvert equals 71.25, and the standard deviation is 15.88.

Table 2. Statistical Indices Related to Introvert and Extrovert Subjects Regarding their Listening Performance

Listening ability	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean Std. Error	Maximum	Minimum
<b>Introvert</b>	71.25	15.88	0.092	95	33
<b>Extrovert</b>	62.35	11.02	0.125	93	22

In order to appraise the relationship between introversion/extroversion of personality type and the listening performance of intermediate EFL learners, Pearson Correlation Coefficient was run. As the results shown in table 3 disclose, the Correlation Coefficient calculated regarding the relationship between introversion/extroversion and the listening performance of subjects equals 0.837, with the level of significance being 0.037, which, of course, points to the existence of a statistically significant correlation between the two variables in question.

Table 3. The Correlation between Introversion and Subjects' Listening Performance

Variable	Number	Pearson Correlation Coefficient	Sig	Confirmed or Rejected
<b>Introversion/Extroversion in Listening Performance</b>	70	0.837	0.037	confirmed

## 5. DISCUSSION

The research question of the current study concerned with the relationship between personality types of introverts/extroverts and listening performance. Apparently the higher language proficiency level leads to better performance in listening skill. But it cannot be always true, simply because in this study all the participants belonged to the same language proficiency level but there were remarkably differences in their listening scores. Where does such difference originate from? Murray (1990) has explained that individual differences play an important role in the language achievement of language learners and Terveen (2001) believed that some personality types dramatically perform better than other types in listening skill.

Data of this study showed that introverts type has a significantly better listening performance. One possible explanation for such a finding is that according to the personality characteristics of introvert learners, they

tend to be better performers in receptive skills like listening, reading, and structure, since according to Eysenck (1965) "they generally have a reflective and thoughtful personality type that suits the receptive kinds of tasks" (p. 59-60). Another reason according to Eysenck (1965) is that "the typical extrovert does not like studying by himself and is generally impulsive individual" (p. 59-60).

Additionally according to Eysenck's theory, which has been confirmed by a number of experimental findings (Heyde, 1991), introverts are characterized by a higher level of intrinsic activation or arousal in the brain cortex.. Also Burruss and Kaenzig (1999) claim that introverts prefer to work on their own than in groups, they do not like being in the center of attention and need time and space to complete the tasks. They need to know what they are expected to do and have suitable condition to concentrate.

With regard to the relationship between personality type and listening ability, Ellis (1994) stated that introverted learners do better at developing cognitive academic language ability. The rationale for this hypothesis came from studies which showed that introverted learners typically enjoy more academic success, perhaps because they spend more time reading and writing. The second hypothesis is that introverted learners will do better at developing cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP). Entwistle and Wilson (1977) claim that introverts will achieve more because they have better long-term memory than extroverts. Besides, they take learning a language in a more serious way and spend more time on reading, writing and listening due to their personality trait.

## 6. Conclusion

As mentioned before, the main aim of this study was to investigate the relationship between personality type and listening performance of Iranian EFL Learners. In order to obtain evident confirmation for this relationship, the collected data were analyzed through Pearson Correlation Coefficient test. According to the obtained result of the present empirical study, it is stated that, there is a significant relationship between personality type and listening performance of Iranian EFL learner

Findings of this research can be a good help to the teachers of listening skill. When they know that some kind of personality types have better performance, they can consider the personality type a lot. For example when a student is introvert, it is easy to the teachers to predict he is a better listener. And the lesson planners can design better listening assignments for different personality types.

Obviously, no research study seems to be perfect and without any limitations, and this study is not an exception and it has its own limitations that need to be acknowledged. First limitation was that relatively little number of participants attended this study. The bigger the number of participants, the more reliable and generalizable the findings will be. The second limitation was lack of accessibility to different institutes. The data needed for this study was collected from one context. Finally the third limitation was that there was no control on the participants' honesty in completing the Eysneck questionnaire.

This study investigated the relationship between personality type and listening performance. Other studies can be done to study the relationship between other language skills such as speaking, writing or dictation. Also other instruments can be used to determine personality type. The subjects of this study were young adults. Other studies can be done with the participation of different ages in both males and females.

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# THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TEACHER AUTONOMY AND TEACHER EFFICACY

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## Abstract

This study aimed at investigating the relationship between teacher autonomy and teacher efficacy, and also gender and teacher autonomy. It pursued two main objectives. The first objective of this study was to examine how teacher autonomy can enhance teacher efficacy in an EFL context. The investigation drew upon the reflections of EFL teachers, more autonomous and less autonomous ones, to see how teachers' efficacy enjoy this variable. The second objective of the present study was to see if gender has a role to play with regard to teacher autonomy. The study was carried out among 49 Iranian EFL teachers were selected randomly from two universities in Shiraz. Two questionnaires of "Teacher Autonomy" and "Teacher Efficacy" were used in this study. Data analysis procedures for this study were quantitative data analyses using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The obtained results indicated that there is a positive, low, and significant relationship between teacher autonomy and teacher efficacy. Furthermore, it was found out that there is not a significant relationship between males and females in terms of autonomy.

## Introduction

Since teachers got the most important role in any aspects of academic setting, their actions and behaviors are related to their beliefs, perceptions, assumptions and motivational levels. One of the important beliefs considered to be significantly effective in students and teachers outcomes is teachers' feelings of efficacy (Chaco'n, 2005). Teachers' beliefs in their abilities to instruct students and influence student performance are very strong indicators of instructional effectiveness (Bandura, 1997). Bandura (1977) suggests that efficacious individuals hold the control of the events affecting their lives and display such behaviors allowing them to realize the desired outcomes (cited in Witcher, Onwuegbuzie, Collins, Minor & James, 2002). For teachers, this notion may mean that efficacious teachers display behaviors which may contribute to educational activities in class and learning by students. Therefore, teachers' self-efficacy beliefs and teacher autonomy which may positively affect classroom activities of teachers have been an interesting subject for education researchers. Besides, teachers' efficacy and teachers' autonomy are other important variables in academic setting. Mostly teachers' autonomy refers to the professional independence of teachers in schools, especially the degree to which they can make autonomous decisions about what they teach students and how they teach it. So, the relationship between these two variables can be of paramount importance in practical settings.

The extensive body of literature also signifies the important roles of teacher autonomy and teacher efficacy on educational system. It is assumed that teachers' awareness of autonomous learning can increase their own self-governing capacity, which may contribute to higher achievement and motivation. It is argued that this development among student teachers may have a positive effect on the development of autonomous learning among their future students (Sert, 2006). Therefore, this study aimed at investigating the relationship between teacher autonomy and teacher efficacy, and also gender and teacher autonomy. The first objective of this study was to examine how teacher autonomy can enhance teacher efficacy in an EFL context. The investigation drew upon the reflections of EFL teachers, more autonomous and less autonomous ones, to see how teachers' efficacy enjoy this variable. The second objective of the present study was to see if gender has a role to play with regard to teacher autonomy.

### Statement of the Problem

Teacher autonomy and teacher efficacy are two major areas of research in the field of teacher education, which need excessive attention in the literature. Reviewing the available literature marked a gap in conducted studies, particularly in EFL contexts, which needs to be filled with further research. This study aims at investigating the relationship between teacher autonomy and efficacy in an EFL context to see how promoting autonomy in teachers can enhance the effectiveness of their practice. The findings of this study will shed more light on the topic at hand and will also feed both confirmatory and exploratory nature of any research.

### Research Questions

Based on the objectives of the study mentioned above, the study aims at providing answers to the following research questions:

- 1) What is the relationship between teacher autonomy and teacher efficacy in an Iranian EFL context?
- 2) What is the relationship between gender and teacher autonomy in an Iranian EFL context?

### Literature review

A few studies have been done on the relationship between teacher efficacy and teacher autonomy. In one of the studies, Basikin (2006) reiterates the role of efficacy in teacher education and its effect on teacher autonomy. He notes that a high sense of efficacy is necessary for ESL teachers to become autonomous. The sense of efficacy is specifically important in spoken and written English, efficacy for instructional strategy, efficacy for classroom management, and efficacy for student engagement.

In one of the studies, Skaalvik and Sidsel (2014) investigated the relationship between teacher self-efficacy and teacher autonomy. The results of their study indicated that both teacher self-efficacy and teacher autonomy are associated with adaptive motivational and emotional outcomes. This study tested whether teacher self-efficacy and teacher autonomy are independently associated with engagement, job satisfaction, and emotional exhaustion. 2,569 Norwegian teachers in elementary school and middle school (719 men, 1,850 women; M age = 45.0 yr., SD = 11.5) were administered the Norwegian Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale, the Teacher Autonomy Scale, the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale, the Teacher Job Satisfaction Scale, and the Maslach Burnout Inventory. The analysis revealed that both teacher autonomy and self-efficacy were independent predictors of engagement, job satisfaction, and emotional exhaustion. This study suggests that autonomy or decision latitude works positively but through different processes for teachers with high and low mastery satisfactory expectations.

Motallebzade, Ashraf, and Tabatabaee (2013) investigated the role of two important social psychological variables in teaching and educational context which were self-Efficacy and burnout. This study has been conducted as a qualitative dominant mixed research design to explore the correlation between self-efficacy of Iranian English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers and their reports of burnout comparing two big provinces of Tehran and Khorasan Razavi. The data were gathered through the application of the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI; Maslach & Jackson 1981) and a researchers-made questionnaire of self-efficacy was designed by Motallebzadeh, Ashraf and Tabatabaee (2013) which checked Iranian EFL teachers' self-efficacy. The participants were as 326 professional experienced teachers having university education. They were from both genders and different age groups. After obtaining the raw data, the SPSS software (version 16) was used to change the data into numerical interpretable form, using correlational analysis to determine any significant relationship between self-efficacy and teachers' burnout. The result showed that the participants' self-efficacy has a reverse relationship with their burnout. In addition, a significant relationship was observed between teachers' age, gender, years of experiences and reports of burnout.

Noormohamadi (2014) investigated the relationship between teacher reflection, teacher efficacy and autonomy by means of a new English language teacher reflective inventory (Akbari & Moradkhani, 2010). 172 EFL Iranian teachers voluntarily participated in this study. The results showed that there was a positive relationship between teacher reflective practice, teacher self-efficacy and autonomy; also reflection elements had positive relations with self-efficacy and autonomy components. Obviously, reflective practice would help teachers to foster their effectiveness as well as independence.

Moomaw (2005) examined the relationship between teacher autonomy and on-the-job stress, work satisfaction, empowerment, and professionalism. Using a reliable and valid measure of curriculum autonomy and general

teaching autonomy (TAS), it was found that as curriculum autonomy increased on-the-job stress decreased, but there was little association between curriculum autonomy and job satisfaction. It was also demonstrated that as general teacher autonomy increased so did empowerment and professionalism. Also, as job satisfaction, perceived empowerment, and professionalism increased on-the-job stress decreased, and greater job satisfaction was associated with a high degree of professionalism and empowerment. The results of this study also indicate that autonomy does not differ across teaching level (elementary, middle, high school).

Skaalvik (2014) investigated the teacher efficacy and perceived autonomy. The results showed that, both teacher self-efficacy and teacher autonomy were associated with adaptive motivational and emotional outcomes. This study tested whether teacher self-efficacy and teacher autonomy were independently associated with engagement, job satisfaction, and emotional exhaustion. 2,569 Norwegian teachers in elementary school and middle school (719 men, 1,850 women; M age = 45.0 yr., SD = 11.5) were administered the Norwegian Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale, the Teacher Autonomy Scale, the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale, the Teacher Job Satisfaction Scale, and the Maslach Burnout Inventory. The analysis revealed that both teacher autonomy and self-efficacy were independent predictors of engagement, job satisfaction, and emotional exhaustion. This study suggests that autonomy or decision latitude works positively but through different processes for teachers with high and low mastery expectations.

## Methodology

### Participants

The participants of this study were 49 Iranian EFL teachers (23 females and 26 males) with minimum of 10 years of teaching experience. The participants were selected randomly from two universities in Shiraz, Islamic Azad University and Shiraz University. As the participants of the study were both males and females, this gave a chance to the researcher to investigate the role of gender in this research.

### Instruments

This study utilized two instruments for data collection. The "Teacher Autonomy" and "Teacher Efficacy" questionnaires were used in this study.

For measuring teachers' self-efficacy, a researcher-made questionnaire was designed by Motallebzadeh, Ashraf and Tabatabaee (2013) which checked Iranian EFL teachers' self-efficacy, based on the (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk-Hoy 2001) and (Bandura, 1997) Teacher Self-efficacy Scale, and (Murdoch, 1997) Good Teacher's questionnaire.

In order to measure teacher autonomy, Charters' (1974) teacher autonomy questionnaire was used. Response options were coded on 5-point scales.

### Results

The researcher ran the Pearson correlation to investigate whether there is any the relationship between teacher autonomy and teacher efficacy in an Iranian EFL context. The results of the descriptive and correlation are reported in Tables 1 and 2 respectively.

**Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Teacher Autonomy and Teacher Efficacy**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Teacher Autonomy	49	1.78	4.83	3.2993	.68191
Teacher Efficacy	49	3.00	4.56	3.8514	.39395
Valid N (listwise)	49				

**Table 2. Correlation Analysis between Teacher Autonomy and Teacher Efficacy Scores**

		Teacher Autonomy	Teacher Efficacy
Teacher Autonomy	Pearson Correlation	1	.306*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.032
	N	49	49
Teacher Efficacy	Pearson Correlation	.306*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.032	

N	49	49
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\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

As Table 2 reveals, there is a positive, low, and significant relationship between teacher autonomy and teacher efficacy scores ( $r = .306$ ,  $\text{sig.} = .032$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Afterwards, the researcher ran the correlation to explore the relationship between teacher autonomy and the subscales of teacher efficacy (Efficacy to influence decision-making, Instructional self-efficacy, Disciplinary self-efficacy, Efficacy to enlist community and parental involvement, Efficacy to create a positive school climate). Tables 3 and 4 show the pertaining results.

**Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of Teacher Autonomy and the subscales of Teacher Efficacy**

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Efficacy to influence decision making	49	4.0175	.42422
Instructional self-efficacy	49	3.9745	.48209
Disciplinary self-efficacy	49	4.1020	.60363
Efficacy to enlist community and parental involvement	49	3.4694	.65940
Efficacy to create a positive school climate	49	2.7653	1.05130
Teacher autonomy	49	3.2993	.68191

**Table 4. Correlation between Teacher Autonomy and the Subscales of Teacher Efficacy**

		Teacher autonomy
Efficacy to influence decision making	Pearson Correlation	.327*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.022
	N	49
Instructional self-efficacy	Pearson Correlation	.163
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.264
	N	49
Disciplinary self-efficacy	Pearson Correlation	.256
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.076
	N	49
Efficacy to enlist community and parental involvement	Pearson Correlation	.214
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.140
	N	49
Efficacy to create a positive school climate	Pearson Correlation	.014
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.926
	N	49

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

Based on the findings, just one of the relationships is significant. There is a positive, medium, and significant relationship between teacher autonomy and efficacy to influence decision making ( $r = .32$ ,  $\text{sig.} = .02$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

Following the objectives of the study, the second question of the study delves into the effect of gender on teacher autonomy in an Iranian EFL context. As mentioned earlier, 26 male and 23 female EFL teachers participated in this study. To find the answer of the second research question, an independent samples t-test was run. Tables 5 and 6 show the pertaining results.

**Table 5. Descriptive Statistics of Males' and Females' Teacher Autonomy Scores**

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Teacher Autonomy	Male	26	3.1645	.62390	.12236
	Female	23	3.4517	.72558	.15129

**Table 6. Independent Samples t-test to compare Males' and Females' Teacher Autonomy Scores**

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Teacher Autonomy	Equal variances assumed	.381	.540	-1.490	47	.143	-.28716	.19276	-.67495	.10063
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.476	43.728	.147	-.28716	.19458	-.67938	.10506

Based on the results of the independent sample t-test presented in Table 6, the difference between males' and females' teachers autonomy scores is not significant (sig. = .143).

### Discussion and conclusion

The main objective of the present study was to find out whether there is any relationship between teacher autonomy and teacher efficacy in an Iranian EFL context. Additionally, this research was an attempt to see if gender affects teacher autonomy in an Iranian EFL context.

The results of the correlation revealed that the relationship between teacher autonomy and teacher efficacy is positive, low, and significant. Concerning the role of gender, it was concluded that it did not have a determining role in the teacher autonomy.

Based on the results of the correlation, it was concluded that there was a positive, low, and significant relationship between teacher autonomy and teacher efficacy ( $r = .306$ , sig. = .032,  $p < .05$ ).

The researcher also investigated the relationship between teacher autonomy and the subscales of teacher efficacy (Efficacy to influence decision-making, Instructional self-efficacy, Disciplinary self-efficacy, Efficacy to enlist community and parental involvement, Efficacy to create a positive school climate). The results revealed that efficacy to influence decision making had a positive, medium, and significant relationship with teacher autonomy ( $r = .32$ , sig. = .02,  $p < .05$ ). The relationship between teacher autonomy and the other subscales of teacher efficacy was not significant.

In scientific literature, teacher autonomy is commonly defined as the right of the teacher to exert initiative and carry out professional action according to school stakeholders' needs and based on the necessary conditions of success. Teacher efficacy is also defined as the extent to which teachers believe that they can control the reinforcement of their actions within themselves (internal control of reinforcement) or in the environment (external control of reinforcement) (Rotter, 1990). So it can be expected that teacher autonomy and teacher efficacy can have a significant role in the second language teaching.

The results of this study are in line with the findings of Primus Cancro's (1992) study that examined the interaction of teacher efficacy and organizational culture on the perceived autonomy of the teacher. 119 teachers representing five secondary schools participated in the study. The findings indicated that organizational culture and efficacy can predict the perceived teacher autonomy.

The results of the independent samples t-test showed that the males and females are not different in terms of teacher autonomy (sig. = .143). Based on the findings, it can be inferred that gender did not have a determining role in the teacher autonomy.

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# ESP VOCABULARY INSTRUCTION: THE EFFECT OF USING GAME- ORIENTED TEACHING METHODS ON IRANIAN ESP LEARNERS MAJORING IN PSYCHOLOGY

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## ABSTRACT

One of the most difficult but important parts of learning a target language for ESP learners is vocabulary acquisition. In addition to some general and semi-technical lexical items, each genre contains specific jargons to be learnt, especially if the purpose is to introduce the concepts to the students. Using pedagogical games for teaching vocabulary has become very popular for several decades. The present study attempts to investigate the effect of using games in vocabulary learning of Iranian students of psychology. To do so, 60 L2 learners majoring in psychology in Iran, Tonekabon Azad University were randomly selected and assigned into two groups through Nelson Test (1976). During a five week treatment, the experimental group benefited from games, and traditional teaching methods were applied for the control group. Then two vocabulary tests were administered and a covariate analysis was conducted on the pretest-posttest vocabulary test scores. Based on their scores on the post- test, the subjects in the game-oriented group outperformed those in the conventional one.

**Keywords:** *Iranian ESP learners, vocabulary acquisition, game oriented teaching method*

## 1. Introduction

Learning a foreign language is to a large extent related to vocabulary knowledge. According to Schmitt (2000), learning vocabulary is a very complex and multidimensional matter. Therefore, there are different issues to be focused for both L2 teachers and learners in this field. Vocabulary knowledge is an important consideration especially for those who want learn it for specific purposes .like the learners at college level. Moreover, Blachowicz and Fisher (2005) believe that words allow the learners to extend their understanding of the world around them and to access to completely new worlds. They maintain that in addition to affecting reading performance, vocabulary knowledge affects a student's ability to participate fully in both social and academic classroom routines. They also believe that all students can benefit from vocabulary instruction, especially if that instruction is conducted according to their strength and needs. Richards (2003) suggested three important changes on language teaching: the traditional approaches (up to late 1960s), and a move toward classic communicative teaching (1970s to 1990s), and current communicative language teaching CLT (1990s to the present) respectively, which shifted L2 researchers' focus from traditional lesson formats toward using toward innovative tasks such as pair work activities, role plays and group work activities. These trends led to a movement called ESP movement in 1970s and 1980s. Hutchinson and Waters (1987) assert its practical domain driven by people who needed English for specific purposes such as reading academic textbooks or business objectives. Moreover, Dovey (2006) states some specific courses make learners ready for their workplace with objectives different from other course plans.

In ESP course plans, vocabulary teaching programs are needed to expand and improve learners' potential in catching meaning and developing the knowledge of the jargon of the genre. Since ESP courses largely consists of a lot of terminology and abbreviations, therefore, the essential question is how to make instruction effective by choosing a teaching procedure which can facilitate VL of ESP L2 learners. Watts-Taffe and Truscott (2000) suggest that providing rich explanation to elaborate and contextualize word meanings, using nonverbal cues such as facial expressions, gestures, illustrations, and other visuals can support word learning. Students usually only acquire new vocabulary through new words in their textbooks or those given by their teachers and

classmates in the classroom. According to Blachowicz and Fisher (2005), limited knowledge of English vocabulary may affect the performance of English language learners in at least four ways: the development and maintenance of social relationships with other students, participation in academic learning routines, comprehension as a part of reading instruction, and comprehension as a part of content area instruction. By taking into consideration the importance of ESP vocabulary and the problems that learners may encounter through their lack of knowledge in workplace settings, successful vocabulary instructions are needed to expand the learners' level of knowledge. Boshier and Smalkowski (2002) report a research on need analysis of learners and stress the significance of providing the best way to maximize the learners' communicative ability through terminologies in real-life hospital situation. In a similar study, Medlin (2009) proves that providing an adjunct course for learners requires assigning attention to complexities inherent in curriculum development such as material development, essential terminology and decision making. In addition to these studies, Yarmohammadi (2005) analyzed and evaluated a selected number of ESP textbooks in Iran, and offered some suggestions and ways that ESP methodology and material production should precede. But, in a CLT classroom, playing vocabulary games is one the activities which require learners to actively and enthusiastically interact with their classmate. Other methods of teaching vocabulary to ESP learners are also practiced and studied. Abdullah Ali Alghamdi (2014) camp[are two methods for teaching vocabulary namely CATs (Content Area Teaching) and ETV (English Technical Vocabulary) in a Saudi Arabian industrial college called YIC (Yanbu Industrial College). It was also found that ETV teaching is more challenging to ESPTs than CATs.

In a CLT course of English teaching, playing vocabulary games are used as instructional tools involving students in an active interaction with their fellow classmates. Lewis (1999) says through games children will experiment, discover, and interact with their environment. Therefore, games give learners the opportunity to practice language in various language areas, such as spelling, grammar and vocabulary. Tyson (2000) suggests that a game should involve "friendly" competition, keep all of the students involved and interested, and give students a chance to learn, practice, or review specific language material. This is confirmed by Krashen and Terrell's (1983) comments that "All human beings can acquire additional languages, but they must have the desire or the need to acquire the language, and the opportunity to use the language they study for real communicative purposes" (p. 17). Nguyen and Nga (2003) report a research that learners stated that they liked the relaxed atmosphere, the competitiveness, and the motivation brought to the class by the games and they could learn the material quickly in anon-stressful environment. Learners liked game-oriented activities and were greatly motivated. According to August and Collins (2005), rich instruction for ELL students includes the same components relevant to native language speakers, definitional, contextual, and usage information, with the addition of further elaboration. Many textbook and methodology manual writers have argued that games are not just time-filling activities but have a great educational value. Traditional activities get students involved in a boring process of memorization of long vocabulary lists, derivations, repetition of words, translation, fill-in-the-blank exercises, etc. Scrivener (2009, p. 241) investigated how long list of words and their translation may defy memory. He beleives even when we can recall the word we want, it doesn't seem to fit comfortably into our sentences, so the action of noting down a list of lexical items makes no guarantee that remembering will take place. Therefore, from a pedagogical point of view, there is a need for research that helps to identify the suitable activities that provide optimal opportunities for L2 VL. Taken together, using more interesting methods can help both EFL and ESP teachers and learners. This study aimed to explore whether game-based methods are more effective than the traditional ones in L2 ESP vocabulary teaching. Furthermore, the results of the study could probably affect Iranian teachers, syllabus designers, and learners' perspectives to implement the games more effectively in EFL curricula.

## 2. Method

### 2.1. Participants

To implement the study 200 female ESP students were randomly chosen from senior students majoring in psychology field in Iran, Tonekabon Azad University. Through the Nelson Test (Fowler & Coe, 1976) 60 learners whose scores fell one SD above and below the mean were selected to take part in the study. This ensured that all the participants were homogeneous and in the intermediate level. Then they were randomly divided into two groups of 30 learners: one game and one traditional group. This procedure guaranteed the existence of a fair degree of homogeneity.

### 2.2. Instruments

Three main instruments were used in the present study. The first one was a Nelson Language Proficiency test which was used as a standardized measure to check the homogeneity of subjects in terms of language proficiency. The second instruments were two separate but parallel 18 item multiple-choice and 12 matching item measuring the technical vocabulary in psychology developed by the researchers. The test items were taken from English for psychology students. Two major steps were used to standardize the tests. In the first step, the tests were administered to a pilot group of 15 learners each. In the second step, the revised tests were administered to another pilot group of 15. Item difficulty and item discrimination of each test items were estimated. The final tests were used as the assessment tool in the pretest and the posttest phase of the study. The reliability of the tests was investigated by the use of Cronbach's alpha formula through SPSS. It was  $\alpha=0.70$ . Also, the validity of the vocabulary tests was investigated by the expert judgments.

### 2.3. Materials

The only materials used in this study were some pedagogical games prepared and planned by the researchers for teaching vocabulary. These games were taken from EFL textbooks taught in Iran like Interchange series, American file and other CLT textbooks. They involve jigsaws, puzzles and role plays. The researchers tried to involve psychological specific terms instead of the existing lexical items in these games.

### 2.3. Procedures

For the purpose of this study Sixty out of two hundred students were selected based on their score on Proficiency test. They were randomly assigned into two groups, experimental and control groups. Two separate Parallel tests of psychological vocabulary were developed by the researchers. Their reliability and validity was estimated. First a pre- test was administered. The two groups were almost the same. After the pre test, the treatment began. Students in experimental group received five weeks of instruction. Some games taken from EFL textbooks taught in Iran was prepared and modified by the researchers. Specific Psychological lexical items were added to these games. Students were asked to do crossword puzzles, jigsaws, role-plays, Guessing games and in this way practice using these items in their exercises. The control group start learning specific vocabularies in psychology through traditional ways such as translation and memorization fill in the blanks, multiple choices, matching and other common exercises used in ESP text books. After five weeks of instruction, a post- test was participated to both groups. The results were investigated and analyzed through SPSS.

### 3. Results and discussion

This section is oriented towards the quantitative account, descriptive and inferential analysis of the data gathered through pre test and post test. The data is analyzed by SPSS software and the findings are reported as followed.

**Table 1. Descriptive statics of game and traditional groups**

Variable	N	Pretest		Posttest	
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation
Experimental	30	13.60	1.68	15.45	1.79
Control	30	13.08	2.12	13.12	2.17

The number of participants in each group were ( $n = 30$ ) the same. As Table 1 demonstrates the pretest mean scores of the two groups were not much different from each other before the treatment. The pretest means score of the first group (Game) was 13.60; and in the second group (Traditional), the pretest means score was 13.08. But the posttest mean score indicated a greater difference after giving treatment. The posttest mean score for the game group is ( $M = 15.45$ ), and it is 13.12 for the traditional group.

**Table 2. Test of equality of variance**

Test	F	df	Sig.
Levene	.45	1, 38	.51

In order to address the research question, it was important to make sure that all groups had normal distribution. A Levene's test of equality of error variance in SPSS was applied in order to demonstrate the normality of the groups. According to table 2, the significance value was ( $p = 0.51$ ). Therefore, the assumption of

the equality of variance is not rejected at 0.05. As a result, according to the Levene's test, the two groups had normal distribution.

**Table3. Analysis of covariance on the post-test scores for the effect of the method**

Source	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	eta Square
Game	1	23	41.83	10.59	0.002

In order to see the effect of the first method of instruction (i.e., game) on L2 VL scores the analysis of covariance was conducted. As Table 3 demonstrates, the effect of the treatment was significant on the posttest scores:  $F = 10.59$ ,  $p = 0.002$  ( $*p < 0.05$ ). This result indicates that there was a significant difference in the game group. That is, two method of instruction did not have the same effect on the posttest scores.

Also, to answer the second research question, a Levene's test of equality of error variance was used.

**Table 4. Test of equality of variance**

Test	F	df	Sig.
Levene	1.50	1, 38	0.90

As Table 4 displays, the significant value of this test is  $p = 0.90$ , therefore, the assumption of the equality of variance is not rejected at 0.05.

#### 4. Conclusion

Teaching new words in target language is one of the most important issues for L2 teachers, and also syllabus designers. L2 learners need a large number of L2 new words, too. So the use of various activities and games might increase the interest and motivation of L2 learners to learn L2 new words better. Therefore, there are different considerations for both L2 teachers and learners in this field to promote the vocabulary knowledge of L2 learners. Successful communication in occupational atmospheres is because of considerable attention being placed on ESP. In this respect, game pedagogy can be really effective in teaching ESP terms to EFL learners. This study investigated the role of games in enhancing and developing ESP vocabulary to EFL learners. According to the results of pretest, the mean scores of the two groups were not much different from each other before the treatment. But the posttest mean score indicated a greater difference after the treatment. Therefore, the findings support the idea that VL can improve through game oriented approaches. The result of the present study is in line with Nguyen and Nga (2003) research. They carried out a study on the effect of game to teaching general language skills. The results obtained by these researchers indicate a significant improvement in learners' language knowledge. They reported that the learners like the friendly competition and the motivation brought by the games to the classroom. This promotes CLT approach and paves the way for more successful teaching and learning and improves learners' "Communicative Competence" by putting them as part of the lessons themselves. The learners were more willing to participate actively in class games and conquer their opponents. Their friendly competition helped them to work together and communicate via ESP terms. So games can play an important role in teaching or learning the new L2 words in ESP courses for the EFL participants of this study and are more effective than traditional procedure in promoting ESP VL at the college level. Considering English as a foreign language in Iran, most learners specially ESP ones encounter problems in learning technical terms in English. Therefore, providing effective games can reduce their anxiety toward learning and retaining new word and leads to interactive classroom which Savignon (2002) has marked as an aid to language learning? While most of studies, previously done, were conducted on children (e.g., Lewis, 1999) and their objectives were mostly on general language ability, the focus of this study was on adults on ESP vocabulary leaning. To conclude, the results can also be effective for EFL teachers to make ESP classes more fruitful and at the same time fun syllabus designer can provide programs to insert games in all EFL classes; EAP, EGP or other language related courses.

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# AN ANALYSIS OF EFL TEXTBOOKS IN IRAN FROM THE CULTURAL AWARENESS PROSPECTIVE

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## Abstract

The treatment of culture in foreign language textbooks is comparatively a new trend in English Language Teaching (ELT) which attempts to raise students' awareness of international culture as well as that of their own. This paper endeavors to critically analyze four EFL textbooks taught in Iran based on some cultural awareness aspects to see how much this books yields awareness and to ask teachers ideas about the treatment of cultural awareness based on aims of teaching and aspects of culture through a questionnaire, interview and observation. It is also tried to find what kind of teaching materials for teaching about other cultures are mostly used by teachers. For this purpose, four new EFL textbooks named American File series, Top Notch and Summit series, Interchange series and Four Corners series were first critically analyzed based on the criterion mentioned in the questionnaire for cultural points. The questionnaire was developed by ECML (European Centre for Modern Languages, 30 January, 2003), a center that have been focusing on theories of learning and analyzing them in more detail. The validity of the questionnaire was confirmed by this workshop. The researchers also investigated and analyzed all existing questionnaires concerning cultural awareness studies and found a lot of similarities in content in all of them including the one used in this study. The result shows that cultural awareness is practiced almost in all these four books, but interchange series is more sensitive to cultural aspects than other three textbooks. This questionnaire was also given with the same criteria used in the analysis of textbooks to one hundred teachers of these books. To increase the validity of results, teachers were also interviewed and observed in their classes to ask their reaction about cultural awareness treatment based on aim of teaching and cultural aspects. The results of data obtained through questionnaire and interview from the teachers also confirm the treatment of culture in these text books. The teachers also believe Interchange series is more sensitive to culture than other textbooks. The results are shown in percentages. It has also become clear through this study that textbooks are still the best sources used by teachers for teaching culture because different cultural aspects are practiced through these EFL sources.

**Keywords:** Cultural awareness, textbooks, EFL, ECML

## 1. Introduction

Moerman in Hinkel (1999) defines culture as a set –perhaps– a system of principles of interpretation, together with the products of that system. It can be seen as the framework of assumptions, ideas, and beliefs that are used to interpret other people's action, words, and patterns of thinking. However, it is very important for language learner to know the different cultural frameworks, either their own or those of others so that with their knowledge of different culture, the language learners can adapt themselves in learning the language as well as the culture of it. Communicative competence is thought to be essential in concepts of social as well as intercultural competence because it contains "the awareness of communicative processes and the ability to understand and make understood informational messages" (Müller 1995, p.46).. Exploring the foreign culture is seen as an important process which affects participants in a dialectic interrelationship. As much as learners are influenced by the foreign culture, at the same time they are also influenced by that culture. Therefore culture has to be seen as a dynamic rather than a static factor. In the last few years a number of studies and workshops on cultural awareness have been done. ECML (Malta, 7 – 11 April 1998) is a workshop in order to build a bridge between theory and practice on the theoretical basis of culture, specific principles and practical examples. The starting point for research on cultural awareness is the assumption or belief that language teaching does not equal teaching a language only, but also involves cultural, political, economical, and societal aspects of the

country or countries whose language one wants to learn. As Martin J. Gannon points out in *Understanding Global Cultures*: "it is not surprising that culture is important when individuals must communicate directly" and also that "knowing a country's language is no guarantee of understanding its cultural mindset" (2001, p.18). Text books are important resources during the English language learning process especially for teachers in assisting students to learn better. Therefore, according to Azizifar et al. (2009), textbooks serve as the basis for much of the language input and are considered to be dependable for many learners in Iran. However, there are some groups of teachers who have a very poor opinion of textbooks. They say textbooks are boring and inappropriate for the class as they want to rely on their own ideas, reference books, pages from magazines, ideas from the students and other resources. Therefore, some teachers make decision to do without textbook, but this decision is possible if teachers have enough experience and time to provide a consistent program of work by using their own bank of materials. In contrast, a large group of teachers and learners often feel positive about textbooks as for the former a textbook gives them a consistent syllabus and also dependable teaching sequences and for the latter textbook is reassuring and give them a chance for what's coming and reviews what they have done. Since implementation of American English Books in Kerman Shokuh Institutes, these textbooks have been criticized by supervisors and teachers as well as students for many reasons including. Curtain and Pesola in Savignon (1988) proposed some criteria for evaluating textbooks and other printed materials when they examined materials used in Spanish, German, English-speaking classrooms. They investigated whether culture is integrated into the program materials or not, whether the emphasis of the program is on experiencing culture rather than on learning that culture, whether culture is presented from global perspective rather than focusing on a single country, region, or ethnic group, whether the situations and language presented are culturally authentic, or whether the materials promote an appreciation of culture or not. As Prodromou (1992; as cited in Sardi, 2002) states, the learner's awareness of the target culture has an impact upon the acquisition of the language. A positive attitude toward the target language culture, i.e. respecting other people and their way of life, is a factor in language learning that leads to cross cultural understanding. Before students can learn about culture they must be receptive to the concept of learning about cultures other than their own. According to Karimpour (2000), viewing everything through the eyes of our own culture and its values, usually emerges either through false stereotyping or undue ethnocentrism. English as a foreign language (EFL) learners' negative attitudes toward second language (L2) culture may lead to decreased motivation and interaction, and because of decreased L2 input and interaction it may lead to unsuccessful attainment of L2 proficiency. There are indications that some ELT course books focusing on the target culture have an alienating effect on students who do not want to be culturally assimilated and, as a consequence, give up learning the language (Gray, 2000). On the other hand, it is not uncommon for many students to become alienated from their own social and cultural settings as they become adjusted to the value system of the Anglo-American world. Many educators in Asian and African countries have expressed their concern for the status of their native culture and language. There are also some opposing views concerning cultural awareness raising in textbooks. Because of problems with the cultural influence of English on other societies, it is suggested that an ideologically, politically and culturally neutral form of English should be promoted in ELT. The suggestion is that, instead of focusing entirely on the culture of the target language, it is more beneficial to take a cross-cultural approach to EFL teaching. According to Prodromou (1992), for example, the development of students' cross-cultural awareness is of vital importance because in this way they will become more sensitive to the world's many cultural systems and will care more about the world they live in. There have been similar studies carried out with regard to both or one of the variables. For example, Ashraf, Motalebzadeh, & Kafi (2013), investigated the EFL learners' attitudes through the analysis of Interchange and American file series. They also checked these EFL localized textbooks instead of the original ones. The results indicated that EFL learners prefer using original English textbooks instead of the localized ones. Moreover, for all these learners' cultural awareness have been affected by the textbooks. Rajabi and Ketabi (2012) investigated the aspects of cultural elements in prominent English textbooks for EFL setting. The results indicated that the pragmatic (sociolinguistic) occurrences are quite predominant probably because the forms and functions of language such as, to offer, to clarify and to request are included in almost all the chapters. Abdollahzadeh and Baniasad (2010) also conducted a research on ideologies in the imported English textbooks: EFL learners and teachers' awareness and attitude. Studying the results and from the total frequencies, it can be concluded that Spectrum VI (total frequency: 58) has the most ideologies. Comparing frequencies, one can observe that the higher the level of a textbook, the more frequent the ideologies.

So the role of text books as an important source of learning is very important in this case. In this study this role is going to be investigated to find whether cultural awareness is focused in Iranian EFL textbooks or not.

### 1.1. The purpose of this study

In this study the researcher aims to:

1. Critically analyze the textbooks based on some cultural awareness aspects to see how much this books yields awareness.
2. Ask teachers ideas about the treatment of cultural awareness through questionnaire and interview based on aim of teaching and cultural aspects.
3. Find what kind of teaching materials for teaching about other cultures are mostly used by teachers.

## 2. Method

### 2.1. Participants

In order to collect the required data the questionnaire was given to 25 institutions and by the end of our survey 100 teachers were willing to answer our questionnaire. These teachers have been working in this job for many years and have a good familiarity with all of these textbooks.

### 2.2. Instruments

Three research instruments were used in this study:

1. A questionnaire was designed in three parts with some sub-questions taken from ECML (European Centre for Modern Languages, 30 January, 2003), a center that have been focusing on theories of learning and analyzing them in more detail. This questionnaire is designed by this center for the purpose of cultural awareness. The validity of the questionnaire was confirmed by this workshop. The researchers also investigated and analyzed all existing questionnaires concerning cultural awareness studies and found a lot of similarities in content in all of them including the one used in this study.
2. Interview in which teachers explained and talked about the activities and strategies concerning cultural awareness in more detail and express their ideas about the extent culture is practiced in these books.
3. Observation to increase the validity of results and to confirm them.

### 2.3. Materials

Four different new EFL textbooks were investigated and analyzed critically for cultural points .They are:

1. American File series by Barbara Hoskins, Karen Frazier, Ritsuko Nakata (2015) .Oxford University Press.
2. Top Notch and Summit series by Joan Saslow, Allen Ascher (2014). Foruzesh Publication, Iran.
3. Interchange series by Jack C. Richard,, Jonathan Hull, Susan Proctor(2014). Cambridge University press
4. Four Corners series by Jack. C. Richard, Bohlke (2012). Cambridge University press.

### 2.4. Procedures

To implement the first and second purpose of research, first four different new EFL textbooks named American File, Top Notch, Interchange and Four corners were investigated and analyzed critically for cultural points to see how much awareness they offer to the learners. At this stage the criteria for the analysis were taken from a questionnaire developed by ECML workshop (Malta, 7 - 11 April 1998) whose purpose is to build a bridge between theory and practice on the theoretical basis of culture, specific principles and practical examples. The validity of the questionnaire was confirmed by this workshop. The researchers also investigated and analyzed all existing questionnaires concerning cultural awareness studies and found a lot of similarities in content in all of them including the one used in this study. Closely concerned with the second aim of the research, to ask teachers' ideas about the treatment of culture in this textbooks based on aim of teaching and cultural aspects, Twenty five institutions in Mazandaran province, all teaching these EFL textbooks, were chosen. One hundred teachers of these institutions agree to respond the questionnaire. The result is shown in percentages. They were also interviewed and observed for more precision.



### 3. Results and Discussion

This section is oriented towards the qualitative account and descriptive analysis of the quantitative data and findings gathered through two major instruments of the present research study, The result of interview is also discussed each of which will be presented and discussed below.

#### 3.1. Critical Textbook analysis results

##### 3.1.1. Text: *New Interchange*, Cambridge University Press, Jack C. Richards, 1990/2005

The interchange series is a staple of the EFL textbook lineup, having been in print for almost 20 years. The most recent edition stresses English for International Communication and differs from previous versions in its inclusion of cultural information and more international scenarios. Most of the characters are of different backgrounds with usually at least one a native speaker from the U.S. or U.K. In unit 5 "Tell me about your family" e.g. Ryan from America and Soo-Mi from Korea are having a conversation on family, marriage, divorce and gender roles. So both source and target culture is practiced in these series. Students are asked to paraphrase the facts stated by each character in the dialogue. There is a section named "Snapshot", which represents interesting cultural points in different regions in the world and makes the learners compare their own culture with others. They practiced tolerance of other cultures and understanding their value system. There are a lot of exercises for critical thinking and analysis. The units focus on understanding statistics with selected information on American family trends and overgeneralizations regarding other countries such as in Australia, e.g. 87% of married couples have children. Whether true or not such a statement without context or qualification only creates an arbitrary image in the students mind regarding the target community, without understanding the circumstances involved or evaluating, comparing or learning from the cultural information. The writing exercise which follows encourages students to reflect on cultural information. This section begins with a sample statement "In my country most people get married at age..." Such examples are too general and abstract to be of any usefulness to the student's cultural or linguistic learning. Such an exercise for the purpose of cultural awareness raising should be less matter of fact and more open ended and subjective. Perhaps instead asking questions like; what are important family values and how do they affect marriage trends? How and why might these be different cross culturally or individually? The final section of the units consists of a reading comprehension exercises on the changing American families and many other social and cultural structures.. Here students read vague statements from Americans regarding family matters and other cultural aspects and are asked to describe the different problems in each family or in the society. Although these exercises require reflection on the culture, although it is biased in nature and does not provide an opportunity for contemplation or objective comparison with the students own realities. Such activities are only useful if the cultural information comes from the students and is evaluated within context in order to fully appreciate and understand the causes, effects and interpretations which constitute awareness. But generally speaking they are better than other series in implementing culture. Cultural aspects of history geography are frequently practiced. Little is said about politics. Racial minorities are seen in a positive way. Youth culture is presented in different exercises and ways. Customs and stereotypes are also shown to some extent. Social expectations are overemphasized. Different forms of art are also highlighted through the tasks. So interchange series can be a very good source of culture teaching. The 80% of teachers also believe they are the best books learning cultural points.

##### 3.1.2. Text: *Top Notch and Summit series* by Joan Saslow, Allen Ascher (2014).

Top Notch, addressing the beginners and intermediate level students proved rich as a source to enhance the learners' cultural sensitivity, given its reception of diversity in sociocultural identities among the learners and depiction of the value systems of diverse national and cultural groups. Nevertheless, such reception of heterogeneity seemed to cease when the system of discourses in the books was concerned. Utilitarianism, the solidarity and deference politeness strategies and the involvement face system, associate with that, constituted the communication system ubiquitously observed throughout the books. This was found as a fallacy in the books, not capable of making the learners pragmatically effective for intercultural communication. Summit, on the other hand, addressing upper-intermediate and advanced learners, seemed to be following a different objective. Apparently, assuming its audience to be competent enough for intercultural communication, the books followed the goal of acquainting the learners more with the culture of individualism, characteristic of western societies, probably to socialize them as a member of such

communities, whose values are becoming globalized. The books, therefore, became homogeneously the locus of individualistic cultural values, both in terms of the depicted sociocultural identities and discourse structure system. Accordingly, they maintained the approach of Top Notch in presenting exclusively the utilitarian discourse style, but replaced its diversity of sociocultural identities with a homogeneous portrayal of individualistic identity values. Juxtaposing the results of the analyses, one can see that the kind of socialization Top Notch and Summit English courses provide altogether can be sufficient in raising the learners' cultural sensitivity and enhancing their apprehension of diversity; however, it cannot adequately promote their pragmatic competence for intercultural communication. Intercultural communication does not merely require the attitude and knowledge for the reception of diversity, but the skills as well to understand such diversity when they manifest in the communication practices of the people. Therefore, Top Notch, for instance, could do better, had it demonstrated how the diverse sociocultural identity values it depicted aiming to acquire the language for intercultural communication. 65% of teachers agree with this.

### 3.1.3. Text: *Four Corners by Jack. C. Richard, Bohlke (2012. Cambridge University press.*

Four Corners are useful tools in helping students to meet some Freshman English Goals and Objectives. As some positive themes, Four Corners offers an interesting array of topics and is sequenced well, and its grammar is not overemphasized. On the negative side, the series does not always highlight the importance of speaking and clear connections between the grammar sections and the speaking activities. The data suggests that Four Corners may be more effective at promoting speaking and listening. Cultural points are not so much emphasized in these series and it is confined to adapting to classroom culture. Little is said about target culture or students own culture. Most of the instructors commented that "some students never adapt" and noted that in spite of a teacher's desire for students to learn through group and pair work, some students still "prefer to learn alone." "Students will not improve their ability to interact with people from other cultures and there is "not too much about foreign cultures (manners, traditions, customs or extralinguistic factors (posture, eye contact, tone of voice, body language, customs, etc.)" .so there is little tolerance toward otherness, little understanding of others value system. But students learn how to behave in situations when abroad. Although there are some conversations and monologues presented in non-native voices, and some dialogues on topics such as places to visit in foreign countries, the series may not present enough intercultural information to adequately address this goal. Cultural aspects are not practiced very well.

### 3.1.4. Text: *American file series by Barbara Hoskins, Karen Frazier, Ritsuko Nakata (2015) .Oxford University Press.*

The selected topics in these series are familiar to the learners and enhance learners' motivation. The topics and themes in the textbook are related to learners' needs and interests. The materials in the book are up-to-date using authentic listening and speaking materials. The learners are encouraged to take some degree of responsibility for their learning. They are facilitator of the learning process and contain communicative exercises that enable learners to do their communicative tasks in real life situations. All of the textbooks were found to be well-designed in this regard, as they allowed the learners to copy the different tasks in some real life situations. Cultural aspect like the historical, geographical, racial, aspects are directly and indirectly practiced in theses series. Youth cultures and different stereotypes are shown through conversations and reading texts. The learners work as they are expected socially. Art and literature can be seen in different sections of these books. In the textbooks, there is a section with different names which represents some cultural points about the American culture and gives the opportunity to the learners to compare their culture in that specific aspect, with their own culture. Therefore the learners not only can understand their own culture, but also the target culture. So the There is also a section named Practical English in which one can find functional language and social situations and learners get to know some of the practical expressions and some cultural points in the USA. So the value system of the foreign culture is well understood. The textbooks offered cross-cultural comparison between foreign and domestic culture. They can critically compare the two cultures. Practice of practical language such as: how to ask for directions, how to request services at a hotel, airport etc is frequently seen. Furthermore, American English File provides content to help students develop a cultural fluency by creating and awareness of the varied rules across cultures for issues like politeness, greetings and introductions, etc. But nearly half of the tasks in American English File expect the learners to "respond". The rest of the tasks include "initiation". It can seen through these series that the authors of American English File in spite of giving much importance to group

activities in the process of learning have given importance to tasks that involves learners into activities that should be done individually. As far as culture is concerned, it is well practiced, but not as interchange series. The above –mentioned textbooks are analyzed critically .The results show that all of these books are sensitive to cultural awareness giving and almost in all of these books culture teaching is an important factor that improves the quality of learning a foreign language. Among these books, interchange series are more sensitive than others to cultural awareness.

### 3.2. Questionnaire analysis for teachers' ideas about cultural awareness in EFL textbooks

Tables below are the results of teachers' ideas about these four EFL textbooks taught in Iranian institutions collected through the questionnaire.

**Table 3. How important is the following aims of teaching culture?**

	not at all	hardly	fairly	important	very important
Learning facts about Great Britain, US, etc	0.4	4.5	00.0	55	40.1
Understanding one's own culture	0.2	0.3	5	40	40
Understanding the value systems of other cultures	10.2	8.6	1.2	48	32
Developing a critical attitude towards society	3.3	6.2	1.1	42.4	47
Being tolerant toward otherness	0.00	0.00	10	10	80
Learning how to behave in situations when abroad	0.00	0.00	0.00	10	90

The purpose of this first question was to examine why teachers thought it important to teach this subject. The answers to the first part of the questionnaire on cultural awareness show a relatively homogeneous picture of the teaching situation in Iran. The main aims show a clear tendency towards seeing culture in broadly humanistic terms. Imparting facts about the country of the target language (e.g. about history or geography) still ranks quite high in the opinions of many teachers (95.1percent of those interviewed think that learning facts about foreign countries is "important" or "very important") but humanistic aims exceed this factual information distinctly: 89.4 percent of the teachers think that "Developing a critical attitude towards society" is "important" or "very important". This compares with 100 percent for the aim "Learning how to behave in situations when abroad"; 80 percent for "Understanding the value systems of other cultures" and the aim that ranks highest in the minds of teachers is "Being tolerant toward otherness" reaching 90 percent. It is surprising that "Understanding one's own culture" ranks quite high, too, with 83 percent of the teachers saying it is an "important" or "very important" aim in the teaching of a foreign language.

**Table 4. How much do you focus on the following aspects of culture in your lessons?**

	not at all	hardly	sometimes	quite a lot	very often
History	2.3	1.0	.55	30.7	11
Geography	3.1	0.00	.59	.32	30.1
Politics	1.1	0.00	.54	40.5	4.4
Racial Minorities	3.2	1.1	.30	.50	15.7
Youth culture	1.1	0.00	.35	53.9	10
Customs	0.00	0.00	.32	0.8	60
Stereotypes	1.2	1.0	.38	.59	1.8
Social expectations	0.00	0.00	.15	.70	.15
Arts (literature, film)	0.00	0.00	.13	.7	.80

The outcome of the second question shows a slight mismatch compared to what one would expect having read the answers in question number one. The question is "How much do you focus on the following aspects of

culture in your lessons?" For history, geography and politics approximately half of the teachers say that they treat this part of culture only "sometimes". The topics "Racial minorities", which received 65.7 percents the answer "quite a lot" or "very often" and by 70 percent of those interviewed, "Youth culture" 63.9 percent, "Customs" 68 percent and "Literature" 87 percent, "Stereotypes" 60.8percent and "Social expectations" 75 percent. The results show that "Art" is practiced more than others in these textbooks for giving cultural awareness.

**Table 5. How often do you use the following material for teaching about other cultures?**

	not at all	hardly	sometimes	quite a lot	very often
Textbook	0.0	0.00	0.00	.20	.80
Internet	1.3	0.00	.60	18.7	.20
Magazines and newspapers	.2	0.00	70	.9	.20.8
Radio and TV	0.00	0.00	.63	.17	.20
Radio and TV	0.00	0.00	70	.15	.15
Literature (novels)	0.00	0.00	80	.19	.1

The last question was "How often do you use the following material for teaching about other cultures?" Many teachers still seem to rely on the textbook as the main source for preparing their lessons (100 percent use the textbook "quite a lot" or "very often"). The other materials are "sometimes" used in the classrooms with 60 percent for internet, 70 percent for Magazines and newspapers, 63 percent for Radio and TV, 70 percent for videos and 80 percent for literature. Except the role of textbook that has the highest percent of use in EFL settings, Literature is again the second important source used for teaching culture. Teachers were interviewed. Their answer with almost the same percentages confirmed the results.

The results of interview and observation also confirm the findings. Firstly, whether it is significant to integrate culture into language learning and teaching process have been tried to answer. The reflections from the teachers' interviews showed that nearly all of the teachers have developed an understanding on the place and function of culture in language classes. They are aware that language use reflects the culture of its speakers and learning of a language together with its culture increase their intellectually, general view of the world, and communicative competence. Some even expressed that learning target culture help to understand their own culture better. As Meyer says, "Intercultural competence includes the capacity of stabilizing one's self-identity in the process of cross-cultural mediation, and of helping other people to stabilize their self-identity." (Meyer, 1991, p. 137) However, a small number of teachers expressed their fear about losing their own cultural values and also they do not see any reason for culture learning for knowledge of language is only a requirement of job. Teachers were also asked whether English language course books teach culture or not and what kind of observations about the culture they got from course books have indicated that course books have a teaching role in terms of culture. Although some claim that just American and British cultures are included in course books and especially they got negative opinions about the characteristics of some nations, mostly believe that it has a multicultural approach. Nevertheless, they also state that there is a very limited information about their own country and they wish to see more native cultural elements in course books.

#### 4. Conclusion

A number of studies have been conducted on textbook evaluation all over the world. They emphasize the great significance of textbooks in language teaching and learning. Several of these studies centered on developing criteria for materials evaluation and selection. Studies done by Kearsey and Turner (1999), Xu (2004), and Altman, Ericksen, and Pena-Shaff (2006), Gray (2000), Yakhontova (2001), and Morgan (2003) are among these works. When examining the work of others, it becomes clear that a lot of effort is placed on promoting the importance of cultural awareness. As Curtain and Pesola in Savignon (1988), Aliakbari (2005), Rajabi and Ketabi (2012), Abdollahzadeh and Baniasad (2010) and many others proposed some criteria for evaluating textbooks and other printed materials when they examined materials. They investigated whether culture is integrated into the program materials or not. Studies of these kinds show that cultural points are an integral part of EFL textbooks. Prodromou (1992; as cited in Sardi, 2002) states awareness toward the target culture has an important impact upon the acquisition of the language and is seen as the main factor in language learning that leads to

cross cultural understanding. Karimpour (2000) believes viewing everything through the eyes of our own culture and its values and just through false stereotyping or undue ethnocentrism may lead to decreased motivation and interaction. There is also some opposing view concerning cultural treatment in ELT textbooks. For example, Ashraf, Motallebzadeh, & Kafi (2013), investigated the Interchange and American file series and checked these EFL localized textbooks instead of the original ones. But they also concluded that the original textbooks lead to a better understanding of cultural points and as a result a better learning of English as a foreign language. It is clear that grammar and lexical competences alone will not enable a non-native speaker of English to successfully communicate in the foreign language. Therefore it is essential encouraging cultural awareness on various levels of language teaching. It needs to be fostered in teacher training that is to say at the root of the education, as well as in language text-books, which means directly affecting the “end-product” the learner. Surely there is a lot of cultural diversity among languages and its successful integration in the educational system needs great flexibility and the questioning of traditional teaching methods, and also a closer collaboration of theory and practice. Thus, the analysis of existing teaching materials, a change in teaching or didactics, and also a change in the role of the teachers are three key factors for the integration and practice of cultural education in schools. However Cultural education is not to be seen as a part of language classes, but teaching language competence in relation to cultural awareness and intercultural competence has the purpose of preparing students to tackle with multicultural pluralism. Communicative competence as part of language competence must always be seen within different cultural frameworks and contexts. Therefore, it may be suggested that teachers, educators and especially course book publishers essentially need to develop a critical and an objective view towards course books and their cultural components in order not to cause any misunderstanding or prejudices. Moreover, instead of putting particular English speaking countries into the centre of the course books, they need to take a multicultural approach in order to create consciousness, sensitivity and understanding for the differences and similarities of the nations.

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# EXTENSIVE READING AND ITS EFFECTS ON READING COMPREHENSION PERFORMANCE OF IRANIAN EFL STUDENTS ACCORDING TO BLOOM'S TAXONOMY

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## Abstract

The present study aimed at finding out the effects of ER on students' reading comprehension performance based on the component of knowledge of Bloom's Taxonomy. In so doing, the researcher selected 32 men and 28 women between the ages of 14 to 30 years old divided between two groups of experimental and control groups. Students of both groups were given a test of reading comprehension and answered 18 comprehension questions in 45 minutes. After the pretest, participants of the experimental group received the treatment and started to read the book "Intermediate Anecdotes in American English" by L. H. Hills extensively within a 12-session period. The control group, including 30 learners, received no treatment. In the first day after the ER period, students of both groups (experimental and control) took the reading comprehension test and scores were tabulated for the analysis. The results revealed that based on the component of knowledge of Bloom's Taxonomy; there was a significant difference in the total reading comprehension performance scores of the experimental group and control group after the experiment.

**Keywords:** Bloom's taxonomy, Extensive reading, Reading comprehension performance

## 1. Introduction

In extensive reading programs reading a large amount of texts is the main aim and the readers' comprehension is rarely tested (Day & Bamford, 2009). On the other hand, classroom assessment is necessary to facilitate learning. In fact assessment is one of the ways to align the material and the instruction with the objectives or standards (Bumen, 2007). Bloom's Taxonomy has been introduced as one of the ways to assess students' performance and make their learning align with the objectives, here enhancing students' reading performance (Eber & Parker, 2007). Bearing in mind the abovementioned information, the present study is an investigation to figure out the effects of extensive reading materials on EFL students' reading performance. In so doing, principles of Bloom's Taxonomy are used to assess the students' reading performance.

When students engage in the construction of knowledge, an element of uncertainty is introduced into the instructional process and the outcomes are not always predictable; in other words, the teacher is not certain what the students will produce. In helping students become producers of knowledge, the teacher's main instructional task is to create activities or environments that allow them opportunities to engage in higher-order thinking (Karaali, 2011). This environment and opportunity can be provided through extensive reading. However, Bloom's Taxonomy can be used to ensure the effectiveness of such environment.

## 2. Review of the related literature

Extensive reading has been introduced as a method to teaching reading comprehension that motivates and interests students most (Day & Bamford, 2009). One of the weaknesses of this method which is mainly aimed at creating interest and motivation in students was reported to be that no method of reading comprehension assessment was introduced to gauge the students' final reading performance (Day & Bamford, 2009). To fill in this gap, Bloom's Taxonomy was applied to construct suitable reading comprehension questions.

The theory which underpins extensive reading's effectiveness in terms of enhancing comprehension is Krashen's Comprehension Hypothesis which stresses that acquisition of a second language is facilitated if students are given enough comprehensible input, and when learning is conducted in a tension-free environment

(Krashen, 2004). The input hypothesis states that “we acquire language in one way: by understanding messages and we acquire language when we obtain comprehensible input”. In extensive reading programs, students will be saturated or immersed with reading materials which provides a great deal of comprehensible input.

Besides reading materials, the environment for reading is equally important. Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis (1993) states that in anxiety-producing situations, there is an affective filter which acts as a mental block preventing acquirers from fully utilizing the input they receive. But when the filter is low or down, the acquirer can fully comprehend the message and use the input to enhance their language competence. This hypothesis states that in a low-anxiety environment, that is, an environment where students feel relaxed and at ease, students learn better. Extensive reading creates this environment since students read books of their own choice i.e. according to their interest and they read them at their own pace and level. They do not make a conscious effort in reading since they are not required to take tests. They only read for pleasure and for enjoyment.

## 2.1. Models of reading

The purpose of Reading is to comprehend the meaning of the text and the writer's message the readers pay attention to message of the text and to gain information from the text not to forms or structure of written materials. Models of reading include bottom-up, top down and interactive processes (Grabe and Stoller, 2002).

### 1. Bottom – up Models

According to Alderson (2000), the bottom up process of reading is defined as a serial model where the reader begins with the printed word, recognizes graphics stimuli, decodes them to sound, recognizes word, and decodes meaning.

### 2. Top-down Models

Contrary to bottom-up models, in top-down models the readers bring their background knowledge to the text. Grabe and Stoller (2002), state that reading is directed by reader goals.

According to Alderson (2000), in top- down approaches schemata is very important. Schema theory deals with what readers bring to the text they read. Alderson defines schemata as interlocking mental structures representing reader's knowledge. Eskey (1998) believes that there are some limitations for top – down models. He states that top – down models require the prediction of meaning by using context clues and combining them with background knowledge. However this models is useful for fluent readers.

Interactive models interactive models combine elements of both, bottom- up and top – down models (Anderson 2000). In interactive models, the reader needs to be fast in order to recognize the letters. Not only should the recognition of the word be fast, but also efficient.

## 2.2. Bloom's Taxonomy

Bloom's Taxonomy was first proposed in 1956 by Benjamin Bloom following the 1948 Convention of the American Psychological Association. Three “domains” of educational activities were identified. The first of these, named the knowledge and the development of intellectual attitudes and skills. The other domains are the Affective Domain and the Psychomotor Domain. Eventually, Bloom and his co-workers established a hierarchy of educational objectives, which is generally referred to as Bloom's Taxonomy, and which divides cognitive objectives ranging from the simplest behavior to the most complex (Bloom, 1956).



Isaacs (1996) described the subdomains of Cognitive domain as follows:

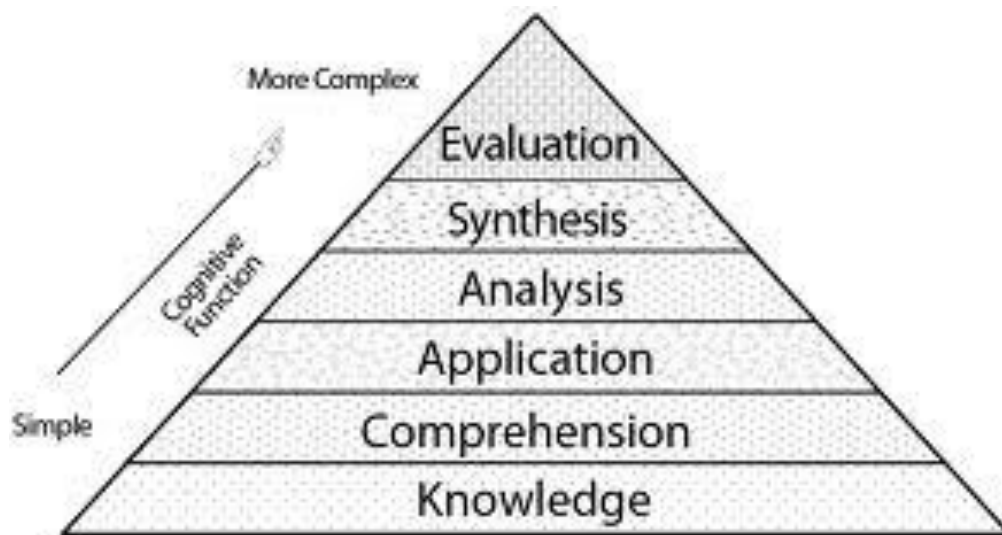


Figure 2-1: Original 1956 Hierarchy

- Knowledge: the recall of specific items
- Comprehension: can recall, but can do a little more (e.g. paraphrase, define, discuss to some extent)
- Application: all of the above, but can take information of an abstract nature and use it in concrete situations
- Analysis: can break down a communication into its constituent parts, revealing the relationships among them
- Synthesis: can pull together many disorganized elements or parts so as to form a whole
- Evaluation: makes judgments about the value of materials or methods.

### 2.3. Bloom's Taxonomy and Evaluating EFL Learners' Reading Comprehension

Evaluation of reading skills is normally associated with Bloom's taxonomy. For example, Ghabanchi, Morady-Moghaddam and Malekzadeh (2011) observed 32 EFL classes and analyzed the way teachers interacted with learners while presenting reading activities. They conducted the research on three phases; (1) pre-reading; (2) during-reading; and (3) after-reading. Using Bloom's taxonomy, the researchers found that most teachers use action verbs which are related to concrete end of the taxonomy regardless of the learners' level of proficiency and their cognitive state. Some of the other research studies in this area include Alizamani, Khodabandehlou and Mobashernia (2013), and Sunggingwati, and Nguyen (2013).

### 3. Research question

Is there any significant difference between the experimental group and control group after the experiment in the knowledge domain?

### 4. Method

#### 4.1. Sampling and setting

Subject selection in this study was done on the basis of level of the participants and availability. Sixty EFL Students from Hashtroud, East Azerbaijan, with particular linguistic, cultural, social, and geographical

characteristics. They were mixed in terms of their gender, 32 men and 28 women and between the ages of 14 to 30 years old (Mean=18.1). Linguistically speaking, 51 (85%) of the students were Azeri, and 9 (15%) of them were Persian. They were all from Hashrood. 30 participants received the treatment and started ER with the instruction of the teacher who individually taught all 30 students in two separate classes. The control group, including 30 learners received no treatment.

## 4.2. Instrumentation

In order to meet the criteria of the present research according to the research questions, three instruments including the Solutions Placement Test (SPT) to determine subjects' proficiency level, and a teacher-made reading comprehension test which was designed by a group of teachers as the pretest and posttest to measure subjects' reading comprehension performance in terms of the three lower domains of Bloom's taxonomy were used. The reliability of the test was calculated using Cronbach's alpha, and the coefficient was reported 0.86. Although the participants were studying English in intermediate classes, to have an integrated sample, a placement test was performed.

## 4.3. Data collection

### 4.3.1. Procedure for eliciting SPT data

The Solutions Placement Test (SPT) was administered among the total of 76 students studying in the intermediate-level classes (4 were absent) at the institute a week before the main experiment starts. The results of the SPT revealed that 61 (80.26%) of the participants were qualified for the study. But regarding the observance of economy of time and cost, and the homogeneity of groups only 60 students (32 men and 28 women) were selected (1 removed). The administration of the test took about 60 minutes. The placement test was administered in a single session. Here the students whose total score is over 47 on the placement test are considered as intermediate-level students.

### 4.3.2. Procedure for pretest

A week after the placement test was administered; students of both groups were given the test of reading comprehension and answered 18 comprehension questions in 45 minutes. They were all naïve to the objective and hypotheses of the research and the pretest was taken as one of the class exams.

For grading the sheets, each sheet was coded for a certain student; and an experienced teacher as a rater graded the test sheets. After the test, the average score for each sub domain and for the whole test was calculated for data tabulation purposes.

### 4.3.3. Treatment

After the pretest, students of the experimental group were asked to read all the stories of the book for enjoyment within a 12-session period. The teacher was required to indirectly check the progress with the material over the sessions. This helped the researcher ensure that the students read the materials gradually. Students of the control group were not exposed to any particular reading program; and continued their study as before.

### 4.3.4. Procedure for posttest

Since all students in both groups were unaware of the research purpose and there was enough time interval (12 weeks), in the first day after the ER period, students of both groups (experimental and control) took the same reading comprehension test within 45 minutes and scores were tabulated for data analysis.

## 5. Results of Data analysis

In order to test the hypotheses, an independent samples t-test was implemented and the effect size was calculated using the following formula:

$$\text{Eta squared} = t^2 / t^2 + (N_1 + N_2 - 2)$$

Table 1. Mean, Standard Deviation and Standard Error Mean for the experimental and control groups

	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Posttest	Experimental	30	17.1333	1.07425	.19613
	Control	30	14.4000	1.61031	.29400
Post-Knowledge	Experimental	30	5.9333	.25371	.04632
	Control	30	5.6000	.49827	.09097
Post-Comprehension	Experimental	30	5.9333	.25371	.04632
	Control	30	4.7333	.82768	.15111
Post-Application	Experimental	30	5.2667	.82768	.15111
	Control	30	4.0333	.80872	.14765

Table 2

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
POSTTEST	Equal variances assumed	1.500	.267	4.919	6	.003	2.75000	.55902	1.38213	4.11787
	Equal variances not assumed			4.919	4.927	.005	2.75000	.55902	1.30657	4.19343
Post-knowledge	Equal variances assumed			1.732	6	.134	.50000	.28868	-.20636	1.20636
	Equal variances not assumed			1.732	3.000	.182	.50000	.28868	-.41869	1.41869
Post-comprehension	Equal variances assumed	9.000	.024	3.000	6	.024	.75000	.25000	.13827	1.36173
	Equal variances not assumed			3.000	3.000	.058	.75000	.25000	-.04561	1.54561
Post-application	Equal variances assumed			5.196	6	.002	1.50000	.28868	.79364	2.20636
	Equal variances not assumed			5.196	3.000	.014	1.50000	.28868	.58131	2.41869

$$\text{Posttest: Eta squared} = 4.91^2 / 4.91^2 + (6) = 0.80$$

$$\text{Post-application} = 5.19^2 / 5.19^2 + (6) = 0.81$$

The results in tables 1 and 2 were interpreted as follows:

Results for Knowledge questions: An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare the knowledge questions scores for experimental and control groups. There was a significant difference in scores for experimental group ( $M=5.26$ ,  $SD=.25371$ ) and control group [ $M=4.03$ ,  $SD=.49827$ ;  $t(58) = 3.265$ ,  $p=.002 < 0.05$ ]. The magnitude of the differences in the means was large (eta squared=.15). This rejects hypothesis and "There is a significant relationship between the experimental group and control group after the experiment compared to the pre-experiment stage in the knowledge domain."

## 6. Discussion

The results revealed a significant difference between experimental group's total reading comprehension performance scores: ( $M=17.13$ ,  $SD=1.07425$ ), knowledge questions scores: ( $M=5.26$ ,  $SD=.25371$ ), and control group's total reading comprehension performance scores: [ $M=14.40$ ,  $SD=1.61031$ ;  $t(58) = 7.734$ ,  $p=.000<0.05$ ], knowledge questions scores: [ $M=4.03$ ,  $SD=.49827$ ;  $t(58) = 3.265$ ,  $p=.002<0.05$ ]. Therefore the hypothesis is rejected and ER significantly affected reading comprehension performance and knowledge domain of the learners.

The results are also consistent with a research study by Alizamani, Khodabandehlou and Mobashernia (2013). They conducted a research to investigate the effects of teaching critical thinking strategies on Iranian EFL learners' reading comprehension ability using Blooms' taxonomy. They concluded that based on Bloom's taxonomy, critical thinking knowledge helped students in a better understanding of English language texts.

## 7. Results

An important result which is obtained by the analysis is that the experimental group did outperform the control group, since according to what Krashen (1985) pinpointed through providing learners with comprehensible input, acquisition will take place. In the present study the ER program provided the experimental group with comprehensible input to enhance the acquisition of the target language.

Teachers may benefit from the ER materials to create a base for improving reading comprehension skills in long-term. The continuous reading over a long time can provide students with a wide range of knowledge. In spite of the enjoyment aspects of ER, since the ER materials used here consisted of multitude short stories, the students may be exposed to a lot of other reading-related learning such as vocabulary span, general English terms, context-related issue in reading and timing of reading.

Learners also can benefit from such programs. Although the repetition of contexts and forms within the stories appears to have promoted students' enthusiasm to study further, the main benefit of such readings for learners is the improvement of *attitudes* of reading itself. The feedback students provided after the posttest confirms this assertion.

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# THE EFFECT OF REFLECTIVE TEACHING ON DEVELOPMENT OF PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS' TEACHING ABILITY IN AN EFL CONTEXT

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## Abstract

Reflective thinking is considered to be connected to investigating and understanding oneself, and it is a continuing attempt. Thinking reflectively is a particular manner of thinking which is illustrated by a person's mental and emotional association in the thinking process. By collecting information about what occurs in their classes and by bearing in mind and evaluating this information, teachers identify and examine their own performance and fundamental attitudes. The purpose of this study was to investigate the effect of reflective teaching on the development of pre-service teachers' teaching ability. The participants of this study were 40 students in the teacher preparation program who were junior and senior teacher students at Islamic Azad University, Behshahr, Iran. These pre-service teachers were prompted to respond to a series of statements or questions related to the components of their field based experience. A grounded theory methodology was used until data had been coded to preserve the pre-service teachers' perspectives accurately in the results. Responses from the reflection emerged in three themes: (a) learner characteristics, (b) classroom management and environment, and (c) teaching strategies. The results of this study suggest that pre-service teachers' ability to develop a general understanding of reflection is important and indicate the way how to reflective practice can be encouraged in different contexts.

**Keywords:** *reflective teaching, pre-service teachers, teaching ability, EFL contexts*

## Introduction

By gathering information about what happens in the classroom, and by examining and assessing this information, we recognize and investigate our own performance and underlying attitudes. This can subsequently bring about modifications and enhancements in our instructions. Reflective teaching entails noticing, investigating, reflecting over the manner a person instructs. As people own their own environment and knowledge, they bring certain viewpoints, suppositions, understanding, feelings and principles to instruction.

It is also observed that education happens in a social situation that has its own distinctive personality, chances and limitations. The application of reflective teaching investigates the propositions of all these multifaceted issues with the purpose of considering and making teaching-learning practice better. Schon (1983) recommends that reflective teaching is a constant procedure and helps students considerably with bearing in mind one's own knowledge in pertaining knowledge to practice as being educated by experts. It assists the people expand their own qualities.

Gibbs (1988) proposes that people expand analysis of emotions, assessment of knowledge etc. Jasper (1999) links reflective teaching to lifelong learning leading to the expansion of independent, capable and self-sufficient experts. Involving in reflective action is linked to the enhancement of the value of care, motivating individual and professional augmentation and filling the opening between theory and practice.

Bartlett (1990) stipulates that a reflective teacher must move further than a crucial concern with educational methods and how to question and ask what and why questions that look upon teaching and decision-making methods not as aims in themselves, but as elements of broader learning intentions. Asking questions what and why gives specific supremacy over people's instruction leading to the appearance of

independence and liability in the work of instructors. In revealing the above type of questions, instructors start exercising power and open up the likelihood of altering daily classroom experience.

Lieberman and Miller (2000) hold that applying reflective teaching, reflective examination, and reflection-on practice lead to obtaining the individual and expert awareness that is so vital for being an efficient instructor and in forming children's education. Han (1995) maintains that the procedure part of reflection highlights how instructors make choices, content stresses the substance that obliges the thoughts and reflective inquiry may set the phase for learning how to be a superior instructor. Galvez-Martin et al. (1998) suggests reflective teaching to be the work of making a rational room in which to consider a question or idea, for example, "What do I identify now about coaching young children?" this of repeated questioning results in mental alteration to a point and a condition that results in a deeper viewpoint supporting learners.

All in all, reflective thinking is considered to be connected to investigating and appreciating of oneself, and it is considered as a continuing attempt (Colton & Sparks-Langer, 1993). In fact, self-awareness is accepted as a significant element for self-development (Been & Stevens, 2002).

Accepting the idea of reflective instructor has resulted in an augmented prominence on classroom practices which persuade instructors to reflect-in-action and reflect-on-action in order to make better their instruction and to employ action research. Teacher training programs have clinched the idea of reflective instructor by proposing learning experiences that model and promote pre-service teachers' reflective aptitudes, therefore authorizing future teachers as thoughtful experts.

Encouraging pre-service teachers' reflective qualifications needs a focus on the growth of their cognitive and emotional talents. This is a procedure which includes persuading them to express themselves in their own mind, widen their intuition, and offers chances for them to scrutinize and probably make use of their personal principles and theories about instruction.

Furthermore, it is commonly established that instructors with the capability to make use of their intuition can be beneficial to any class or educational system. For instance, there is a proof that instructors' applying reflective capabilities results in inventive and original approaches to school conditions and problems. Furthermore, it results in self-understanding and self-improvement and could make them better instructors, therefore assisting essential modifications in 'self', others, and the working milieu (Cunningham, 2001).

Presenting learning experiences that persuade pre-service teachers to make use of their insightful potentials (that is, to employ critical thinking, framing challenging situations and cooperating with colleagues) ought to be the chief focal point for any reflective teacher training program. Pre-service teachers who use their reflective potentials are vital for three rationales.

Firstly, providing a diversity of opportunities for them to make use of their reflective potentials is one way of persuading their constant utilization of reflection while engaged in the schooling career. This is essential since they will come across many obstacles to instructing reflectively in classrooms (Cole, 1997). Secondly, there is the necessity to extend future teachers for the notion of reflection and reflective teaching, therefore enabling future pre-service instructors to experience the profits of reflective teaching. Thirdly, building up instructors who are independent experts is a purpose of teacher education programs throughout the world. Presenting opportunities for pre-service teachers to make use of their reflective potentials is a means of attaining this purpose.

Thinking reflectively is a particular manner of thinking which is illustrated by a person's mental and emotional association in the thinking process. Reflective teaching means looking at what instructors do in the class setting, pondering on the reason they perform it and pondering on whether it is beneficial – a process of self-examination and self-assessment.

By collecting information about what occurs in their classes and by bearing in mind and evaluating this information, teachers identify and examine their own performance and fundamental attitudes. This may subsequently bring about changes and improvements in their instruction. Indeed, teacher reflection is so important for teacher development and ought to be an ingredient of their profession. Reflective thinking allow teachers to glance at themselves, admit what they have done or have not done, and occasionally make a decision to modify it.

During the past 20 years, the instruction career has accepted these and other concepts of teaching reflectively and the idea of reflective teacher. The present study is an effort to widen instruction skills of pre-service teachers via a preparation strategy to assist them expand their general teaching skills, and examine the

consequence of this strategy on pre-service teachers' lesson planning, use of new materials, introduction, classroom management and evaluation.

### **Research Questions**

The present study was an effort to supply reasonable answers to the following research questions:

1. What are the ways that pre-service teachers engage in reflection?
2. What are the levels of reflective engagement by the pre-service teachers?
3. What did pre-service teachers discover about teaching through their reflection?
4. How did the reflection done by pre-service teachers affect their pedagogical ability?

### **Methodology**

#### **Participants**

The participants of this study were 40 students in the teacher preparation program who were junior and senior teacher students at Islamic Azad University, Behshahr, Mazandaran. As a result, they had a wider range of college experience. Students ranged between 20-28 years of age. They were 16 male and 24 females from different cultural backgrounds who were studying TEFL at university. Some of them were working full time and taking courses in the late afternoon. About 30 percent of the teachers training program undergraduates were teaching at schools.

#### **Instrumentation**

Field-based assignments related to cognition, modification, literacy and motivation were used for the pre-service teachers to be completed during the reflection sessions. In addition, a series of questions were used to ask about the participants' reflection about their recently-completed 80-hour field-based experience in public school classrooms.

#### **Procedure**

Pre-service teachers in a theory-based course about the manners and development of students were asked to respond to a series of questions that called for reflection about their recently-completed 80-hour field-based experience in public school classrooms. As a component of this classroom reflective action, would-be teachers were encouraged to reply to a set of declarations or questions related to the components of their field based experience that included 'Name three important things you learned from your field-based placement'. The structured reflection questions were given to the six sections of a theory-based ELT class during the annum, two sections each semester. A grounded theory methodology was used until data had been coded to preserve the pre-service teachers' perspectives accurately in the results (Glesne, 2006).

#### **Data Analysis**

The written responses were collected, entered verbatim and coded. These responses were then looked at by the author for accuracy. A group of colleagues reviewed the responses and attempted to categorize the responses, based on emerging themes. Common elements in the statements were noted and coded. The group then met again and discussed the newly-coded statements and identified major themes occurring within the reflections. The resulting ideas were again sorted and negotiated through the group, from which each theme became clear. This periodic review by a group of colleagues of the pre-service teachers' statements served to verify the accuracy of the determination of the themes and inter-rater reliability for the placement of the statements in the sub-categories.

### **Results & Discussion**

The focus of this paper is on the reflective statements of the pre-service teachers regarding the theme of teaching strategies. Forty-five per cent of all responses of the pre-service teachers occurred within this theme. Within the teaching strategies theme, data statements were additionally found to follow sub-strands or sub-categories including (1) organization (2) active engagement (3) specific strategies and activities (4) modifications and extensions and (5) expectations and motivation of students. After data statements were placed in sub-categories, they were reviewed again and adjustments made. In some cases, sub-categories changed. For example, 'technology' was originally treated as a separate subcategory and then redistributed because statements in that area included references to specific strategies and activities. A summary of the results is shown in Table 1.

**Table 1:** Frequency and Percentage of Pre-service Teachers' Responses in the Subcategories of Teaching Strategies

Sub-category	N	%
Organization	80	37
Active engagement	26	12
Specific strategies and activities	35	16
Modifications and extension	21	10
Expectations and motivation of students	21	10

To understand the level of reflective engagement of the pre-service teachers' practices, the data were explored another time and specific sub-categories related to the kind of commitment appeared. Sub-groupings relating to commitment were categorized as teacher-centered or student-centered as they related to instruction plans. If the reflective action focalized on the action of the pre-service teacher and how he reacted or felt about the use of an instruction plan, it was considered as instructor centered. Reflection declarations whose background content focalized on staring at instruction plans related to theories and knowledge and the impact on students were coded as student centered. A student-centered reflective thinking like that was noted as a higher cognition level of reflective engagement because the pre-service teachers must not only focus on their personal perceptions and choices as well but also include options that take into account the issues and needs of the students and provide quality experiences that are relevant to the students' lives, needs and interests. The ability of pre-service teachers to view how their beliefs and practices affect their students in the classroom allows them to demonstrate metacognition in teaching.

With regard to the first research question, "What are the ways that pre-service teachers engage in reflection?", the outcomes of field-based experiences showed that pre-service teachers' responses were usually focused on learner characteristics, classroom management and teaching strategies. The quantitative analysis of the data indicated that their reflections concerning teaching strategies comprised about 46 percent of their total responses. As found in their responses to questions concerning reflective experiences, the topic of teaching strategies was divided into sub-categories that included procedures, activities for students, ways of keeping students on task, modifications and adaptations for all learners, motivation, and other specific instructional strategies. These are the things that are usually performed by every teacher in a classroom and thus constitute the dimensions of reflection.

With regard to the second research question, "What are the levels of reflective engagement by the pre-service teachers?", the results showed that there were two main levels of reflection which were rather distinct from each other as far as the quality of reflection was concerned. At the early stages of reflection, the focus on planning and organization and specific strategies for use in the classroom dominated what pre-service teachers found out about teaching through their reflection. However, as they experienced more and attended more sessions, they reflected more and changed their tendencies to a more context-based approach.

With regard to the third research question, "What did pre-service teachers discover about teaching through their reflection?" the outcomes of pre-service teachers' statements showed that their understanding about the role of the teacher improved after the reflection sessions. Their concepts of teachers as tellers changed to having roles as facilitators of the learning process. There was also evidence that pre-service teachers were able to better identify the nature of the learning process and ways to utilize more appropriate learning tasks and strategies. This was apparent in their statements for the open-ended questions after each session of teaching reflections.

With regard to the fourth research question, "How did the reflection completed by pre-service teachers affect their pedagogical ability?", the results showed that reflection sessions prepared the teachers to modify their attitudes which used to be teacher-dominated and replace them by more learner-centered ones. They were encouraged to set the ground for growth and professional development. The reflection sessions, as pointed out in most of their responses, could affect their teaching abilities. The pre-service teachers of this study changed their pedagogical approaches as a result of the reflection they had. This happened as they got familiar with the modifications they could bring to the learning environment and make the educational settings more context-sensitive.



A working definition of each theme was developed from the reflections. Responses from the reflection emerged in three themes: (a) learner characteristics (b) classroom management and environment and (c) teaching strategies. The themes were defined in the following manner:

Learner characteristics were described in terms of both student strengths and weaknesses and included the performance modality of students. 'Learning styles' involved the identification of differing learning characteristics and focused on the learning styles of the students that would have implications for instruction. Performance modes of learning were described as the diverse ways in which learners approached the learning tasks.

Classroom management was identified as the pedagogical techniques used to maintain a healthy learning environment. Classroom management strategies included the ways teachers' maintained control that was conducive to student growth. This area also focused on techniques aimed at decreasing disruptive behaviors and increasing productive behavior.

Teaching strategies included both what was taught and how it was taught. This theme was driven by how lessons were organized, the content of instructional materials and the foci of the lessons. Planning methods, teacher and student-centered approaches for different content areas, and individual and group teaching strategies were also considered as part of this theme. The teaching strategies ranged from conversational questioning, content rules, small-group activities, contextual problem solving to collaboration and authentic learning experiences.

The emphasis on the methodology of teaching strategies that is a fundamental part of most teacher preparation programs appeared throughout the pre-service teachers' reflections. While some early concerns were about classroom management, the would-be teachers' reflections focused on instructing plans. Almost twice as many decided to remark or reflect on experiences related to teaching strategies as those who focused on classroom management. Forty -five percent of all reflections were in the theme of instruction strategies. Reflective thinking happened on a scale varying from teacher-centered statements such as 'teaching is fun' (which represents an egocentric focus on self) to open reflective speeches that revealed a more student-centered perspective and provided insight into the teaching situation. A sample of such movement is 'I realized that when I was teaching new material that students had not been exposed to earlier, I truly had to break it down for them to distinguish'. Knowing that a pre-service teachers loved what they were doing is great, but the fact that the pre-service teacher realized that how the material is presented differs from the situation and the learners is an integral part of being a reflective practitioner and has rich contextual meaning.

Would-be teachers' reflection reports about teaching strategies focused on the following:

- Importance of ordering, preparation, processes, arrangement and constancy.
- Different techniques to keep students actively involved and engaged.
- Productive experiences of the value of specific teaching strategies and activities.
- Modifications and extensions to use with diverse learners.
- Expectations and motivation strategies for student success.

Findings are presented by focusing on the above sub-categories and illustrative examples are given for representation and clarification of the theme of instruction strategies. The reports were preferred as excellent responses because they were typical of the statements in the data set.

#### ***Importance of Planning and Organization***

One category that emerged from the pre-service teachers' responses was the importance of planning and organization. They mentioned the significance of conventional processes, arrangement and constancy from their practice in the classroom. The reflections of many pre-service teachers shared new understandings about the amount of planning and organization necessary for success in the classroom. The intensity of appreciation about the significance of efficient and thorough planning appeared to be consistent throughout the reflective statements of the pre-service teachers. Their first-hand experience in the classroom made them realize the importance of good planning to effective practice in addressing the needs of students.

#### ***Different Techniques to Keep Students Actively Involved and Engaged***

Pre-service teachers mentioned several different techniques for keeping students engaged. Their reflective thinking in this sub-grouping of teaching strategies ranged from 'being creative to catch students' attention' to 'model instructions for students' and 'If students are not responding to teaching, I can make that better by talking more slowly and writing larger. As one pre-service teacher stated, 'students are more dynamic in the lesson when they are involved in activities that revolve around the concept that you are teaching rather

than a direct teaching method'. Such a comment can be considered as being reflective of both the contextual content level that focuses on the student perspective and the knowledge base of the pre-service teacher. The level of generality or specificity in this subcategory was more pronounced than in the earlier sub-grouping. The total of contribution and intensity of understanding with regard to techniques utilized to engage students in learning experiences appeared to be related to the number of methodology courses included in the pre-service teacher's certification program.

#### *Specific Teaching Strategies and Activities*

Pre-service teachers reflected on their experiences with demonstrations, cooperative learning, guided reading, writers workshop and re-teach techniques and their value in the classroom. But many of their reflective statements focused on specific actions and what they had gained from the practice. Reflective thinking like that had smallest deepness and was on the beginning level of teacher-centered focus on the reflective thinking scale. A minor part of reflection declarations included the students' perspective, which was indicative of deeper understanding of how to match what they do as teachers to student needs, such as the comment 'I learned the importance of closure and relating lessons to their life experiences'. Such a comment can be considered as being involved with the contextual content level that focuses on the student viewpoint. Nevertheless, it is also inspired by the awareness base of the pre-service teacher. Only a smaller proportion of pre-service teachers were able to focus on the impact on students and how that is related to the application of teaching strategies knowledge and theory in classroom, which placed their reflective engagement at the student-centered area of the reflection continuum.

#### *Modifications and Extensions*

One of the greatest challenges in the classroom for the pre-service teacher can be developing the ability to understand the power of viewpoints, judgments and societal compositions on the class setting. Thwarting such sociocultural aspects from interfering in learning and in the development of all students and using teaching methods that reach all students is a problem. That was distinguished by would-be teachers in their reflective remarks. One student reports great satisfaction in 'focusing on helping students achieve their given goals'.

#### *Expectations and Motivation of Students*

One respondent stated that an awareness of 'ways to help and motivate all students' had been part of what was learned in the classroom setting. Another felt that the 'positive influence that a learning community between teachers, staff, parents and students' enriches the interests in learning and improves motivation of students'. The contextual content of the second reflective statement is at a higher level of understanding of the interaction of student needs and knowledge based application and is at the student-centered end of the reflection continuum.

Other areas that drew notice from pre-service teachers were technology support and the need for humor: 'Learning to use technology is important'; 'having a sense of humor will keep you from becoming stressed out'.

Sometimes experience also brought into focus what not to do: for example, "I learned that worksheets all the time are not the reply". The need for changes and expansions for applying with diverse learners was realized by the pre-service teacher who wrote "Maybe I should take time to create a book of modifications and extensions to be use in my classroom. It might be a helpful instrument for me when developing lesson plans".

#### *The Ways that Pre-service Teachers Engage in Reflection*

As for the first research question which focused on the ways that pre-service teachers engage in reflection, field-based experiences were used. When pre-service teachers were asked about their experiences, their responses about their reflections were usually focalized on learner characteristics, instruction strategies and classroom management. Their reflective thinking relating to instruction strategies encompassed 46 percent of their total responses. That theme was further disaggregated into sub-categories that included procedures, activities for students, ways of keeping students engaged, changes and alterations for all students, inspirations, and new detailed educational strategies. These are the things that are usually performed by every teacher in a classroom and thus constitute the dimensions of reflection.

The largest areas of focus within the teaching strategies category related to the organization and application of a specific strategy in the classroom. In other words, how a particular strategy is usually conducted and applied to certain learning situations was important. Pre-service teachers start with an egocentric idea (teacher-centered) about what is important in the classroom. They start referring to their own plethora of teaching strategies and decide on the one which takes into account his own preferences and foci. The focus is on

their actions and how what they do reflects on them and makes them feel satisfied. To put it in a nutshell, they simply do what mirrors their professional identity and this is quite natural and considered as a normal tendency. However, their reflections revealed that as their experiences in the classroom increased, they moved along the continuum to a focus that was more student-centered. As their reflective thoughts augmented their comprehension of how the theories learned in the college classroom could be applied to classroom practice, the focus moved to what they could do to make students more successful. This was evident in their comments to the field-based questions as they moved from the knowledge and comprehension step to the application step which was a higher level of thinking and reflection.

#### *The Levels of Reflective Engagement by the Pre-service Teachers*

The level of the pre-service teachers' reflection experienced a continuum of low-level to high-level of processing in which the tendency was developmental. At the beginning stages of reflection, the focus on planning and organization and specific strategies for use in the classroom dominated what pre-service teachers discovered about teaching through their reflection. In other words, using things like lesson plans and having a well-planned step-by-step approach was preferred for the pre-service teachers. However, as they experienced more and attended more sessions, they reflected more and changed their tendencies to a more context-based approach. Most demonstrated an understanding of how contextual content that focused on the student affected their pedagogical ability. They utilized their overall analysis of the learning environments to better apply their teaching theories which were decontextualized at the outset and later shifted to a more contextualized and context-sensitive approach.

When we talk about reflection in general, and reflection on teaching and learning processes in particular, it is quite possible that even low-cognitive processing happens at the beginning stages of development. This was quite evident in the reports of field-based experiences of our pre-service teachers. By low-cognitive processing, this study means that the focus was merely on the content of the lessons which follows the coverage model (Chaffee, 1992). In the coverage model, the focus is simply on the transfer of education from teacher to student and the primary goal is covering the content. However, at the later stages of reflection and development, the pre-service teachers conducted a more learner-centered approach and considered the learning environment and the learner needs and interests. This stage equals the critical thinking model which is the opposing point for the coverage model. At this level, the teachers become more critical of their teaching experiences and try to perform their methodologies based on their own critical needs and also what the learners might need as critical human beings.

#### *Pre-service Teachers' Discoveries about Teaching through Reflection*

The reflection sessions could help the pre-service teachers discover new approaches and helping them to take new stances towards the teaching-learning processes. Pre-service teacher statements indicated that their understanding about the role of the teacher improved during their field-based placement. As mentioned above, their ideas of teachers as the transferring agents who simply bombard the learners with new knowledge changed to having roles as facilitators of the learning process. There was also evidence that pre-service teachers were able to better identify the nature of the learning process and ways to utilize more appropriate learning tasks and strategies. This was apparent in their statements for the open-ended questions after each session of teaching reflections. The field-based experiences helped them to learn through application of an action. This application did not exist at the early stages of reflection and development. They moved from the knowledge step to the application step which are two distinct stages of thinking in the Bloom's taxonomy of education. The class reflection activity indicated a positive understanding of the effect that reflection can have on performance.

Statistics demonstrated that several would-be teachers were capable of reorganizing and applying theory in the classroom through reflective engagement and that such reflection existed on a continuum of development from highly teacher-centered to highly student-centered. This would-be teacher's declaration best demonstrated the worth of this reflection performance: 'I also learned to utilize the theories I have been taught in [class] in my instruction. I discovered it is really useful to carry out tasks in these parts for my instruction in the future'.

The prearranged reflective thinking action helped would-be teachers in developing a deeper understanding how they could apply the theories and processes learned in the college classroom to a more effective learning experience for the students in their classrooms.

#### *The Pedagogical Effects of Reflection*

The results of this study suggest that repeated use of reflection throughout the teacher preparation experience, and particularly in a structured reflection questionnaire, can be useful for encouraging growth and professional development. In other words, reflection has a direct impact on the teaching abilities of the pre-service teachers. As previously mentioned, the participants of this study changed their pedagogical approaches from a teacher-centered approach to a more learner-centered one. This happened as they got familiar with the modifications they could bring to the learning environment and make the educational settings more context-sensitive. This means that without deviating from the standard norms and aims of the curriculum, some changes could be done to pass by the coverage model and have a more critical model which takes into account the target needs of the learners.

The present data add to the debate on the relevance of reflection by illuminating specific discourse chosen by pre-service teachers in the area of teaching strategies. By discourse, we mean the particular language used by the teachers in instructing the students and running the classroom and the learning process. Differences in how time in the field-based classroom was viewed by pre-service teachers of different certification levels appeared in their reflections.

Also, a clear delineation developed showing that reflective engagement progressed along a continuum from teacher-centered to student-centered. This study presents a new conceptual model. Reflective engagement and self-correction have been shown to lead to increased understanding of skills and knowledge and thereby improved performance by pre-service teachers. As they engage in reflection and reflective activities, they modify their teaching methodologies and make them compatible with the accelerating needs and interests of the learners. The discoveries and realizations generated by self-reflection have the potential to encourage continued development for would-be teachers, and offer techniques for university lecturers to encourage constant, intensifying and complicated degrees of reflective thinking.

The findings of this study suggest that pre-arranged reflective thinking, as associated with field-based assignment, augments the comprehension and usage of a variety of instructive theories for would-be teachers. Pre-service teachers pointed out about their escalation and progress in arrangement and actions, tasks for learners, techniques to make learners engaged, capability to generate changes, and/or alterations for all pupils' motivation techniques, and utilization of specific instructional strategies.

These findings are in line with preceding researches (Downey, 2008; Long & Stuart, 2004; Pedro, 2005; Ward & McCotter, 2004; Zengaro & Iran-Nejad, 2007) that suggest pre-service teachers' ability to develop a general understanding of reflection which is important and point to the ways by means of which reflective practices can be encouraged in different contexts. In fact, reflection is a must for all stages of life and not just education. It causes the stake holders to look for the problems of education in general, and the teaching-learning processes, in particular and welcomes changes and modifications. To sum up, reflection sees education as dynamic and not stable leading its teachers to look for new teaching methodologies instead of conforming to the old ones which may not satisfy the learning objectives.

### **Concluding Remarks**

Based on the findings of the present study, pre-service teachers when asked about their reflections of their teaching mainly focus on matters such as learner traits, class management and instruction strategies. Pre-service teachers start with an egocentric idea (teacher-centered) about what is important in the classroom. However, their reflections revealed that as their experiences in the classroom increased, they moved along the continuum to a focus that was more student centered.

There was also evidence that pre-service teachers were able to better classify the nature of the learning process and ways to utilize more appropriate learning tasks and strategies. The field-based experiences helped them to learn through application of an action. The class reflection activity showed a positive understanding of the effect that reflection can have on practice.

The outcomes of this study suggest that repeated use of reflection throughout the teacher training practice, and predominantly in a prearranged reflective thinking questionnaire, can be helpful for persuading expansion and specialized progress. This study presents a new theoretical model. Reflective thinking contributions and self-modifications have been shown to lead to increased understanding of skills and knowledge and thereby improved performance by pre-service teachers.

### **Pedagogical Implications**

Based on the findings of this research, some educational implications can be thought of. Firstly, Reflective thinking is a gradually maturing process, and teachers can progress via lifelong reflective thinking

and constant direction. In language teaching environment, reflective thinking at mechanical level and the thoughtfulness of best performance for teachers is an ordinary first step in this process. Would-be teachers' consciousness towards background and ethical issues can be improved via steady and on purpose direction and endorsement.

Secondly, in support of reflective thinking, contact to genuine instruction practices is considered to be the main issue. Would-be teachers have to have the right of entry to those practices, if possible to instruction, at first level, in an extensive and intensive phase. Reasonably, it was discovered that extended exposure to classroom environment enables beginner teachers to become conscious of students – their talents, interests, and troubles (Kagan, 1992). In their extensive classroom experiences, would-be teachers will have adequate exposure to classroom instruction. This will augment their consciousness on larger areas of instruction, which will assist them shift further than technicality of instruction more simply.

Thirdly, collaborative atmosphere is essential in a reflective course. Therefore, would-be teachers must be provided with an environment which is friendly and stress free to be able to contact with each other safely in their practicum period to take risks and observe original instructional practices. It ought to be mentioned that teacher educators have a key role in providing this type of an environment.

Another issue which is a significant part in reflective teacher education is guidance. For providing guidance, both teacher educators' and peer guidance and feedback must be considered as relevant in EFL situations. It needs some kind of trust among all parties involved including student teachers and teacher educators. Again, a friendly and non-threatening setting where peers can communicate their comments is necessary.

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# THE EFFECT OF PARAGRAPH WRITING ON VOCABULARY LEARNING OF IRANIAN INTERMEDIATE EFL STUDENTS

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## ABSTRACT

This study aimed to investigate the effect of Paragraph Writing on Vocabulary Learning of Iranian Intermediate EFL Students. The main question this study tried to answer was whether Paragraph Writing might enhance higher knowledge of vocabulary in Iranian learners of English. To answer the question, 30 English intermediate students (male & female) participated in the experiment of the study. They were selected Via an OPT test score which had its own criteria to select a homogenous group. Then they were divided into two groups and were randomly assigned to an experimental and a control group. The participants of this study were all students at Azad University of Tonekabon. Next, a pre - test of English vocabulary taken from TOEFL book, was administered to both groups. The pretest consisted of 20 multiple - choice of vocabulary each had 1 point as their score. Then, they were taught vocabularies for 10 sessions but with different methodologies: the experimental group received the treatment of Paragraph Writing for ten sessions, using the vocabulary they were taught. However, the control group received the existing methods of teaching vocabulary like translation and synonyms, etc. A post - test of English vocabulary which was parallel with the pretest but had different items was then administered to both groups.

The data of the study were analyzed using an independent sample t - test to indicate the groups' post - test mean difference. The degree of progress from the pre - test to the post - test in the two groups of the study was indicated by calculating two separate ANCOVA coefficients.

The result indicated that the Iranian EFL learners in the experimental group received higher scores, though not significantly, in vocabulary after being treated with 10 sessions of the treatment.

**Key words:** Paragraph writing, Vocabulary, Task, EFL, Second language learning Strategy, Experimental group, Control group.

## 1. Introduction

Learning vocabulary is one of the first steps of learning a second language. Most students learning a foreign language have agreed that the most important part of learning a foreign language was vocabulary. Knowing a lot of vocabulary items can enable language learners to learn and understand English better. So vocabulary as a very important component of language has a brilliant role in learning a foreign or second language.

Vocabulary development is an important aspect of language development. No matter what is the reason of foreign language learning, foreign languages have something to offer everyone. Foreign language learners generally see vocabulary learning as their first priority.

For many years vocabulary learning was limited to long list of vocabularies with their native language equivalents for students to memorize them.

It seems a commonly accepted truth that teachers mostly incline to teach others in the same way we were instructed. Based upon Zimmerman's (1997) survey, the teachers would think that most second language

learners have traditionally been taught by methods that paid insufficient attention to vocabulary and thus the statement that most teachers will also continue to neglect vocabulary appears reasonable (Coady, 1997).

Therefore, an urgent need was felt by the researcher to deal with those techniques of teaching and learning vocabulary which had been neglected in working with Iranian EFL students. Hoping that familiarity with this technique would help teachers to make use of different techniques for teaching vocabulary.

Moreover, being influenced by grammar as the ultimate goal of language learning and as a result vocabulary would be an overlooked component classroom situation.

Consequently, here the problem is to find a good technique to be incorporated into the student's language curriculum.

In order for a classroom instruction to be successful it is important to keep in mind that learning does not occur in vacuum, (Baker, Simmons and Kameenuni). Therefore just listing words for a student to memorize may not be interesting.

The great problem is the deficiency in vocabulary learning which may lead to the problem in writing, reading comprehension and listening. As students read challenging texts, especially those in the content areas, they encounter many complex words. As a result, students with limited vocabularies may not be able to access the meaning of the text (Anderson & Free body, 1981). So, here the teacher can help them overcome this problem by creating some new tasks for learning vocabularies.

There are different strategies to help students learn and recall new words. One of them is writing assignment. Writing is an important means of learning. Writing anything to be learned helps students practice the material and store it in a long-term memory (Chastain, 1988).

One principle of effective vocabulary learning is to help learners involve in writing. According to Rivers (1981) the activity of writing helps to consolidate the learning to render it available for use in other areas. Writing gives the students practice in manipulating structural variants and in selecting and combining lexical elements. Chastain (1988) said that writing is a basic communication skill, a unique asset in the process of learning a second language.

Some researchers have suggested that the use of paragraph writing for inferring meaning can be beneficial to L2 learners' vocabulary building (change, Wagner, muse, chow and Shu, 2005; Morin, 2003; Schiff and Califf 2007). Thus, the purpose of this study is to explore the effect of Writing Paragraph on Iranian EFL learners' vocabulary knowledge.

Writing Paragraph is defined operationally as "the awareness of and access to the meaning and structure of morphemes in relation to word in a well-organized structure: (change et al. 2005, p.417).

Writing Paragraph involves two steps. First learners need to be able to think about what they want to write. Second, they need to find words in their mental lexicon.

As a result, the main problem regarding vocabulary is lack of confidence and competence. Therefore, the teachers' duty is to help students to develop greater confidence and competence by giving students topics to write.

Testing vocabulary regularly can help learners to be more exposed to vocabulary. One way to test is asking students to write a paragraph about newly taught vocabularies. Written products are often the results of thinking, drafting and revising procedures that require specialized skills, skills that not every speaker develops naturally (Brown, 2001). According to Chastain (1998) we should seek to develop classroom activities in which students can simultaneously communicate while learning language forms. Since vocabulary learning is central to language acquisition, it is necessary to search ways to teach it well and to stick it in the learners' mind and paragraph writing seems to consolidate this vital element learning in the mind of learners.

### 1.1. Significance of the Study

Researchers emphasize the importance of vocabulary and point out that knowing a word well involves the combination of several different types of knowledge. Stahl (1999) suggests that knowing a word means not only knowing its literal definition but also knowing its relationship to other words, its connotations in different contexts and its power of transformation into various other forms.

An understanding of word structure can be a powerful tool for students faced with the difficult task of acquiring academic vocabulary. But after going through different stages of education and language learning, learners cannot remember vocabulary appropriately especially in a country like Iran in which vocabulary is sometimes ignored.



Therefore, this study tries to consider some new techniques namely writing paragraph tasks to improve methods of teaching vocabulary in a real situation. It is hoped that this study theoretically can add to the body of knowledge in Iranian EFL learners in a way that it investigates the effect of Writing Paragraph task on Iranian EFL learner's vocabulary knowledge.

Moreover, this study can have pedagogical advantages in a sense that it helps teachers to expand their students' vocabulary for the purpose of comprehension and understanding the text. If so, a large number of unfamiliar words that students encounter in different text could be understandable if students knew the more common root word and could break the complex words down (Nagy & Anderson, 1984). Because text contain many of these complex but decipherable words, students' abilities to attack and dissect them are essential to their understanding of these texts.

In addition, Writing Paragraph can be useful to encourage students to examine some interesting strategies. They can employ the new words in their own writings and as we know use is much more important than usage.

Another role which can be assigned to Writing Paragraph, is that according to some researchers, using writing to manipulate words can be seen as a cognitive gave strategy to be learned, not simply a set of rules to be memorized. This cognitive strategy will help students to become independent while trying to learn vocabulary by themselves.

It is worth mentioning that within the discipline of linguistics, Writing Paragraph is one of the productive skills that a learner is expected to achieve in order to ensure his communicative competence. Writing is a visual representation of speech. In writing and speaking the language learner is engaged in communicating his ideas and feelings.

In the case of speaking a kind of give and take situation between listener and Speaker exists. But in the case of writing the message communicated has a higher degree of finiteness and this skill requires real proficiency if one can be able to communicate effectively.

Consequently, this study helps the teachers to overcome some of the barriers hindering vocabulary learning and they can examine the effect of Writing Paragraph tasks on Iranian EFL learners' vocabulary knowledge.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to show whether the teaching of Writing Paragraph task is an appropriate way of improving vocabulary. This is significant because the learners should be able to construct meaningful sentences and paragraphs through using suitable words, which makes their writing more effective and comprehensible.

## 1.2. Research Question of the Study

Based on the problem and the related parts explained above, the current study tries to answer the following question:

RQ: Does Writing Paragraph task have any effect on Iranian intermediate EFL learners' vocabulary knowledge?

## 1.3. Hypothesis of the Study

In order to answer the above mentioned research question, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H0: Using Writing Paragraph has no effect on Iranian EFL learners' vocabulary knowledge.

## 2. Review of Literature

### 2.1. General Consideration

In foreign language teaching vocabulary had been a neglected area for a long time. Moras points out that vocabulary teaching above elementary level was mostly restricted on presenting new items as they appeared in reading or listening texts. This indirect teaching of vocabulary supposed that vocabulary can be increased when other language skills are practiced (2001). Also course books provided little guidance but word lists.

In recent years, vocabulary teaching has become part of the syllabus, and has been taught on a well-planned and regular basis. Moras declares that some experts, such as Lewis argue that vocabulary should be at the center of language teaching (2001). As a result, new course books now include word study sections.

Without a large vocabulary it is difficult to hold a proper conversation. Consequently, learners have to make a conscious effort to acquire the target language not only in the classroom but outside it as well. In effective language teaching students are exposed to the target language in multiple ways, and teachers' aim is to encourage their students to be autonomous in their language learning.

## 2.2. Vocabulary and Its Importance

English is the world's most important language. Today, it is the mother tongue of several hundred million people. Its great role in science and technology as well as in international commerce and culture has made English the most frequently taught second language in the world.

The size of the English vocabulary can be an advantage for its own since the speakers with a good command of vocabulary can say things differently, however the enormous size of English vocabulary can be a great problem to the second language learners because they have to learn so many words while they don't know exactly how and why.

The great question is why vocabularies are important. They are important because the overwhelming majority of meaning is carried lexically; and, therefore, vocabulary is something which must be taken into consideration both in second and foreign language teaching.

Learning a language cannot be reduced, of course, to only learning vocabulary, but it is also true that no matter how well the student learns grammar, "no matter how successfully the sounds of L2 are mastered, without words to express a wide range of meanings, communication L2 just cannot happen in any meaningful way". (McCarthy 1990: VIII), and idea defended by many applied linguists, e.g. Allen (1983:1), Wallace (1988:9), Corder (Rossner & Bolitho 1990:113), Taylor (1990:1) Willins (1990:1-14) etc. Nevertheless, in spite of the importance of this element, vocabulary is often the least systematized and the most neglected of all the aspects of learning second language. This neglect of attention is not just the matter of grammatical syllabuses but of more recent communicative approaches. Even the learners who have graduated from so many language Institutes cannot remember so many vocabularies, therefore, the need to teach language in general and teach vocabulary effectively in particular is the challenge before all the teachers to think and evaluate their teaching strategies especially in the vocabulary domains.

Students need to be made aware of the importance of vocabulary because it is observed that, in general, there is a tendency to concentrate on grammar, paying little attention to vocabulary.

Having different opportunities will help improve learners, overall language ability by improving their vocabulary. In other words, "the goal is for students to become word-savvy, to develop an understanding of how words work within the context of reading and writing, and to become excited about words as they learn to manipulate them in playful ways" (Brand, 2004, 4).

Teachers should facilitate vocabulary learning by teaching learners useful words and by teaching strategies to help learners figure out meanings on their own (Nation, 2003). Learners need to acquire vocabulary learning strategies in order to discover the meaning of new words. The strategies should be useful within the classroom as well as when learners are in a situation where they encounter new and unfamiliar words on their own. The strategies should also help learners to use words that they hear and see. Consequently, vocabulary should be integrated into teaching the four skills – listening, speaking, reading and writing.

It seems almost impossible to overstate the power of words because they play a fundamental role in literacy development and academic success (National Reading panel, 2000). Furthermore, a learner's socio-economic status is a critical correlate of vocabulary knowledge (Biemiller, 2005; Hart & Risley, 1995). This is not hard to understand. The stronger oral vocabulary associated with learners, the greater success they will have in reading (Biemiller & Slonim, 2001). Successful readers are exposed to more text. Because they read more, which in turn expands those students' written word vocabulary, thus encouraging still more reading success. All the while, students who begin the process of learning to read with an impoverished vocabulary fall further and further behind their advantaged peers, not only in reading, but in the content areas that depend more and more on independent reading skills (Beck, Mckeown, & kucan, 2002).

Knowing vocabulary is important, but to use vocabulary well needs fluent users. Developing fluency involves learning to make the best use of what is already known (Schmitt, 2002).

According to Schmitt (2002) there are two general approaches to fluency development. The first relies primarily on repetition and could be called 'the well-beaten path approach' to fluency. This involves gaining repeated practice on the same material so that it can be performed fluently.

The second approach to fluency according to Schmitt, relies on making many connections and associations with a known item. Rather than following one well-beaten path, the learner can choose from many paths. This could be called 'the richness approach' to fluency. This involves using the known item in a wide variety of contexts and situations. This includes speed-reading practice, easy extensive reading, continuous writing and retelling activities. The aim and result of this approach is to develop a well-ordered system of vocabulary. Fluency then

can occur because learner is in control of the system of the language and can use a variety of paths to the wanted item.

### 2.3 Writing strategies to learn and teach vocabulary

Schmitt (2000) sees the need to help learners acquire the strategies necessary to learn words on their own. For Nation (1990; 2001), the most important way to learn vocabulary is learners using strategies independently of a teacher. In his recent publication, strategy training is suggested to be part of a vocabulary development program. The main benefit gained from all learning strategies, including strategies for vocabulary learning, is the fact that they enable learners to take more control of their own learning so that students can take more responsibility for their studies (Nation, 2001; Scharle & Szabo, 2000).

Chastain (1988) believes that writing is an important means of learning. Writing anything to be learned helps students practice the material and store it in a long term memory. The appropriateness of the writing assignments as employed in this study, is also recommended by (Swain & Lapkin, 1995 who maintain that presenting both types of writing (sentence & composition) pushes the students to use the language in original and meaningful contexts (i.e., this is normally referred to as 'pushed output') as mentioned by Swain and Lapkin (1995). Pushed output, in addition to improving learner's grammar, has been found to improve vocabulary learning and retention (Swain, 1995). From the above discussion, we can infer that there are three factors attributing to the effectiveness of writing in improving vocabulary learning (Coomber, Ramstad & Sheets, 1986). The first factor is the use of the words in meaningful contexts. The second is the students' utilization of their higher level cognitive functions. The third factor has to do with the nature of the writing process in being slow which allows students to have more time to elaborate on the lexical items. So, the learners using this assignment to improve vocabulary learning are more successful in learning new words.

Writing in context, with attention to vocabulary use, is a tool for general second language improvement (Muncie, 2002). Maftoon (2006) states that teachers write key words on the board so that students have visual, as well as auditory, input. Since many students do not understand cursive writing, teachers need to print clearly and legibly. When students see written form of a word, they will learn it better, especially when they use these new words repeatedly in contexts, with the purpose of communication. There is a positive and direct relationship between written homework assignment and vocabulary learning among Iranian EFL beginners (Panah Dehghani, 2007).

Another research was done by Keshavarz and Estaji (2006) on the Iranian students. The main purpose of this study was to discover the possible impact of composition writing strategy on the learning of newly taught words. They found out that composition writing had a great effect on learning second language vocabulary. The results suggest a wider application of composition writing strategies to promote meaningful learning.

At the end, in an answer to why writing is effective in improving vocabulary learning, Coomber et al. attributed this effectiveness to three factors (Coomber, Ramstad & Sheets, 1986). The first factor is the use of the words in meaningful contexts. The second is the students' utilization of their higher level cognitive functions. The third factor has to do with the nature of the writing process in being slow which allows students to have more time to elaborate on the lexical items.

So it can be concluded that writing in general generates more elaboration than merely matching words to context and such elaboration can be expected to result in better retention, as this research was also designed to discover and detect more about the effect of a writing assignment, which is paragraph writing on vocabulary learning of intermediate EFL students.

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1. Design of the Study

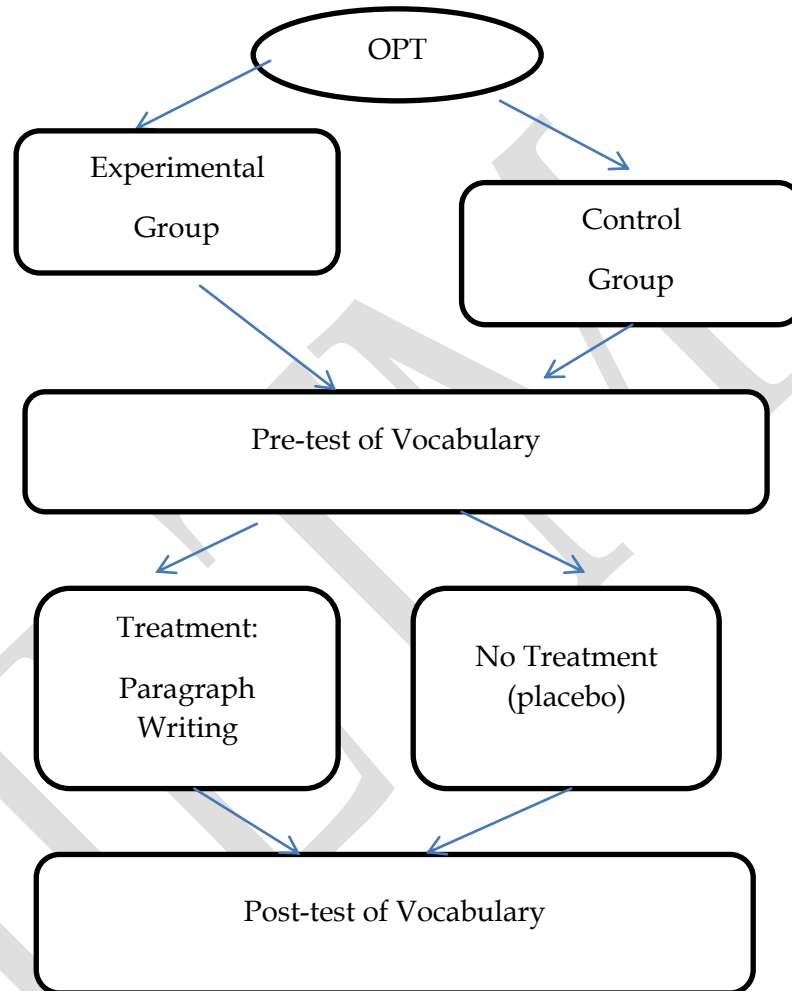


Figure 3.1. The Diagram of the Design of the Study

The study investigates the effectiveness of Writing Paragraph task on teaching vocabulary.

The study takes the form of an experiment in which two rounds of two different treatments were administered to two groups of students in two classes of English. The effects of the treatments were compared using a quasi - experimental design.

The study adopted a quasi - experimental design, since it's not possible to generalize the results because the sampling is not so much broad for example for this study if the sample had been chosen from all over the country, from so many universities, then it might be possible to generalize its results but because of so many limitations it is done just in Tonekabone Azad university and consequently, the results would not be generalizable, because of small sampling. Therefore the design of the study is quasi - experimental. The design of the current study has been illustrated diagrammatically in figure (3.1).

Figure (3.1) demonstrates the general schematic representation of the current study. This diagram shows four stages:

1. Subject selection via administering an Oxford placement test (OPT).

2. Exposing the participants to the pre - test of vocabulary to know the potential knowledge of participants regarding vocabulary before taking the treatment.
  3. Adopting Writing Paragraph task as a treatment for the experimental group of the study (EG) and using existing methods of teaching vocabulary for the control group (CG).
  4. Administering the post - test of vocabulary which is parallel with the pretest but contains different items to both groups of the study to see their improvements.
- The treatment took 10 sessions to answer the research questions. Finally the post - test was run to investigate the possible effectiveness or ineffectiveness of the treatment.

### 3.2. Participants

The researcher was granted permission to complete this study during regular class time in Tonekabon University. The participants of this study were 30 Iranian EFL learners who had been selected via an OPT test. They studied English as their own major in two classes in Islamic Azad University of Tonekabon. Of course the population was more but they had become homogenous through an OPT test. They were intermediate students, their age ranges between 19 - 25. Their mother tongue was Persian.

Then students randomly were assigned to the experimental and control groups. The Experimental group (EG) received Writing Paragraph task as their own treatment to improve their vocabulary knowledge and the control group received the existing methods for the same purpose.

### 3.3. Materials

The Materials used in this study were of four sorts: Oxford placement test, the vocabulary pre - test, two vocabulary post - tests and the material for the treatment of the study.

#### 3.3.1. Oxford Placement Test (OPT)

The first material was Oxford placement test (OPT) which was administered as a standardized measure to ascertain the homogeneity of the subjects regarding language proficiency.

Oxford placement test had been used after consultation with the teachers and was designed to assess students' knowledge of the key language as well as their receptive and productive skills. An OPT test enables teachers to evaluate their students' level of proficiency. The great reason behind using this was its reliability. Because it's a reliable test and it has been tested for several times. But if the researcher had used some teacher -made tests she would have to standardize it, however, an OPT test is a standardized test (appendix 1) and it was in the form of multiple - choice questions and a reading. Altogether, there was 60 questions in the OPT test with 1 point for each of them. An OPT test has a criteria itself to classify the levels of the students. Those who received a score beyond 30 could be considered as Intermediate levels which are of our purpose. A result 30 students were selected and they were randomly assigned into two almost homogenous groups.

#### 3.3.2. The Vocabulary Pre - test

The second material used in this research was the vocabulary pre - test (appendix B). In order to show that the participants in both groups, namely- experimental group and control group had not acquired the to-be -learned vocabulary, a vocabulary pretest was administered. For the purpose of achieving the reliability and validity, the pre - test was chosen from TOEFL book which is quite reliable. As validity concerned, it was attempted to choose the items which were in the domain of the participant's vocabulary knowledge. There were 20 items in the vocabulary pretest and each one had one point as a score. The pre - test was administered both in the experimental and the control group.

#### 3.3.3. The Vocabulary Post - test

After 10 sessions which were the instructional stage, a vocabulary test (post - test) (appendix C), was given to the participants to evaluate the relative effect of the two different methods (the Writing Paragraph task and the existing method). Since the study here aimed at indicating the degree of progress from the pre - test to the post - test, the same but parallel test was administered as the vocabulary test in both experimental and control group. The number of items in the post - test was the same as the pre - test, but the order was different and it was parallel too. In fact the participants were asked to take the vocabulary recall post - test one week later to evaluate the relative retention impact of Writing Paragraph task.

### 3.3.4. The Material for the Treatment of the Study

The Material for the treatment of the study was a book named, "Headway Series". The book was introduced by the supervisor of the researcher. She took it and used it in the experimental group. It took 10 sessions to teach 60 selected words to the students.

### 3.4. Procedures

As mentioned earlier, an Oxford placement test (OPT) was administered in order to identify the homogeneity of the participants' English proficiency. 30 students were selected according to the OPT criteria itself. According to the OPT criteria, those who received beyond 30 as their own score could be considered as an intermediate level. Then, they were randomly assigned either to the experimental group (EG) or to the control group (CG). Next the researcher administered the vocabulary pretest which was derived from TOEFL book for the sake of reliability. The aim of the pretest was to know the potential vocabulary knowledge which students have at the beginning of the study. Time allotted to conduct a pre-test was 30 minutes and there were 20 items in the pretest.

After the administration of the vocabulary pretest, the researcher introduced the program to both experimental and control group. Specially, she explained experimental group that they were going to write paragraphs applying the treated vocabularies.

Moreover, it was explained to both of them that, the scores they received had nothing to do with their University scores for their own course. Then she explained the logic of the Writing Paragraph to help them overcome the barrier of forgetting the words.

Then, the researcher introduced the book named "Headway Series". Next she explained to the students that each session 6 new vocabularies would be taught.

In the experimental group, (N=15), the students were taught 6 new vocabulary items each session and then they were asked to write a paragraph (at least 80 words in 20 minutes) using the newly learnt vocabulary items. This continued for 10 sessions. In the control group, (N=15), the students were taught 6 new vocabulary items each session and in the next session they were asked to tell the meanings of the previously learnt vocabulary items orally. After completing the 10 sessions of instruction in 2 groups, a post-test which was the same as the pre-test were administered to the groups to check the rate of vocabulary learnt by the learners and to see which group did better. For examining the effect of treatment a t-test were applied. For showing their improvement from pre-test to post-test in both groups, two one way ANCOVAs were calculated.

All the above mentioned procedures were followed in the classroom and not at home or out of the classroom, because the researcher wanted to make sure that the students do the assignments themselves, without any help from their parents or a dictionary.

### 3.5. Scoring

The OPT used in this study was scored on the basis of standard criteria introduced by the test itself. The total score of OPT for this study was 60 which was 1 point for each item. The criterion for scoring the pre- test and post - test of the study was the maximum of 20.

### 3.6. Data Analysis

The data obtained from hypothesis testing of the study would be analyzed via calculating a t-test between the post - test of vocabulary scores of the experimental and the control groups of the study and two ANCOVAs (Analysis of covariance) between the pre - test and post - test of the experimental and control group of the study to see any progress happened from pre - test to the post - test or in fact during the treatment period.

## 4. Data Analysis and Findings

The result of the study will be presented into two main parts: The data analysis and findings will be given in two different sections in the first part. The descriptive analysis of the data with different tables and the inferential analysis of the obtained data which will consist of calculating the t-test and one way ANCOVA (Analysis of Covariance) based on specific tables are in the first section. The second part of this chapter will talk about the resulting status of the hypothesis of the study, that is, it is rejection or support. What follows will present the findings from analyzing the whole data of the current study. For doing data analysis easily and reducing some errors in finding correct result of the study the SPSS software will be used.

#### 4.1. Descriptive Analysis of the Data

This section presented the descriptive analysis of the obtained data of this research. So, the researcher used the SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Science) software. Table (4.1) showed the descriptive analysis for the pre-test and post-test of the control group of this study.

Table 4.1. Descriptive analysis of the data of the Control group of the study  
Descriptive Statistics

	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Error	Std. Deviation	Variance
Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic
Pre co	15	11.00	7.00	18.00	13.0000	.76842	2.97610	8.857
post co	15	9.00	9.00	18.00	15.0000	.64881	2.51282	6.314
Valid	15							

According to table (4.1), the total number of participants (N) was 15 in the pre- test and post- test of the control group. The minimum score or the smallest score for pre-test was 7.00 but the minimum score for post-test was 9.00 but the maximum score or the largest score for the pre- test and posttest of the control group was 18.00. The mean score for the pre- test and post- test of the control group has been shown as 13.0000 and 15.2000 respectively. The Standard Deviation has been calculated as 2.97610 for the pre- test and 2.51282 for the post test, that is the average deviation of all scores from the mean score of the pre- test and post- test was 2.97610, and 2.51282 respectively. The variance for the pre test scores was 8.857 and for the post test scores 6.314. The valid N has been shown as 15 which referred to the number of non-missing values of the control group, that is, all the participants in the control group participated in the research. The descriptive analysis of the pre- test and the post test of the experimental group has been shown in table (4.2):

Table 4.2 Descriptive analysis of the data of the Experimental group of the study  
Descriptive Statistics

	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Error	Std. Deviation	Variance
Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic
Pre Ex	15	10.00	7.00	17.00	11.9333	.78962	3.05817	9.352
Post Ex	15	7.00	13.00	20.00	15.8000	.62640	2.42605	5.886
Valid	N	15						

According to table (4.2), the total number of participants (N) has been 15 in the pre- test and post -test of the Experimental group. The minimum score or the smallest score for the pre- test was 7.00 but this value was 13.00 for the post test. Also, the maximum score for post- test was 20.00 while this value for pre- test was 17.00. For the standard deviation obtained for the experimental group, there sounds to be more variability among the pre- test of vocabulary scores than the scores in the post test of the vocabulary. This may be present that the participants' post test scores being more homogenous after presenting the treatment of the study. There were 15 participants and there has been no missing value which means that all participants participated in the experiment of this study.

#### 4. 2. Inferential Analysis of the Data

This section focused on the inferential analysis was conducted through using SPSS ( Statistical Package for Social Sciences ) software from which the independent Sample-t-test and also one way ANCOVA were calculated and indicated in tables (4.3) , (4.4) ,(4.5) respectively.

Table 4.3 The t-test result of the study  
t- test for equality of means

vocabulary assumed	variances	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
		3.004	28	.006	2.40000	.79881

According to the table (4.3) indicates that the t-test results of the study between the post test scores of the both experimental and control groups of the study. The observed t value was calculated to be 3.004. The degree of freedom (df) was 28. The level of significance (sig.2-tailed) was calculated as to be .006 which has been used in calculating the data for the rejection or support of the hypothesis of the study. The mean difference was shown as 2.40000, that is, the difference between the mean scores of the post-tests of the control group and the experimental group of this study was calculated as 2.40000.

The next inferential analysis of data in this study was indicated to be the degree of covariance between the pre-test and the post test of vocabulary knowledge in both the experimental and control groups of the study:

Table 4. 4 Covariance Analysis of the Control Group of the Study  
Tests of between-subjects effects

Dependent Variable: post -test co

Source	Type II Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	69.750(a)	1	69.750	48.619	.000
Intercept	20.777	1	20.777	14.483	.002
Pre-test co	69.750	1	69.750	48.619	.000
Error	18.650	13	1.435		
Total	3554.000	15			
Corrected Total	88.400	14			

a R Squared = .789 (Adjusted R Squared = .773)

Table 4.5. Covariance Analysis of the experimental group of the study  
Tests of between-subjects effects

Dependent Variable: post-test EX

Source	Type II Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	62.968(a)	1	62.968	42.126	.000
Intercept	49.050	1	49.050	32.815	.000
Pre-test EX	62.968	1	62.968	42.126	.000
Error	19.432	13	1.495		
Total	3827.000	15			
Corrected Total	82.400	14			

A R Squared = .764 (Adjusted R Squared = .746)

According to table (4.4 & 4.5), the covariance between the two sets of pre- test and post test scores in the experimental group is 42.126 and 48.619 in the control group of the study. This means that the scores of experimental group is near 1, so the experimental group has undergone a progress compared to the control group whose score is lower than the experimental group. Thus, it can be concluded that the experimental group worked better than the control group because of being treated with traditional method of teaching.

## 5. Results

The results of testing the hypothesis of the study have been presented and explained in detail the rejection or support of the hypothesis. Before the hypothesis of the study was rejected or supported, it was repeated below:



H0: Paragraph writing as a writing assignment has no effect on vocabulary learning of intermediate EFL students.

First of all, according to the descriptive analysis of the given data and based on the table (4.1), (4.2), the mean scores of the pre- test and post- test of the control group was 13.0000 and 15.2000 and for the experimental group was 11.9333 and 15.8000 respectively. So, these two tables showed that there was no significant change in the mean scores of the Control group, but this change was very significant in the mean scores of the experimental group and it is an evidence for rejection of the hypothesis.

In addition to, the results of the T-Test, table (4.3), showed that the observed t value was calculated by the SPSS was 3.004 ( $t_{\text{observed}} = 3.004$ ) while the critical t value determined on the basis of considering (df) and the 2-tailed significance level of 0.05 ( $p=0.05$ ) (Appendix f) was 2.048 .so, the observed t value was higher than the critical t value and high enough to reject the null hypothesis of the study. Also, it was presented in the table (4.3), the level of significance for two-tailed value calculated by the SPSS to be .006. When this value was less than 0.05 (based on the SPSS regulations) it confirmed the rejection of the hypothesis. It could be concluded that there was a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the posttests of the control group and experimental group. There is no chance for calculating the difference between the means of the post tests of the study, so it shows that Paragraph writing as a writing assignment affected vocabulary learning of intermediate EFL students. According to the table (4.4 & 4.5), it was shown that the rejection of the hypothesis of the study by indicating the experimental group participants' progress from pre-test to the post test of the study. The covariance value between the pre- test and post test scores in the experimental was higher than of the control group. This meant that Writing Paragraph has affected the Iranian EFL learners' vocabulary knowledge. Also, the covariance value between the pre- test to the post test scores in the control group was lower than that of experimental group, and this meant that post test scores of Iranian EFL learners' vocabulary knowledge were close to the pre test scores in the control group.

In other words the effectiveness of F ratio was statistically significance ( $F=42.126$ ). Since this value is greater than 1, the null hypothesis was rejected. Another reason is the level of significance ( $= .000$ ) that is less than 0.5 . Because of these two reasons it could be concluded that there was a statistically significant difference between the pre -test and the post test scores of the experimental group. So our null hypothesis was rejected.

## 6. Discussion

At first it was hypothesized that writing paragraph has no effect on Iranian EFL learners' vocabulary knowledge but the current study represented that the Writing Paragraph task could have a positive impact on vocabulary and comprehension skills and as a result the Null hypothesis was rejected. This result received support from the data analysis represented in chapter 4. Results indicated that vocabulary skills significantly improved following this intervention.

So the systemic teaching of vocabulary, in this case morphemic analysis, directly increases student comprehension.

## 7. Suggestions for Further Research

Due to the fact that learners have always difficulty in learning, remembering and retrieving vocabulary, it is always of great importance to have more research in this critical area to discover how teachers can teach vocabulary more effectively which can be influential in the process of language acquisition. What follows are some suggestions that further studies could investigate:

First, further investigation into the application of paragraph writing could look at the effects of a longer period of intervention. A six month investigation or more could be tested with a pre and post standardized test to see if the statistical significance would improve even more and whether comprehension growth would be improved or not.

Second, this study can be replicated with the learners of different proficiency levels. That is, the researchers can carry out the same study at the elementary, pre - intermediate, and advanced levels to compare their performance to see whether learners perform differently regarding their proficiency level. And they can test the effect of learners' change of proficiency level on the effectiveness of this technique.

Third, this study was carried out on a small sample in Tonekabon university but other researches can be done with a larger sample such as a population from two or more universities to see the effect of larger samples on the

results and to make the results more generalizable and probably to change the research from quasi - experimental to the experimental one.

Moreover, this study aimed to investigate the effect of Writing Paragraph task on learning vocabulary, other studies can be replicated by investigating the effect of Writing Paragraph task on other language skills such as reading, listening, and speaking. Even for teaching vocabulary similar Writing Paragraph tasks can be investigated for their effect on other areas learning such as verbs or adjectives, etc.

## 8. Conclusion

Since having a good knowledge of vocabulary has a great effect on the improvement of all aspects of language such as reading, listening, speaking, and writing so we should attention to choosing and preforming appropriate vocabulary teaching techniques in language classes.

This study was an investigation of effects of the use of writing paragraph task to improve students' English vocabulary learning. The findings of the study support the idea that the use of paragraph writing improves vocabulary learning. The results make clear one to conclude that the technique tested in this study that is Writing Paragraph task was really effective in improving vocabulary learning of Iranian students.

To have a more detailed conclusion the research question will be answered:

Does Writing Paragraph task have any effect on Iranian intermediate EFL learners' vocabulary knowledge?

Based on the t - test done between posttests of control and experimental groups, the t value was less than the critical value in our table. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected and it can be concluded that Writing Paragraph task has affected on vocabulary learning of Iranian students.

Moreover, the results of the present study had been explained in terms of suggesting a practical model to be employed in classroom situations, it is hoped that the teachers at all levels and across all disciplines can use this technique and other strategies in their classrooms as part of teacher - as - researchers or action research projects that investigate the teaching and learning of vocabulary across the curriculums. Such findings would help narrow the gap between theories and practice, support the notion of teachers as learners and inquirers, and provide real life examples from real teachers in real classrooms.

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## PRAGMATIC COMPETENCE DEVELOPMENT IN L2

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### Abstract

Mastery of linguistic/grammatical aspects of a language alone cannot make a language learner competent enough to communicate with other speakers of that language without any problem to understand and to be understood. Pragmatics is a branch of linguistics that explores social and cultural elements of language. Pragmatics focuses on implicit meanings of utterances. Language learners, therefore, need to develop this subfield of linguistics parallel to other components of language. In this paper some individual variables related to development of pragmatics in second language, as well as the role of explicit instruction and teaching material are reviewed. Although being subject to direct exposure to the target language in an environment where the very language is spoken may have some effects on developing pragmatic competence, it cannot be said that these effects are significant. Cooperative interaction and motivation, on the other hand, may contribute significantly to the development of this aspect of language in learners. Advanced foreign language learners who are not able to communicate effectively due to lack of sufficient pragmatic knowledge in second language show the importance of direct and explicit instruction and inclusion of explicit information on pragmatics in language textbooks. Awareness-raising tasks included in the classes and books help language learners improve their pragmatic competence.

**Keywords:** competence, L2 pragmatic development, length of residence, interaction, motivation, instruction,

### 1. Introduction

There is much research on the area of second language acquisition and learning. Although according to Krashen (2002) a "good language learner" is an *acquirer*, in a sense that he is able to receive sufficient intake in the second language, and he can later utilize this input for language acquisition provided that the condition under which he is dealing with the second language seems right and motivating enough. The good language learner may or may not be a conscious learner of course, yet there are some aspects of language that may need instruction even indirectly but there should be the right context created so that what is learnt can be used appropriately later. Pragmatics is one of these aspects which can be developed in one's second language setting. There have been many challenges on pragmatic development in one's second language. But how do learners come up with the pragmatic competence?

### 2. What is pragmatics?

Pragmatics is a subfield of linguistics which Yule (1996) defines as the study of speaker meaning, contextual meaning, how more gets communicated than is said, and expression of relative distance. According to Crystal (1980) it is the study of language from the users' points of view. Bardovi-Harlig & Mahan-Taylor (2003) state the study of pragmatics explores language learners' ability to match utterance with appropriate context. There are two claims about the relationship between pragmatics and grammar. The first one states that L2 speakers can manage to be pragmatically appropriate without a native-like grammatical knowledge and the second one asserts that grammatical knowledge is necessary for pragmatic development (Rueda, 2006). According to Jung (2005) pragmatics is an indispensable aspect of language ability for L2 learners to understand and be understood in their interaction with native speakers.

## 2.1 Pragmatic competence

Chomsky (1965, cited in McDonough, 2002) used "competence" in opposition to "performance". In Chomskyan linguistics, competence refers to speaker/hearer's unconscious or implicit knowledge, whereas performance refers to actual use of language. Due to narrowness of Chomskyan linguistics and its inability to account for other aspects of language use, Hymes (1971, cited in Ellis, 1994) extends this dichotomy to include communicative aspects of language. Communicative competence refers to knowledge of what constitutes appropriate and correct language behavior (linguistic knowledge) and what constitutes effective language behavior in relation to particular communicative goal (pragmatic knowledge) as well (Ellis, 1994). Hymes distinguishes four components of communicative competence: knowledge of "what is possible, feasible, appropriate, and actually done" (Johnson & Johnson, 1998, p.62). Canale & Swain (1980, cited in Kasper, 2000) in their influential article "The theoretical bases of communicative approach to second language teaching and testing" distinguish three components of language: grammatical, sociolinguistic, and strategic competences. Later Canale (1983 cited in Bachman, 1990) makes a distinction between "sociolinguistic competence", that is sociocultural rules, and "discourse competence", which includes cohesion and coherence. In Bachman's model (1990) language competence is divided into organizational competence and pragmatic competence. Organizational competence includes grammatical competence (vocabulary, morphology, syntax, and phonology/ graphology), and textual competence (cohesion and rhetorical organization). Pragmatic competence is subdivided into illocutionary competence and sociolinguistic competence.

Language learners must develop a number of language competencies in order to communicate successfully. Mastery of the syntax, morphology, phonology, and lexis is required for successful communicative events. Yet sometimes grammatically and phonologically correct speech acts fail due to learners' undeveloped or faulty pragmatic competence (Brock and Nagasaka, 2005). Canale and Swain's (1980 cited in Rueda, 2006) communicative competence model include pragmatic competence as sociolinguistic competence, i.e., using language contextually appropriately. Later Canale (1988 cited in Rueda, 2006) state that pragmatic competence consists of illocutionary competence, knowledge of conventions for performing acceptable language functions, and sociolinguistic competence, knowledge of conventions for performing language functions in a context properly. In Bachman's (1990) language competence model pragmatic competence comprises those types of knowledge which are utilized in addition to organizational competence for performing and interpreting socially appropriate illocutionary acts in a given context. They include knowledge of language functions, sociolinguistic rules of appropriateness, cultural references, and figurative language.

Interlanguage pragmatics considers the way pragmatic competence influences L2 learners' speech acts, and how pragmatic competence develops in target language learning (Brock and Nagasaka, 2005). Acquiring pragmatic knowledge in the L2 can be facilitated by utilizing pragmatic knowledge and successful transfer of some aspects from learners' L1 (Rueda, 2006). Adult L2 learners also need to develop representations of pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic knowledge which they do not have in their L1 (Bialystock, 1993 cited in Rueda, 2006). Pragmalinguistic knowledge is the linguistic resources available in a language which are necessary to express a specific communication effect. Sociopragmatic knowledge, on the other hand, is the knowledge of social conventions at the perception level.

As Rahimi Domakani and Felfelian (2015) pointed out, the main purpose of pragmatics is making the language users communicatively competent rather than merely grammatically competent if one wish to master a

language. So, there seems to be the need for examining the learners' development of pragmatic competence. Respectively, Rueda (2006) mentioned that communicative approach appeared to support the importance of the fostering the functional abilities in the target language (TL) with the final purpose of understanding and producing language that is appropriate to communicative situations in accordance with specific sociocultural parameters. According to Ren (2012) there should be more research if we want to provide a comprehensive insight into the development of learners' L2 pragmatic competence. As mentioned by Kasper (2000) the first comprehensive investigation of the development of communicative competence was done by Schmidt's famous Wes study (1983). He added that the renewed focus on the relationship between pragmatic and grammatical competence was marked by Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei's (1998) study of ESL and EFL learners' pragmatic and grammatical awareness. In fact, according to Derakhshan and Eslami (2015) the acquisition of pragmatic competence in an EFL context entails not only develops mastery over linguistic but also social, and cultural elements. As Abbeduto (2015) asserted becoming pragmatically competent requires skills and knowledge beyond those entailed in the acquisition of the linguistic system, including memory skills, deep and well-organized knowledge about the social and physical worlds and about the communicative process itself, the ability to flexibly integrate multiple sources of information from different modalities, and the ability to plan and recognize goal-directed sequences of actions (p.1).

## 2.2 Factors affecting the development of pragmatic competence

According to Eslami and JinAhn (2014) the role of individual variables in the development of second language pragmatics and researching the individual differences (ID) in language learning has a concern in SLA. However, the role of ID in the acquisition of L2 pragmatics has rarely been addressed, although there are many affective factors in this regard, namely, Length of residence, Amount of interaction, Motivation, Besides these factors the role of instruction in pragmatic development cannot be neglected.

### 2.2.1 Length of residence

Eslami and JinAhn (2014) believed that Length of residence is known as one of the ID variables that affect learners' different developmental phases of L2 pragmatics. Many studies have used length of stay in a target speech community as an indicator of L2 pragmatic acquisition (Han, 2005). Researchers argue that language learners who are living in a target speech community have much more opportunities to interact in the L2, which leads to the learners' successful acquisition of pragmatic competence than those who are not. As reported in the very paper, Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1986) found out that there is a relationship between the length of stay in the target speech community and the target-like perception of directness and politeness in an L2. It was also revealed that the amount of external modification used by L2 learners approximated community pragmatic norms after five to seven years of stay in the target language environment, and that such convergence correlated positively with their duration of stay. House (1996) also asserted that learners who had stayed in English-speaking countries for a long time performed better than those who had not, both before and after instruction. Röver (1996) reported that German EFL students who had spent almost six weeks in English-speaking countries outperformed learners who did not in the use of pragmatic routines. Bouton (1999) studied how length of residence affects non-native speakers' understanding of implicature in American English. In contrast to what these results claim, however, some researchers argue that length of residence in the target country has not been identified as a good predictor of L2 success and is not the only reason for the achievement of increased proficiency in L2. Kondo (1997) investigated the Japanese EFL learners' apology performance before and after a year of home stay in the United States, and compared them with L1 speakers of Japanese and American English. It was found out that the students' apologies became more target-like, but in others they did not. In a more recent study done by Rodriguez (2001) the effect of a semester studying in a target-language community by examining students' request strategies was investigated. The findings revealed no advantage at all for the study-abroad students. Roever (2001) also stated that neither learners' comprehension of implicatures nor their performance of speech acts in English was affected by their stay abroad. It can be concluded that the students may need to have constant exposure to the real environment in which the language is used for communicative purposes.

### 2.2.2 Amount of interaction

As asserted by Eslami and JinAhn (2014) Seliger's 1977 study of the role of interaction patterns of ESL students provides empirical evidence that target language use is a must in second- language acquisition. Seliger claimed that the more learners have opportunities to use the target language and interact intensively with native speakers, the more competent they become. Pica (1996) and Ellis (1994) also found out a positive correlation between interaction in the target language and success in learning the language. So, using the input that the learners receive in an authentic interactive activity seems to have a very dominant role in their competent development. Marriot (1995) studied the acquisition of sociolinguistic competence by Australian secondary students who took part in exchange programs in Japan. She reported that learners benefit more from "self- and other-correction" procedures in interactive situations in a Japanese homestay context. These Cooperative interactants contributed significantly to the development of their L2 pragmatic awareness.

### 2.2.3 Motivation

Gardner (1985, 1988) seems to be one of the pioneers in investigating the effect of motivation as an individual factor on the learners' achievement in SLA. His framework is mostly based on Integrative and instrumental motivations. It is worth mentioning that closely related to integrative/instrumental motivation is the extrinsic/intrinsic dichotomy, which is related to doing something for getting external and internal rewards, respectively. Dornyei (2005) claims that, since motivation is a dynamic and ever-changing process, its research should also evolve over time. In a study done by Tajeddin and Ebadi (2011) it was found out that motivation was significantly correlated with the learners' pragmatic awareness. So, there seems to be a significant role dedicated to motivation of any kind, although more research in this regard is needed.

### 2.2.4 Instruction

Should learners be instructed to develop pragmatic competence? A majority of linguists and language teachers favor instruction in L2 pragmatics since empirical evidence has proved that learners do not always use their linguistic knowledge and structures when they face a new language task (Rueda, 2006). Bardovi-Harlig and Mahan-Taylor (2003) advocate teaching pragmatics because observing language learners shows instruction is needed and can be successful. Advanced language learners with high grammatical proficiency do not display equivalent pragmatic development. They believe that learners show significant differences from native speakers in using language, executing and comprehending speech acts, in performing conversational functions, and in managing conversations. Consequences of this pragmatic difference are interpreted on a social or personal level and not as a result of language learning. Bardovi-Harlig (2001 cited in Rueda, 2006) believes that many aspects of L2 pragmatics may not be acquired without instruction, or they may be learned very slowly, so instruction is facilitative if not necessary.

Reviewing studies done to examine the effects of pragmatic instruction, Kasper (1997) concludes that pragmatic features are teachable, instructed students performed better than uninstructed learners, and explicitly taught students did better than their implicitly taught counterparts. Kasper (1997) believes that L2 learners get remarkable amount of L2 pragmatics because of universality of pragmatic knowledge, and transfer from L1. Learners, however, do not always get use of this available knowledge. So without some form of instruction do not develop well.

Instruction in pragmatics should furnish students with linguistic tools which help learners realize and comprehend linguistic action in a contextually appropriate way. This may be done by teaching the target language culture, in a process-oriented manner rather than product-oriented one (Rueda, 2006). According to Bardovi-Harlig and Mahan-Taylor (2003) the chief goal of instruction in pragmatics is to make learners familiar with range of pragmatic devices and practices in the target language. They believe that specific input and interpretation of language use are important for development of pragmatics, and both input and interpretation can be provided in language classrooms: instruction can help learners observe language without being directly involved in conversation. Instruction can highlight features of language and language use, and inform the learners about their salience. Instruction can help learners understand when and why certain linguistic practices take place, that is help learners interpret language use.



Brock and Nagasaka (2005) believe that explicit instruction is necessary for learners. They suggest a four-step guide, S.U.R.E. (See, Use, Review, and Experience) for teaching pragmatics in FL classrooms:

1. See. Help students see the language in context, raise consciousness of the pragmatic role, and explain pragmatic function in specific event.
2. Use. Develop activities through which students use language in context.
3. Review. Review, reinforce, and recycle the previously taught areas of pragmatic competence.
4. Experience. Arrange for students to experience and observe pragmatic role in communication.

In order to help learners develop pragmatic competence, tasks must be used to raise learners' pragmatic awareness and to offer opportunities for communicative use. Kasper (1997) suggests observation tasks as helpful task for raising pragmatic awareness. Observation could be managed for improving both sociopragmatic competence and pragmalinguistic competence. Open or structured observation can be used depending on learners' population and available time. In open observation students try to detect what important context features may be. In structured observation, learners are given an observation sheet which specifies the categories to look for. According to Kasper (1997) authentic native speaker input, no matter gathered through out-of-class observation or through audiovisual media, is indispensable for pragmatic learning since it enables learners to build their own pragmatic knowledge based on the right kind of input.

### 2.2.5 Teaching materials

Learners may not be aware of socially and culturally appropriate forms of L2, so they must be provided with language materials which presents native-like examples of speech act strategies to develop pragmatic competence (Ekin, 2013). For many language learners the only available material is their textbooks, but do language textbooks really help learners develop pragmatic competence? Vellena (2004) in a qualitative and quantitative study of 8 EFL and ESL textbooks shows that textbooks include a paucity of explicit metapragmatic information, and thus learning pragmatics from textbooks is highly unlikely. Ekin (2013) investigates 8 pre-intermediate course books based on the strategies of suggestion. Those books are also compared according to whether they are good representatives of authentic-like materials for presenting suggestion to help develop pragmatic competence. Only two books provide explicit information about suggestion.

### 3. Conclusion

L2 learners must be taught not only to master grammatical aspect of language but also to be able to use the language in a given context appropriately since according to Lust (2006) knowledge of a language and its use are not equal. Many factors seem to be important in developing L2 pragmatic competence. Although some researchers claim that length of residence in a community may improve knowledge of conventions for performing acceptable language functions properly, more studies are required in this regard. Cooperative interaction with speakers of a language, learners' motivation, and direct, explicit instruction which is a conscious-raising activity, on the other hand, apparently have more significant roles on pragmatic development among L2 learners.

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# ON THE EFFECTS OF PHATIC COMMUNION INSTRUCTION ON IRANIAN INTERMEDIATE AND ADVANCED EFL LEARNER'S ORAL PRODUCTION

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## Abstract

This study investigated the effect of phatic communion instruction on Iranian EFL learners' oral production at intermediate and advanced levels. One hundred female language learners in Iran Language Institute Qazvin branch, Iran were participated in this study. To ensure their homogeneity in terms of language proficiency, the researchers used the standard proficiency test, Preliminary English Test (PET). The groups were randomly assigned as two experimental groups and two control groups. For ten weeks, the two experimental groups received phatic communion instruction, while the two control groups didn't received any phatic communion instruction explicitly. The research data obtained from the oral production as a pre-test and post-test were analyzed via an ANCOVA and an independent sample t-test test. The results indicated that phatic communion instruction had significant effects on Iranian EFL language learners' oral production. The results of the statistical analysis indicated that two treatment groups outperformed the two control groups in terms of oral production. The results confirmed the benefits of L2 phatic communion instruction in EFL context. Based upon the conclusion drawn from the study, phatic communion instruction was thus recommended to be integrated into English instruction. Pedagogical implications for the application of phatic communion in EFL teaching were proposed. Finally, suggestions for future research were recommended.

**Key words:** phatic communion- oral production- intermediate level-advanced level

## Introduction

To be communicatively competent, learners of English must acquire some knowledge and develop the necessary skills that enable them to reach their social and communicative goals, as well as to project their desired identity, by performing adequately in a variety of social or situational contexts and they may experience performance- and language-related problems, as a consequence of which they deviate from native speakers' standards and expectations when accomplishing speech acts, producing certain types of discourse or participating in conversations as Kaur (2011) states. Such deviations may result in pragmatic errors, which, though unnoticed in some cases, give rise to funny or anecdotal misunderstandings or even have more serious consequences in others.

An area that poses difficulties and challenges to many learners of English is phatic discourse, small talk or *phatic communion*, i.e. that "language used in free, aimless, social intercourse" (Malinowski 1923, p. 476), or, in other words, that conversation devoid of relevant factual content but with a great latent significance because it creates, maintains and/or enhances friendly relationships (Burnard 2003, p. 680). Its presence in many cultures and communities of practice, and hence the assumption that learners could transfer the necessary knowledge and ability to engage in it from their L1 (Kasper and Schmidt 1996; Kasper 1997), might have motivated its neglect in many teaching materials and courses. However, the pragmatics of phatic communion varies across cultures and communities of practice, unveiling differing underlying value systems (Placencia 2004; Sun 2004; Ladegaard 2011).

Depending on their proficiency level, learners may bring some tacit knowledge of phatic communion from their L1 but still be unable to make informed decisions about its use and contents, or fail at controlling an

inventory of pragmalinguistic strategies efficiently. Different instructional approaches –explicit and implicit teaching– seem to facilitate acquisition of relevant L2 pragmatic aspects and contribute to learners’ performance (Alcón Soler 2005).

The primary objective is to investigate the possible effect of phatic communion instruction on Iranian intermediate learners’ oral production. The second objective is to figure out the possible effect of phatic communion instruction on Iranian advanced learners’ oral production.

1. Does phatic communion instruction promote Iranian intermediate learners’ oral production?
2. Does phatic communion instruction promote Iranian advanced learners’ oral production?

### Review of the Related Literature

Anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski’s (1923) idea of phatic communion was developed during his ethnographic observations of the Trobriand Islander’s communication practices. Malinowski defines phatic communion as “a type of speech in which ties of union are created by a mere exchange of words” (1923, p. 315). Ehlich (1993) suggests that the word ‘communion’ was possibly used to emphasize “the intensity of this type of speech”. Importantly, according to Miller (2008) phatic communication “does not inform or exchange any meaningful information or facts about the world. Its purpose is a social one, to express sociability and maintain connections or bonds” (pp. 393–394). Quick discussions about the weather while in an elevator, or asking someone how they are, fulfill an important social role.

Phatic communication is not expected to undertake, or “perhaps even there must not be” (Malinowski, 1935, p. 316) a transfer of ideas or information. The words or language used in the speech act are in fact not part of the communication because they are irrelevant. An example of a phatic expression is ‘how’s it going?’ and ‘the bus is very crowded today’. While seemingly banal, there is a function to the communication in that it “serves to establish bonds of personal union between people brought together by the need of companionship and does not serve any purpose of communicating ideas” (Malinowski, 1935, p. 316). Phatic communication acts as a linguistic ping that serves to maintain connection to others (Makice, 2009). Furthermore, a Miller (2008) state there is value in phatic messages and they should not be regarded as ‘meaningless’ because the messages contain more than the content suggests: “they are very meaningful, and imply the recognition, intimacy and sociability in which a strong sense of community is founded” (p. 395).

Since its initial description, there have been two different attitudes towards phatic utterances. On the one hand, some linguists have regarded them mere linguistic devices aimed at establishing or maintaining the interactive contact between interlocutors because of the triviality and obviousness of their propositional content, which does not significantly contribute to an improvement of the interlocutors’ knowledge of reality (e.g. Abercrombie, 1956, 1998; Coulmas, 1981; Edmondson and House, 1981; Hudson, 1980; Leech, 1974; Turner, 1973). Their works seem to presuppose the existence of a type of true and authentic discourse that can be classified as *informative*, which is opposed to another that can be termed as *social* or *interactive* (e.g. Coupland, 2000 ; Coupland and Ylänne-McEwen, 2000; Holmes, 2000; Tracy & Naughton, 2000). On the other hand, other linguists have seen in phatic utterances a fundamental mechanism for social interaction because of the feeling of involvement, agreement, union or solidarity that they create between interlocutors (e.g. Coupland, Coupland and Robinson, 1992; Coupland, Robinson and Coupland, 1994; Leech, 1983; Lyons, 1968; Schneider, 1988; Silva, 1980).

### Phatic Communion inside the EFL Classroom

In L2 classes, according to Haidl Dietlmeier (1993), students can gradually accumulate information about the value of certain linguistic expressions by means of a progressive learning of the inferences and assumptions that reflect L2 native speakers’ linguistic behavior. In other words, it seems that the proficiency level of the learners would have the close relationships with phatic communion understanding. In the same way, by means of those progressive learning students can also get information about the correct behavior in a particular communicative situation and, thus, avoid sociopragmatic failure. Learners need explicit teaching to evaluate the different parameters intervening in the realization of some speech acts within a specific sociocultural group. They have to learn when, how and with whom they have to behave in a particular way, as well as the consequences of their behavior. That information can only be achieved through the development of what Thomas (1983, p.98) has termed *metapragmatic ability*, or, following Sharwood-Smith (1981, p.62), through a process of *consciousness-*

*raising*. By means of guided discussions, the teacher can help learners create a set of mental representations that provide them with information about the terms in which interaction in the L2 is carried out. Furthermore, by doing this, the teacher can make them aware of some of the unwanted implicatures that L2 native speakers could derive from certain linguistic behaviors that do not match their own actual behavior. Teachers must equip their learners with the tools that enable them to communicate in whatever way they choose.

Regarding the usage of phatic utterances, teachers' roles can be regarded crucial. Teachers will have to show learners that they are crucial for interaction because of the different interpretations can be achieved. Students, on the other hand, must understand that by means of these utterances they not only transmit their willingness to communicate or to socialize with their interlocutors, but they also show that they know how to act within the social group that speaks the language they are learning. For this reason, in L2 classes, small talk or phatic communion instruction and time should be valued and it should be clarified that conversations should not be limited to the transmission of relevant factual information, as a wrong reading of Relevance Theory might lead (Sperber & Wilson, 1986, 1995) to think. L2 learners must learn to produce in their hearers the social implicatures that phatic utterances implicitly convey.

As in any other learning process, getting the learner to make deductions about language use requires much time and implies a certain degree of difficulty. Therefore, as Haidl Dietlmeier's (1993) suggests that activities done and topics dealt with in L2 classes should allow linguistic interaction in familiar contexts is quite adequate. Thus, topics and activities must be close to real situations; so that learners can interact in a natural way close to the reality they will find when they have to use the L2. For this reason, in L2 classes more attention should be paid to the social acts performed in communication. Phatic discourse plays a crucial role in communication because of the implicit contents it transmits, and consequently, students should know and value its functions. Thus, it can be concluded that teachers play important roles in terms of designing tasks and providing situations inside the classrooms to improve the understanding and production of phatic communion in their language learners.

## Methodology

### Participants

The participants were intermediate level (upper-intermediate) and advanced Iranian female learners in four classes of Iran Language Institute in Qazvin where the study was conducted. Four classes were randomly selected out of twelve available classes in Iran Language Institute, Qazvin branch. Two classes were selected as experimental groups and two classes were selected as control groups. Each class has approximately the same number of learners (25 students per class), one hundred in total. They were all female learners with the age range of 18 to 35 and with Persian as their L1 and none of them have the experience of living in an English speaking country.

### Instrumentations

To answer the research questions and collect data the following materials and data collection instruments were employed:

#### 3.3.1. Consent Form

On the first session of the spring semester (2015), all the participants were informed about the process of the study. Then, they were given the consent form.

#### 3.3.2. Preliminary English Test (PET)

To determine the homogeneity of the participants and to reduce the effects of their proficiency level on the results of the study, the PET was administered for language learners. The test is published by Cambridge University Press for English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL, 2009). The PET includes 3 sections through which the four language skills are put into test: Section 1: Reading Comprehension and Writing; Section 2: Listening Comprehension and Section 3: Speaking. For accomplishing the aims followed in this research, a phatic communion test compiled and administered by the researcher and used as a pre test and post test in order to find out the possible effects of treatment.

#### 3.3.3. Oral Production Test (*pre test – post test*)

The participants were asked to take English oral proficiency test which was administered by the researcher to determine the learners' oral production level. This test was used as a pretest and post test in order to find out the

effect of treatment on the learners' oral production. The framework for test score was adapted from Jacobs (2005) to assess the learners' oral proficiency.

### 3.3.4. Phatic Communion Test (pre- test)

Five phatic communion free discussion situations which was developed by the researcher from TOEFL and IELTS tests used as a pre test in order to determine the comprehension and production level of the learners before beginning the treatment.

### 3.4. Procedures

Firstly, to determine the homogeneity of the participants and to reduce the effects of their proficiency level on the results of the study, the PET was administered for language learners. The PET includes 3 sections through which the four language skills are put into test: Section 1: Reading Comprehension and Writing; Section 2: Listening Comprehension and Section 3: Speaking.

Next, in order to find out any possible effect of phatic communion instruction on intermediate and advanced language learners a test was used which was gathered by the researcher from the series of the tests of IELTS and TOEFL from 2004-2010 from Cambridge and Longman series. The intermediate and advanced learners were asked to discuss on the five situations based on the phatic utterances and the learners were asked to use more phatic utterances as possible as.

Besides, the participants -control groups and experimental groups- were asked to take oral production pre test as well as phatic communion pre test in order to find out the learners level in terms of phatic communion comprehension and production. During the treatment the researcher tried to improve the learners' phatic communion understanding and production.

### Methods of Analyzing Data

In order to find out the possible effects of the ten sessions treatment of phatic communion instruction on intermediate and advanced language learners' oral production the data was analyzed by means of SPSS. The research data obtained from the oral production as a pre-test and post-test were analyzed via an ANCOVA and an independent sample t-test test. These analyses were used to determine the effect of phatic communion instruction on oral production. In this study, oral production served as an dependent and phatic communion served as an independent variable.

### Results and Discussions

A descriptive statistical analysis was done on the collected data of PET (Preliminary EnglishTest) test. The results are shown in Table (4-1).

**Table (4-1): Descriptive Statistics for the Proficiency Test**

N	Mean	SD
100	32	10.32

This table shows the result obtained from the proficiency test, PET. The mean and standard deviation are presented.

Table (4-2) shows the number of students who took the pre-test and post-test. It should be mentioned that no one excluded.

**Table (4-2): Number of Students Participated in Pre-test and Post-test Cases**

	Included		Excluded		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
<b>Pre-test*group</b>	25	100%	0	0%	50	100%
<b>Post-test*group</b>	25	100%	0	0%	50	100%

Fifty participants were selected for this study. They were divided into two groups, experimental and control. The descriptive statistical analysis done on the collected data of pre-test and post-test is shown in table (4-3).

*Table (4-3): Descriptive statistical analysis done on the collected data of pre-test and post-test*

Group		Pre-test		Post-test
Experimental	Mean		59.9	68.4
	N	25		25
	SD		4.8	4.7
Control	Mean	58.45	58.1	
	N	25		25
	SD	5.64		5.2
Total	Mean	59.15		63.25
	N	50		50
	SD	5.216		7.121

In order to examine the equality of variances, Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances was run. It tests the null hypothesis that the error variance of the dependent variable is equal across groups.

**Table (4.4) Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variance**

F	df1	df2	Sig
.26	1	48	.61

According to table (4.5) the calculated F is not significant. So there is equality of variances and ANCOVA can be run.

The data in table (4.6) are related to test of homogeneity of regression. Before running covariance, between-subjects effects of pre-test-group should be investigated.

**Table 4-5: Tests of Between-Subjects Effects**

Source	Type III Sum of Square	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Corrected Model	1879.82	3	626.61	230.93	.00
Group (a)	17.86	1	17.86	6.6	.015
Pretest (b)	802.97	1	802	295.95	.00
Group*pretest(a*b)	.41	1	.41	.15	.7
Error	97.68	36	2.71		
Total	46200	50			

As table (4.5) shows, between -subjects effect (a\*b) is not significant ( $F=0.15$ ,  $Sig=0.7$ ). It shows that the data supports homogeneity of regression. Therefore, covariance should be run just for between - subjects effect of post-test and group to show whether mean scores of two groups are the same or not. The results of this analysis are demonstrated in table (4.7).



Table (4-6) Mean and Corrected Mean of phatic communion

Source	Posttest		Corrected Mean	
	M	SD	M	SE
Experimental	39.4	4.7	38.77	.36
Control	27.1	5.11	27.72	.36

Table (4.6) shows the corrected means of dependent variable phatic communion. The data demonstrate that the means of the experimental group are upper than the control group.

Sum of analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) of phatic communion in the experimental and the control group after eliminating between-subjects effect is demonstrated in table (4.7):

Table (4-7) Sum of analysis of covariance

Source	Type III Sum of Square	df	Mean Square	F	Sig	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	1879.415	2	939.71	354.48	.00	.95
Pretest	818.52	1	818.52	308.76	.00	.89
Group	805.42	1	805.48	303.84	.00	.89
Error	98.08	37	2.65			
Total	46200	50				

As it can be seen, the corrected model ( $f=00$ ,  $F=354.48$ ) is statistically significant. The results ( $F=303.84$ ,  $Sig=.00$ ,  $Eta=.89$ ) shows that there is a difference between two groups. It means that there is significant difference between experimental and control group. As a result the null hypothesis "Phatic communion instruction doesn't promote Iranian intermediate learners' oral production will be rejected, so it can be concluded that the students' phatic communion can be improved by giving them instructions.

Table4.8: independent t-test for advanced learners' oral performance

Levene's Test for Equality of Variances					t-test for Equality of Means		
F	Sig	t	df	sig (two-tailed)	mean difference	Std. Error Difference	
.243	.628	-.298	18	.000	-.28283		.94995
		-.306	17.973	.000	-.28283	.92561	

The results in this table indicate that there was a significant difference in the oral performance of advanced learners.

### Conclusions

In answering the first research question which investigated the possible effect of phatic communion instruction on Iranian intermediate learners' oral production in Iran Language Institute, the results showed that phatic communion instruction had significant impact on Iranian EFL learners' oral production at intermediate level; therefore, the first null hypothesis was rejected. It seems that explicitly focusing on phatic utterances can be a good option for language teachers to promote Iranian oral production.

In answering second research question which investigated the possible effect of phatic communion instruction on Iranian advanced learners' oral production in Iran Language Institute, the results showed that

phatic communion instruction had significant impact on Iranian EFL learners' oral production at this level; therefore, the second null hypothesis was also rejected.

The reasons for the effectiveness of phatic communion instruction seems to be based on the statement of Schneider (1988, p. 79-80), that phatic utterances create solidarity, agreement and ties of union between interlocutors because they are manifestations of the first eight positive-politeness strategies proposed by Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987) in their work on politeness. More exactly, in some circumstances they may be regarded as instantiations of the seventh of such strategies, which leads interlocutors to presuppose common ground and to take for granted or state the existence of affinity with hearers. With positive politeness an individual treats another as a person whose wishes and personal features she knows and admires. This is so because positive politeness strategies rely on the expression of approval and interest in the hearer, the usage of markers of in-group membership, the search for agreement, or the establishment of reciprocity as regards the interlocutors' desires, intentions, features or preferences (Brown, 2000; Brown and Levinson, 1978, 1987). It seems that phatic communion instruction among female intermediate and advanced EFL learners create the appropriate solidarity climate for them to promote the language learners' oral production.

The findings of the present study have implications for learners and teachers in the realm of TEFL. The general implication of this study proposed that the phatic communion instruction has positive and significant impact on the oral production of intermediate and advanced EFL learners; therefore, the role of phatic communion instruction should be considered important in EFL context. Furthermore, the present study provided some pedagogical implications for teachers, material developers, syllabus designers and the authors of textbooks.

Similar to other studies, there are a number of limitations and delimitations in this study that need to be considered. The study was restricted to the following delimitations since the researcher is to define the border lines of the study for the generalization purposes. This investigation focused only on two levels -intermediate and advanced learners and just among female language learners who will study English language in Iran Language Institute (ILI), Qazvin, Iran. The small size of sample population shed doubt on the validity of the observed significance. A replication study with a greater number of subjects is needed to obtain reliable and generalizable results. Another major challenge was that the results of the study may be affected by variables like age, cultural, personal, and social factors and so on, which though important, were not taken into account in this study.

This study only investigated the effect of phatic communion instruction on oral production among intermediate and advanced EFL learners, further studies can be done on the effect of phatic communion instruction on written production and interpretation among elementary and basic EFL learners. Finally, Suggestions are made to investigate the linguistic realization and social strategies of participants of different ages, educational levels, and socio-economic backgrounds. Moreover, qualitative investigation of phatic communion comprehension and production of phatic utterances could be more insightful and introspective methods can be applied in future research.

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# A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF EXPRESSIVE SPEECH ACTS (APOLOGIES, COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS): A CASE STUDY OF PERSIAN NATIVE SPEAKERS AND EFL LEARNERS

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## Abstract

Speaking to others is a social activity. Many people who communicate across linguistic and cultural boundaries have experienced communication breakdowns with people from different first language (L1) backgrounds. Language pedagogy, therefore, should promote language learners' pragmatic awareness and competence in the target language, especially in terms of emphasis on one of the significant pragmatic features and speech acts. Speech acts are not an easy matter in one's own language, and having to do them in a second or foreign language is even more complicated. Therefore, the present study aimed to examine the differences and similarities between Persian and English concerning the way speakers use expressive speech acts in these languages. Meanwhile, the study investigated the influence of gender on using expressive speech acts. The participants of the study included 50 Persian native speakers, 50 EFL learners, and 50 English native speakers from the Marefat language institute in Tehran, and the high school students of Tehran. Discourse Completion Tasks (DTC) were used for collecting pragmatic data about apology, complaint, and compliment speech acts. The three groups of Persian Native Speakers, EFL learners and English Native speakers used a variety of expressive speech acts and the similarities and differences between the uses of speech acts were identified and discussed. Also, results showed that gender does not have a significant impact on the use of expressive speech acts. Results suggest that language teachers should examine learners' needs considering the understanding and production of speech acts in the target language. Learners should be made aware of native speakers' usage of the variety of expressions to realize a certain function, depending on the situation where they are used.

**Keywords:** Critical discourse analysis, speech act, expressive speech act, pragmatics, discourse completion task

## 1. Introduction

Since Hymes (1971) introduced the notion of communicative competence, including both the speaker's knowledge of the linguistic rules as well as the socio-cultural rules for appropriate use, there has been an increasing interest in empirical research in this area and in practical applications of pragmatics studies, especially speech act ones. People in different countries may analyze pragmatics doctrines rather differently from each other, and these differences give rise to great tendency for conducting studies in cross-cultural and contrastive pragmatics (as cited in Farnia, Buchheit & Salim, 2010). These cross-cultural speech act studies have given us a better understanding of what a speaker needs to know in order to perform effectively and appropriately in communication, and the results can let learners be more aware of the interplay of situational, sociolinguistic, and linguistic types of knowledge (Chen & Chen, 2007).

Teachers of English as a second or foreign language have always faced a very difficult task: how to teach communicative competence in the target language. It has become clear that teaching the grammar and

vocabulary of a language is not enough. One also needs to teach pragmatic and cultural competence. Understanding how such socially and culturally specific aspects of language function in different languages is also important, as learners should be aware of the differences between not only their native language and the target language, but also between the two cultures. Being aware of such differences, but also of similarities, would help them better understand the target culture, and thus use the target language in a socially and culturally appropriate way.

We have different types of speech acts such as apology, compliment, invitation, greeting, promise, etc. More than any aspect of language, speech acts are probably the most culture specific. There are numerous definitions of speech acts, from many different perspectives, but the most common and general view of speech acts is of utterances that when issued perform an action (Austin, 1975). The speech act that is the object of the present study is the apology. As a generalization, an apology is the speech act that is required either when the social norms of politeness demand the mending of a behavior or when a linguistic expression has offended another person (Trosborg, 1995) or when somebody is offended due to the fact that personal expectations are not fulfilled (Fraser, 1981). Usually, this speech act requires the presence of two participants, namely the person who is apologizing and the person who expects an apology, be it real or potential.

Speech acts are not an easy matter in one's own language, and having to do them in a second or foreign language is even more complicated. That is why studying the way people use speech acts in different languages is important in order to understand the intricacies of language. More than that, comparative studies on languages that are often taught as second or foreign language are essential in order to improve teaching methods and techniques.

L2 language learners develop their L1 speech acts as they acquire their first language through social interactions in various linguistic contexts. What seems to be significant is the fact that whether the interaction of the learners' L1 and target language culture has any effect on the language learners' use of expressive speech acts which are apologies, complains, and thanks. In other words, are speech acts similar in L1 and L2 or different and whatever outcome we have, what is the role of formal L2 education in this regard?

Taking the above points into account, accordingly, The present study intends to examine the differences and similarities between Persian and English concerning the way speakers use expressive speech acts in these languages. The aim of this article is to investigate the strategies that Persian speakers apply in using such speech acts in different situations which is shown through discourse completion task.

## 2. Review of Literature

Culture and language are closely interconnected in a way that sociocultural conventions designate our way of thinking and speaking (Sapir, 1949; Whorf, 1956, as cited in Liu, 1995). Different nations in the world possess their own particular cultures which demonstrate some universalities and particularities (Wei, 2009). Many people experience communication breakdown or even communication conflict in their cross-cultural interactions with people from different language backgrounds. Speech performances are organized by particular cultural and social constraints (Gumperz & Hymes, 1972, as cited in Al-Issa, 2003). Therefore, people from various sociocultural backgrounds employ their own sociocultural values in their interactions and deviate from L2 culturally different forms. According to Thomas (1995), sociopragmatic failure occurs when the non-native speakers fail to opt for appropriate codes due to their lack of recognizing cultural differences. Therefore, interlocutors should attend to cultural mode of the message in addition to its form.

To be able to use the target language effectively, language learners should develop target language communicative competence. One of the main components of the communicative competence is pragmatic competence. Foreign language teachers in order to be able successfully to perform speech acts; they should use functions of language contextually in communicative oral activities in different situations in order to develop their ability in use of target language. Therefore, people use different functions differently in particular contexts and these functions play a major role in communication and interaction. The way participants decide which form or function to use in particular context depends on some factors such as the social distance between the participants, their relative status, and the formality of context. Because these functions are very important in maintaining and developing relationship, speech acts like greeting, requesting and apology and refusing have been chosen in the present study. If one can't apply pragmatic competence appropriately, misunderstanding can arise despite having a wide range of vocabulary and a sound knowledge of grammar. The communicative function of an utterance corresponds to the speaker's intention in producing a given message (Alemi &

Irandoost, 2012).

It is a noteworthy fact that pragmatics plays a very significant role in the production and perception of speech. Crystal (1985, as cited in Allami & Naeimi, 2011) defines pragmatics as “the study of language from the point of view of users, especially of the choices they make, the constraints they encounter in using language in social interaction and the effects their use of language has on other participants in the act of communication” (p. 240). One of the main factors in the process of communication is pragmatic competence. How interlocutors produce and perceive speech in diverse situations is an important issue as creating inappropriate utterances would cause misunderstanding and miscommunication (Sahragard & Javanmardi, 2011).

The lack of the pragmatic knowledge of the target language by EFL/ESL learners has been frequently observed (Eslami, 2010). Therefore, their attempt to communicate successfully with the native speakers of the target language is likely to lead to intercultural miscommunication. One of the main reasons for the pragmatic errors, committed by EFL/ESL learners, is negative pragmatic transfer which is the use of native language pragmatic feature that leads to an inappropriate form in the target language, and hence miscommunication (Atashaneh & Izadi, 2011). Since, language learners, in general, do not have enough knowledge of the target language norms; they are influenced by their native language and transfer their first language pragmatics to the second language (Sahragard & Javanmardi, 2011).

The pragmatic development for producing and understanding the target language speech appropriately in various situations is very essential for language learners. Failure to do so may cause serious communication breakdown and also label language users as insensitive and rude people (Allami & Naeimi, 2011). We should bear in mind that while native speakers often ignore phonological, syntactic, and lexical errors, they are sensitive to pragmatic errors (Hassani, Mardani, & Hossein, 2011).

The main source of miscommunication is the inability to perceive and produce speech acts appropriately in the context by language learners. According to Austin (1962) as cited in Vaezi (2011), a speech act is a functional unit in communication. It is an act that speakers implement when making utterances. All languages have almost unique ways of performing speech acts. Although speech acts are universals, the method used in performing speech acts is dissimilar in different cultures (Vaezi, 2011).

Successful production of the speech acts in a language needs not only the speaker's linguistic proficiency, but also the pragmatic perception of speech acts. Performing the speech acts properly in a first and second language is very challenging as it comes from both linguistic and cultural variations between the languages (Hassani, Mardani, & Hossein, 2011). Therefore, for the purpose of this study, the following research questions are proposed:

## 2.1 Research Question

The present study tries to find an answer to each of the following questions:

1. Is there any significant difference (s) between Persian native speakers and EFL learners in using expressive speech acts?
2. Are foreign language learners influenced by gender differences in using expressive speech acts?
3. What are the similarities and differences between the learners' L1 expressive speech acts and EFL expressive speech acts?

## 2.2 Research Hypothesis

1. There is no significant difference (s) between Persian native speakers and EFL learners in using expressive speech acts.
2. Foreign language learners are not influenced by their gender differences in using expressive speech acts.

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1 Participants

The participants in this study were selected from the Marefat language institute in Tehran, and the high school students of Tehran. The participants of the study included 50 Persian native speakers, 50 EFL learners, and 50 English native speakers so that the total number of the participants was 150. The age of the participants

ranged from 16 to 24 years old. In each group, there were 25 females and 25 males so that we had 75 female participants and 75 male participants among the sample of the study. The EFL learners were selected from among institute language learners at the intermediate and upper intermediate levels who have been practicing the pragmatic rules of language and speech acts.

### 3.2 Instrument

For the purpose of this study, a Discourse Completion Task (DCT) was used. As Cohen (1996) states a DCT is used for collecting pragmatic data. A Discourse-Completion Task (DCT) is a tool used in linguistics and pragmatics to elicit particular speech acts. A DCT consists of a one-sided role-play containing a situational prompt which a participant will read to elicit responses.

A discourse-completion task consists of scripted dialogue representing various scenarios, preceded by a short prompt describing the setting and situation. The prompt generally includes information on social distance between participants and pre-event background to aid the participant in constructing the scenarios. In doing so, the kind of expressive speech acts (apologies, complains, and compliments) used by the language learners, English native speakers and Persian native speakers were determined.

Along with the DCT, a background questionnaire was given to participants to collect some background information about them.

### 3.3 Procedure

The 150 participants of this study were divided into three groups of Persian native speakers (50 participants; 25 males and 25 females), EFL learners (50 participants; 25 males and 25 females), and English native speakers (50 participants; 25 males and 25 females). According to Blum-Kulka et al., (1989), discourse completion tasks can be used in studies of pragmatic knowledge to investigate speech acts. The participants were presented with discourse completion tasks to find out what type of expressive speech acts they will use. The DCTs covered different linguistic situations not just one situation. Written DCTs were used in this study to elicit the participant's responses and also determine the expressive speech acts used by them. The DCTs had two uses in this study. First, the DCTs were used to find out the kind of expressive speech acts used by Persian native speakers and foreign language learners. The English DCTs were translated into Persian for the native Persian speakers. Second, an attempt was made to investigate whether gender has a significant effect on the use of expressive speech acts among the three groups or not. The expressive speech acts used by Persian native speakers, EFL learners and English Native speakers were compared to find out if there are significant differences among them or not. The DCTs were given to Persian native speakers, EFL learners and English native speakers through language institutes, schools, friends, and email. Instruction was given to participants on how to answer the DCTs appropriately. They were asked to answer each DCT in 15 minutes at most. The English DCTs were translated into Persian and were distributed among the Persian native speakers.

### 3.4 Data Analysis

In order to answer the research questions, two types of analyses were carried out on the collected data. First, quantitative analysis was done in order to determine the type of strategies speakers most often use when they apologize, complain, and thank, and their frequency was also estimated. The second type of analysis, a qualitative one, allowed for a more in depth look at the different strategies that EFL learners, Persian native speakers and English native speakers used in order to use expressive speech acts in different situations. The expressive speech acts used by EFL learners, Persian native speakers and English native speakers were analyzed and compared to each other to see what similarities and differences they had and if there were any differences. The effect of participants' gender on their use of speech acts was also considered in the study. This study focused on speech acts like apologies, complains, and thanks. We have analyzed the results of the three groups using the SPSS19 software. We had a qualitative analysis of the Persian, English native speaker's speech acts and EFL learner's speech acts to come out with the similarities and differences among the three group's expressive speech acts.

## 4. Results and Discussions

4.1.1 The use of apology speech acts by EFL learners, Persian Native Speakers, and English Native speakers  
 Table 4.1 Frequency and percentage of apology speech acts used by the three groups

	EFL learners		Persian Native Speakers		English Native speakers	
Strategy	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Account	18	12%	9	6%	14	9.33%
Offer	10	6.67%	3	2%	8	5.33%
Promise	5	3.33%	5	3.33%	6	4%
Concern	4	2.67%	2	1.33%	4	2.67%
Responsibility	1	0.67%	2	1.33%	9	6%
Responsibility + Account	6	4%	16	10.67%	5	3.33%
Account + Offer	2	1.33%	8	5.33%	3	2%
Account + Promise	3	2%	2	1.33%	1	0.67%
Responsibility + Concern + Offer	1	0.67%	3	2%	0	0%
<b>Total</b>	50	100%	50	100%	50	100%

The categorization used in table 4.1 is taken from Demeter (2000) who did “a pragmatic study of apology strategies used in Romanian”. As table 4.1 shows, different kinds of strategies are used by the three groups for expressive speech acts. As the table indicates EFL learners and English native speakers tend to use shorter statements for expressive speech act. Account (12%) and offer (10%) have the highest frequency among the EFL learners and account (9.33%) and responsibility (6%) have the highest frequency among the English native speakers. Meanwhile, responsibility + Account (10.67%) and Account + Offer (5.33%) have the highest frequency among the Persian native speakers. This shows that Persian native speakers feel more responsible while apologizing and tend to provide more phrases and statements that show they are really sorry for what has happened and are more eager to express a stronger apology. However, English native speakers and EFL learners use shorter phrases and statements and are more likely to express a quick apology and finish the conversation.

Here are some examples of the use of the overall apology strategies in the data:

**1. Account:**

- (a) I apologize for being late. The car had a flat tire.
- (b) .bebakshid dir residam Khiyabonha kheyli shologh bod
- (c) Oh, I'm sorry. There was a heavy traffic.

Account is used as a category for the speech act of apology to present the reason or the cause of the problem and the speaker uses it to justify the other person(s).



**2. Offer**

- (a) Oh, forgive me. I'll take you to the hospital.  
 (b) .Sharmandeh khodam hatman shomaro miresonam  
 (c) Oh, sorry. I will give a ride.

**3. Promise**

- (a) I am sorry. I'll do my best to be on time next time.  
 (b) .Bebakhshid dige tekrar nmishe  
 (c) I promise to be on time from now on.

**4. Concern**

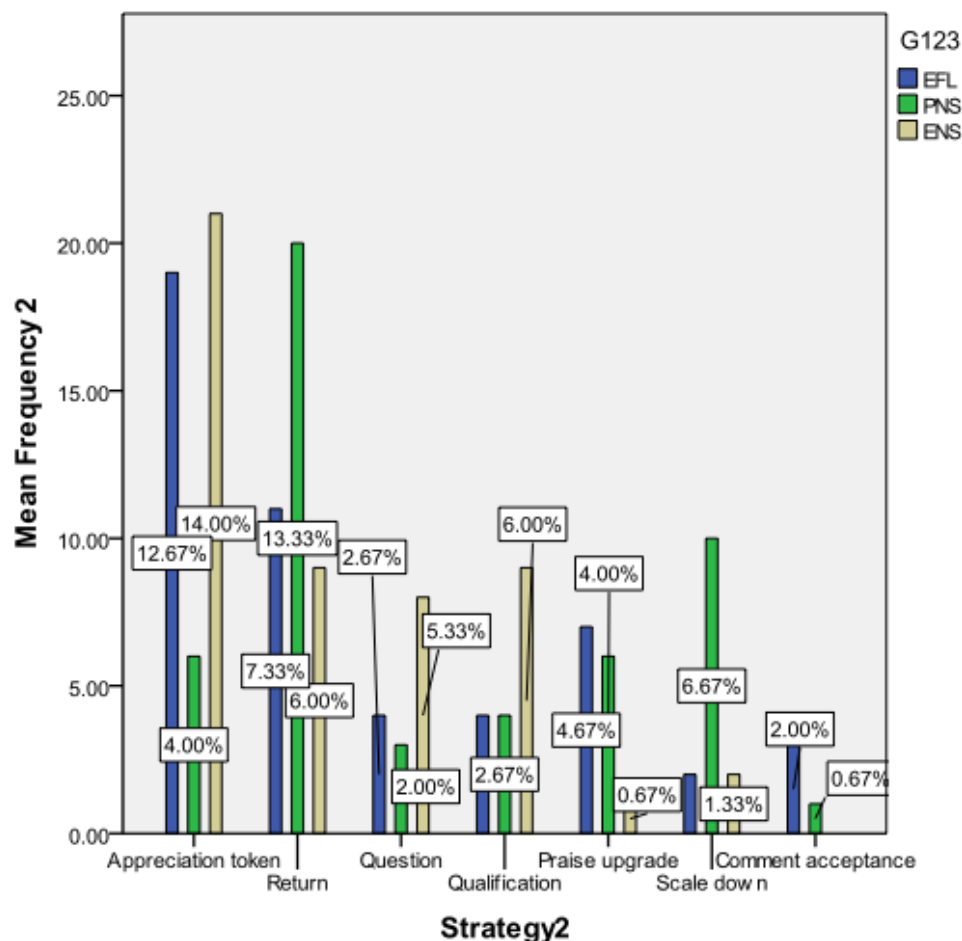
- (a) Oh, forgive me. Are you ok.? Please, let me help you.  
 (b) ?Haleton khobe?mitonam komaketon konam  
 (c) Do you need any help?

**4.1.2 The use of thank speech acts by EFL learners and Persian Native Speakers and English Native speakers***Table 4.2 Frequency and percentage of thanks speech acts used by the three groups*

	EFL learners		Persian Native Speakers		English Native speakers	
Strategy	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Simple thanking	11	7.33%	5	5.33%	21	14%
Thanking + intensifier	19	12.67%	18	12%	10	6.67%
Thanking + intensifier + reason	9	2%	3	2%	5	3.33%
Acknowledging favor	4	2.67%	11	7.33%	6	4%
Formal	4	2.67%	5	3.33%	3	2%
Informal	3	2%	9	6%	5	3.33%
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100%</b>

The categorization used in table 4.2 is taken from the two studies of Ahar and Eslami-Rasekh (2011) who studied "the effect of social status and size of imposition on the gratitude strategies of Persian and English native speakers" and Cheng (2010) who used a "corpus-based approach to the study of speech act of thanking". As indicated in table 4.2, the three groups use different kinds of strategies for expressing thank. For the EFL learners, thanking + intensifier (12.67%) and simple thanking (7.33%) had the highest frequencies. The most frequent strategies for English native speakers were simple thanking (14%) and thanking + intensifier (6.67%). Meanwhile, the most frequently used strategies by the Persian native speakers were thanking + intensifier (12%) and Acknowledging favor (7.33%). The use of thanking + intensifier is most common by Persian Native Speakers and ELF learners. This probably shows the influence of the local culture which requires thanking

strongly for every help and favor, either small or big, received by others. Meanwhile simple thanking is more preferred by English Native speakers.



Here are some examples of the use of the overall thanking strategies in the data:

**1. Simple thanking:** The speakers tend to express thanks in a short word(s)

- (a) Thanks
- (b) ممنون
- (c) Thank you

**2. Thanking + intensifier:**

- (a) Thank you very much indeed
- (b) .Kheyli lotf kardid
- (c) Thanks a lot.

**3. Thanking + intensifier + reason:**

- (a) Thank you very much. I bothered you again.
- (b) .Mamnon az komake ziyadet hamishe toro to zahmat mindazam
- (c) Thanks so much. You have always been nice to me.

**4. Acknowledging favor:**

- (a) You did a great favor.
- (b) .Kheyli lotf kardid
- (c) Thanks for your help.

#### 4.1.3 The use of complaint speech acts by EFL learners and Persian Native Speakers and English Native speakers

##### 4.1.4

*Table 4.3 Frequency and percentage of complaint speech acts used by the three groups*

	EFL learners		Persian Native Speakers		English Native speakers	
Strategy	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Hints	21	14%	14	9.33%	8	5.33%
Express annoyance	9	6%	5	3.33%	18	12%
Blame	10	10.67%	7	4.67%	16	10.67%
Consequence	2	1.33%	16	10.67%	3	2%
Threat	4	2.67%	3	2%	3	2%
Dissatisfaction	4	2.67%	5	3.33%	2	1.33%
<b>Total</b>	50	100%	50	100%	50	100%

The categorization used in table 4.3 is taken from the two studies of AYu. T and Sukyadi (2011) who studied "complaining in EFL learners: Differences of realizations between men and women" and Bikmen and Marti (2013) who studied "complaint speech act in Turkish learners of English". As the above table shows, the three groups use different kinds of strategies for expressing thank. For the EFL learners, hints (14%) and blame (10.67%) had the highest frequencies. The most frequent strategies for English native speakers were express annoyance (12%) and blame (10.67%). Meanwhile, the most frequently used strategies by the Persian native speakers were consequence (10.67%) and hints (9.33%). Hint strategy was more used by EFL learners which might be due to the fact that they tend to avoid being rude. Persian Native speakers focus more on consequence strategy to indirectly show others that they complain about an issue. Again, the use of this strategy is influenced by politeness and trying to be polite. On the other hand, English native speakers mostly used express annoyance strategy which shows how they complain directly and being direct is more favored in their culture.

Here are examples of the use of the overall complaint strategies in the data:

**1. Hints:** The speaker tries not to mention what he wants directly in the situation to avoid conflict.

- (a) I wonder why I got a low score in the exam? Can you tell me the reason?
- (b) .Vaghean az in nomreh kheyli taajob mikonam
- (c) I can not figure out getting such a low score.

**2. Express annoyance:**

- (a) It's a noisy class. I don't like it.
- (b) .Aslan az inja khosham nemiyad
- (c) I hate such a situation.

**3. Blame:**

- (a) It was your fault.
- (b) .Hamash taghsire to bod
- (c) You did it wrong.

**4. Consequence:**

- (a) That takes a lot of time to get well.

- (b) .Injori baraye man moshkel pish miyad  
(c) It involves negative consequences.

#### 4.2 Result of the second research question

**RQ2: Is there any significant difference (s) among Persian native speakers, English native speakers, and EFL learners at institute in using expressive speech acts?**

To find out if there was a significant difference among the three groups a test of chi-square was run. The following table shows the result.

**Table 4.3**  
*Result of the Chi-Square Test among the three Groups for Speech Act of Apology*

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	153.500 <sup>a</sup>	22	.000
Likelihood Ratio	183.996	22	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	2.770	1	.096
N of Valid Cases	150		

a. 21 cells (58.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.00.

As table 4.3 above shows, there was a statistically significant difference among the three groups of Persian native speakers, English native speakers, and EFL learners at institute in using speech act of apology ( $\chi^2(22) = 153.50, p = .000 < .05$ ). To find out if there was a significant difference among the three groups of Persian native speakers, English native speakers, and EFL learners at institute in using speech act of compliment, a test of chi-square was run among the three groups. The following table shows the result.

**Table 4.4**  
*Result of the Chi-Square Test among the three Groups for Speech Act of Compliment*

#### Chi-Square Tests

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	266.000 <sup>a</sup>	24	.000
Likelihood Ratio	297.672	24	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	2.037	1	.154
N of Valid Cases	150		

a. 27 cells (69.2%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .67.

As table 4.4 above shows, there was a statistically significant difference among the three groups of Persian native speakers, English native speakers, and EFL learners at institute in using speech act of compliment ( $\chi^2(24) = 266, p = .000 < .05$ ).

### 4.3 Result of the third research question

#### *RQ3: Are foreign language learners influenced by gender differences in using expressive speech acts?*

To find out if foreign language learners were influenced by gender differences in using expressive speech acts, a test of chi-square was run among male and females. The following table shows the result.

**Table 4.5**  
*Result of the Chi-Square Test among the Males and Females*

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	3.681 <sup>a</sup>	8	.885
Likelihood Ratio	4.503	8	.809
Linear-by-Linear Association	.025	1	.873
N of Valid Cases	50		

a. 15 cells (83.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .48.

As table 4.5 above shows, there was not a statistically significant difference between males and females in their using expressive speech acts ( $\chi(8) = 3.68, p = .885 > .05$ ). So, the third hypothesis that is "Foreign language learners are not influenced by their gender differences in using expressive speech acts" is accepted.

### 5. Conclusion

Comparing the results of the three groups of EFL learners, Persian native speakers and high school students on using expressive speech acts showed that there was a significant difference between institute and high school students ( $p < 0.05$ ), a significant difference between institute and native speakers ( $p < 0.05$ ), and also between high school students and native speakers ( $p < 0.05$ ). Also, results of the analysis of the second question showed that foreign language learners were not influenced by their gender differences in using expressive speech acts which means that males and females did not significantly differ in their DCT scores.

Among the apology speech acts used by EFL learners, "account" had the highest frequency (39%) and "responsibility" had the lowest frequency (11.4%). Also, "responsibility + account" had the highest frequency (42.3%) among Persian native speakers and "concern" had the lowest frequency (12.8%). In using apology speech acts, Persian native speakers were affected by factors such as religious concepts. Among the English Native speakers, "account" had the highest frequency (51.8%) and "responsibility" had the lowest frequency (10.6%).

In using compliment speech acts, "appreciation token" had the highest frequency (46.1%) among the EFL learners and "praise upgrade" had the lowest frequency (12.4%). Also, "appreciation token" had the highest frequency (57.2%) among the Persian native speakers and "comment acceptance" had the lowest frequency (13.2%). For the English native speakers, "appreciation token" had the highest frequency (52.3%) and "question" had the lowest frequency (12.6%).

One of the conclusions that can be drawn considering the apologies is that there seems to be a relationship between the amount of detail provided in the apologies and the seriousness of the threat that the offense has to the face of the speaker. The seriousness of the offense is closely related to the kind of social norms that the offender violated. Thus, the more severe the offense was perceived to be by the speaker, such as missing the wedding ceremony, or being late for a meeting or dinner where several friends are waiting, the more elaborate the details in providing justifications and blaming someone or something else, respectively. Also, if the offense produced consequences beyond the interaction in the situation, the speakers considered that they needed to offer a way to make up for such consequences in order to save their face. The qualitative analysis of the data has also shown that the respondents not only tried to save their own face in their apologies, but were

also concerned with maintaining the friendship with the hearer, sometimes even explicitly mentioning that their friendship was more important than the action that brought about the apology.

Allami and Naeimi (2010) and Jalilifar (2009) found that there is a priority for indirect and embedded communication in the Iranian culture. The overuse of Want statements and Hedge-performatives strategies by English speakers show the dominance of direct strategy types. These findings reveal the fact that Iran belongs to a high - context culture in which indirectness and vagueness are prevalent, whereas Canada belongs to a low - context culture in which directness and accuracy are appreciated (Wurtz, 2005). Eslami-Rasekh et al. (2010) states that Iranian culture has the hierarchal structure in which social hierarchy is assumed as a natural construction and social order should be maintained among the interlocutors, whereas American culture moves on the basis of a deference politeness system. In American society interlocutors share the equal social level and it is believed that they should have equal rights, but in Iranian culture power is a key factor which determines the ways of interactions among people.

Regarding the compliment speech acts, the responses to compliments seem to come from Persian speakers' culture and allow the addressees to avoid acceptance of compliments, which can be regarded as self-praise. Moreover, the function of these expressions in Persian speakers' culture is to lessen embarrassment and tension between interlocutors (Sharifiyan, 2005). Persian speakers' participants might have regarded the compliments put forth to them as insincere, or they might have felt embarrassed. Therefore, instead of saying no, Persian speakers would simply use these formulas. Therefore, it can be claimed that this feature of using formulaic expression is culture-specific. Persian speakers rarely disagree with the compliment in a flat way, but tend to make a comment to show their modesty. Therefore, the Persian speakers' strategies in responding to compliment are characterized by compliment rejection motivated by Leech's Modesty Maxim (Leech, 1983).

The speaker denies the proposition but accepts the complimenting force, thus emphasizing the value of modesty. As mentioned earlier, if the function of the compliment is to make the hearer feel good, the function of a response other than acceptance may be the same. The results imply that, recognizing that the compliment was intended to make him or her feel good, the addressee asserted that he or she and the complimenter were equal by employing the strategy of "shekasteh- nafsi" (Sharifiyan, 2005) to avoid self-praise. When complimented by others, many Persian speakers accept it reluctantly with a comment to show their modesty. This is very comparable with the modesty maximum principle by Leech (1983), and Sharifiyan (2005) referred to it as Persian cultural schema of shekasteh-nafsi (modesty). This schema motivates the speakers to negate or scale down compliments, downplay their talents, skills, achievements, etc.

Considering the role of gender on the use of compliment speech acts, it can be interpreted that male Persian speaking respondents show a tendency to use formulaic expressions far more often than female Persian speakers do, whereas female Persian speakers' respondents show a preference for using appreciation token far more often than male Persian speakers use. This preference is obvious irrespective of the subject of compliment, whether it is the addressees' appearance, ability, or their possessions. To be specific, by choosing to avoid self-praise, males tend to employ the formulaic expressions response type to weaken the complimentary force, but females simply favor accepting the compliment.

The female preference for the category of questions is related to the fact that women are more concerned about face than are men when they reject a compliment. Additionally, women probably view question-type responses to compliments as necessary for conversational maintenance. To put it another way, compliments are more often employed by women than by men to reinforce friendship, intimacy, and solidarity between themselves and the complimenters (Wang & Tsai, 2003).

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## THE ANALYSIS OF IMPOLITENESS IN FAMILY DISCOURSE:

# VERBAL INTERACTIONS BETWEEN IRRECONCILABLE IRANIAN COUPLES

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## ABSTRACT

This study attempted to analyze impoliteness in family discourse in verbal interactions between irreconcilable couples in Ahvaz, Iran. Therefore, a corpus of 300 minutes of the couples' conversations, which was provided by Family research center, was recorded, transcribed and analyzed. The couples were asked to put their controversial problems into discussion. The theoretical framework in this study was Impoliteness Model by Culpeper (1996) based on Brown & Levinson Politeness Strategies (1987). This study was a descriptive analytic one and data analysis was based on qualitative as well as quantitative factors. The results showed women insult themselves twice more compared to their husbands and insult their spouses 5 times more, while men's insults were directed at their wives' family 2.3 times more compared to the other way around. But on the whole, women used impoliteness twice as much as men did. It was hypothesized that men used impoliteness more than women did. But the findings revealed that out of 175 impoliteness examples, 93 cases were utilized by women and 82 ones by men. Finally, it is worth mentioning that the findings of this study were contrary to expectations in that they depicted that although women, in order to save their face, were normally more conservative in verbal communication in different contexts in society and thus appeared politer than men, they tended to be more impolite in family discourse. It indicated that women were less concerned about their face in family conversations in comparison with other contexts.

**KEY WORDS:** family discourse, Impoliteness Model, descriptive-analytic, politeness

## 1. Introduction

Impoliteness, as a variety of face-aggravating verbal behaviors, has recently been paid extensive scholarly attention (Bousfield, 2008; Bousfield & Locher, 2008; Culpeper, 1996, 2005, 2008; Culpeper et. al., 2003; Terkourafi, 2008). Classical politeness theories (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Leech, 1983) was scrutinized for marginalizing non-cooperative communication, and for presuming that impoliteness can be examined utilizing concepts developed for politeness (Perelmuter, 2010, p. 1).

Impoliteness is a negative attitude towards specific behaviors happening in particular contexts. It is maintained by expectations, desires and/or beliefs about social organization, including how one person's or a group's identity is mediated by others in interaction. Situated behaviors are negatively considered as "impolite" when they conflict with how one expects them to be, how one wants them to be and/or how one thinks they



ought to be. Such behaviors are always assumed to have emotional consequences for at least one participant, that is, they cause or are presumed to cause offence (Culpeper, 2011, p. 254).

In the recent decades, many important studies have been conducted in the field of politeness and its strategies. Linguists attempted to categorize these strategies and to investigate them. In their opinion, social factors and cultural variables are involved in the use of polite and impolite utterances. One of the main environments under the impact of polite or impolite utterances is family. The verbal interactions between the couples and their discursive styles are challenging topics in the linguistic studies. Hence, this research attempts to analyze the impolite utterances of irreconcilable Iranian Couples through their conflicts and disputes.

## 2. Review of literature

Laitinen (2010) in his thesis studied the use of impoliteness strategies in the American TV- series House M.D. The aim of this research was the study of impoliteness strategies in the series between Dr. House and his patients. Therefore, the author transcribed nine extracts that were all short conversations between House and his clinic patients. Culpeper's (1996) impoliteness strategies formed the framework of this research. Conclusions showed that based on nine short extracts, it seemed that bald on record strategies and sarcasm were the impoliteness strategies that House utilized most regularly. Most of the patients completely ignored House's impolite insulting remarks. However, the author claimed that due to the fact that the patients were actors in a series, it was impossible to analyze the truthfulness of their reactions.

Kunsti (2012) examined politeness and impoliteness strategies used by lawyers in the "Dover Trail". The subject of this study was linguistic politeness and impoliteness in the speech of lawyers. Culpeper (1996) impoliteness strategies formed the framework of this research. The data for this study was a courtroom transcript of the "Dover Trial". The complete transcript consisted of 5000 pages, but every fifth page was selected as the sample for this study. The results showed that lawyers utilized both politeness and impoliteness strategies in their speech in the courtroom. The number of politeness strategies was significantly greater than that of impoliteness strategies. Thus, the results corresponded with the hypothesis he presented.

Pennanen (2013) investigated the structure of impolite events in Computer-Mediated Conversation. The general aim of this study was to map how impoliteness events were realized in CMC and especially in a discussion board that was used to comment on a piece of news. The data was compiled from the United States of America version of CNN- website. In this case, the piece of news came from the U.S. edition of CNN entitled "war over women kicks off Obama- Romney race". The corpus of this study consisted of the first 1125 of these comments. There were 54,699 tokens all together in the corpus. The research questions were as follows:

1. Does impoliteness-triggering contain adjectives? What is their function? 2. At whom are the impoliteness-triggering events aimed? 3. What is the nature of the conversation in CMC that follows an impoliteness- triggering event: who is insulted and what counter- attack strategies are used? 4. How is the impoliteness super-strategies of sarcasm and calling the other names used in CMC?

The appearance of impoliteness super-strategies in the data were analyzed as follow:

<b>SUPERSTRATEGIS</b>	<b>Following conversation</b>	<b>Triggering event</b>
<b>ON-RECORD IMPOLITENESS</b>	183	58
<b>POSITIVE IMPOLITENESS</b>	106	20
"ignore/ snub the other"	0	1
"exclude other from activity"	5	0
"dissociate from other"	23	8
"be disinterested, unconcerned, unsympathetic"	28	1
"use inappropriate identity markers"	5	8
"seek disagreement"	4	7
"Use taboo words"	3	1
"call the other names"	38	3
<b>NEGATIVE POLITENESS</b>	77	29
"frighten"	3	0
"Condescend, scorn, ridicule"	34	6

"Explicitly associate the other with a negative aspect"	40	23
<b>OFF-RECORD IMPOLITENESS</b>	30	0
"Sarcasm"	30	0
<b>WITHHOLD POLITENESS</b>	54	13
"criticize"	22	8
"enforce role shift"	2	0
"challenge"	30	5
<b>Total usage</b>	267	71

The conclusion showed that CMC was a medium highly different and in some ways incomparable. It was a medium where people could provoke others in ways that were virtually impossible in face-to-face communication. It was a unique form of communication and gave researchers of 'language in use' many opportunities that should be paid attention in the near future (Pennanen, 2013).

Keykhayee (2013) in her article investigated the relationship of the type and number of impoliteness strategies employed by Sistani students with addressee's power and gender in the realization of request speech act. To reach this purpose, a number of requests were collected through a Discourse Completion Test (DCT). The data were gathered according to the Culpeper's (1996) impoliteness framework. The analysis of the data showed that: 1) both male and female subjects tended to be more negatively impolite in the realization of request speech acts, 2) the addressee's power influenced addresser's utilization of impoliteness strategies in terms of the choice and frequency of the strategies employed; and 3) the addressee's gender did not influence addresser's use of impoliteness strategies in terms of the choice and frequency of the strategies employed (See Keykhayee, 2013, p. 352).

Culpeper (1996) utilized Brown and Levinson's (1987) model as a departure for his seminal article on impoliteness. Terming impoliteness as "the parasite of politeness", Culpeper regarded impoliteness as the use of intentionally face threatening acts (p. 335). Culpeper laid out five super strategies that speakers utilized to make impolite utterances (Furman, 2010, p. 3). Before introducing these strategies, it was necessary to present a definition of "face".

The term "face" may be described as the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others presume he has taken during a specific contact (Goffman, 1967: 5). Brown and Levinson (1987) define face in two ways; in terms of positive and negative face. *Negative face* is "the want of every component adult member that his actions be unimpeded by others" (Brown and Levinson, 1987, p.67). Positive face is "the want of every number that his wants be desirable to at least some others" (Brown and Levinson, 1987, p. 67). A *face threatening act* is a speech act (such as a warning or a threat) that can damage the hearer's positive or negative face (Brown and Levinson, 1987, p. 68).

Culpeper's model of impoliteness is based on Brown and Levinson's theory of politeness (1987). Culpeper (2005) defines impoliteness as those occasions when "(1) the speaker communicates face-attack intentionally, or (2) the hearer perceives and/or constructs behavior as intentionally face-attacking, or a combination of (1) and (2)" (p. 38).

According to Culpeper (1995), super strategies and sub-strategies of impoliteness are categorized as follow:

- 1) **Bald on record impoliteness**: performing the FTA (Face Threatening Act) in a direct, clear, unambiguous, and concise way even when face considerations are relevant.
- 2) **Positive impoliteness**: strategies designed to damage the addressee's positive face wants.
  - Ignore, snub the other
  - Exclude the other from an activity
  - Disassociate from the other
  - Be disinterested, unconcerned, unsympathetic
  - Use inappropriate identity markers
  - Use obscure or secretive language
  - Seek disagreement
  - Make the other feel uncomfortable
  - Use taboo words
  - Call the other names

- 3) *Negative impoliteness*: strategies designed to damage the addressee's negative face wants
  - Frighten
  - Condescend, scorn or ridicule
  - Invade the other's space
  - Explicitly associate the other with a negative aspect
  - Put the other's indebtedness on record
  - Use of physical barrier
- 4) *Sarcasm or mock politeness*: performing the FTA with politeness strategies that are obviously insincere.
- 5) *Withhold politeness*: Not performing politeness work where it is expected.

### 3. Research Questions

The study mainly attempts to answer the following research questions:

1. Which one of the irreconcilable Iranian couples (men or women) uses the impoliteness strategies more in their verbal disputes?
2. What is the relationship between gender and the use of impolite discourse in the family?

### 4. Methodology

This study followed a descriptive-analytic method and the corpus of this study was based upon the conversations of 16 irreconcilable couples aged between 18 and 50 who lived in Ahvaz, Iran.

The sampling method was as follows: announcements were issued by the researchers in crowded public places such as squares, parks, mosques... in the city of Ahvaz in order to invite irreconcilable couples. The researchers also sent invitations to marriage counseling centers to motivate the irreconcilable couples who were willing to undergo treatment into participating in the study.

The couples were interviewed to make sure that they had the essential criteria to take part in this research. As a result, 16 couples were considered appropriate and thus were selected as the participants in the study. Their interactions were videotaped during goal oriented scenarios, including: problem solving, decision making, reviewing conversations about a shared memories of a pleasant event in past interactions, and a tea-break session in the research center lab of Ahvaz.

The Material Adjustment Test (MAT) was completed by all participants before observations. The results of this test were compared with the participants' adjustment of marriage satisfaction. In marriage compatibility, the women's scores ranged from 12 to 98 and the men's scores ranged from 7 to 99.

### 5. Results

As we mentioned before, in this study, we attempted to analyze which one of the irreconcilable Iranian couples (men or women) used the impoliteness strategies more in their verbal disputes and to examine the relationship between gender and the use of impolite discourse in the family. Below, we present the results of this study.

#### 5.1. Qualitative and Quantitative analysis

##### 5.1.1. The use of Bald on record impoliteness

###### a. The use of Bald on record impoliteness by women

This kind of impoliteness involves insults. In the Iranian culture, there are 3 types of insults:

##### 1- Insulting one's self (spouses)

Example (1)

Wife: I became vulnerable to be your donkey. It means that you fool me again.

Husband: the only thing I did, I came and save your life and made you happy, didn't I?

Example (2)

Husband: we went to Shiraz and stayed in Majid's grandmother's house.

Wife: look at me, how silly of me! I said to myself we should go to Majid's grandmother's house instead of taking a trip on honeymoon.

#### Qualitative analysis:

In these two conversations, the wives belittled themselves directly by using words like: donkey, silly, waste. They could belittle their husbands but they preferred to humiliate themselves. It means that they wanted their husbands to understand that their behavior and utterances were so horrible that the wives chose to express these insults.

## 2. *Insulting the spouse (by women)*

### Example (1)

Husband: do you admit that you acted like an idiot or not?

Wife: my foolish actions are nothing in comparison with those of yours.

### Example (2)

Wife: If you could understand and spoke kindly with your husband, you would have a good life.

Husband: you know how sensitive and nervous I am, so you pick on it.

### Example (3)

Wife: we should make several kinds of salad.

Husband: I had to make all of them, didn't I?

Wife: when do you make salad?

Husband: are you sure you always do the kitchen works?

Wife: you are so rude. When do you do something useful?

### Example (4)

Husband: you said to me you wanted to go to Shiraz.

Wife: you are sneaky, I smell a rat.

### Example (5)

Husband: I do as you wish.

Wife: as I wish? Ok, God damn you if it is not my wish.

### Example (6)

Wife: you don't have any relatives because all of them know you and your father are mentally sick. You have no relationship with anybody.

Husband: what about your relatives?

### Example (7)

Wife: you are an alcoholic, and I dislike your programs, so I 'm forced to go.

Husband: (laughing) you knew it before.

### Example (8)

Wife: only loose girls are attracted to you, it will be fun.

Husband: I will order a delicious cake, I'll decorate home, I'll buy everything.

Wife: why was your wedding like that of beggars?

### Example (9)

Wife: You were a pretentious person who shows himself as a religious one to me. I thought you are a religious and rich man but I found you are a beggar and ridicule the praying.

Husband: But you found out after one year.

### Example (10)

Husband: Who do you prefer to invite to the party?

Wife: the hooligans who are around you. You don't have a family.

### Example (11)

Wife: Niavaran Palace was nice, but you are too dumb to remember.

Husband: I remember it.

Example (12)

Wife: Whenever we go out, you are busy speaking loudly on your cell phone.

Husband: because we have nothing to say to one another.

Example (13)

Wife: do you admit that you were stupid?

Husband: I admit that I didn't know how to distinguish between truth and untruth?

Example (14)

Husband: didn't I say to go to the North?

Wife: riding in a car with a crazy driver who is driving recklessly and keeps repeating " I want to kill you" ? sure I won't do such a thing.

Husband: it dates back to six years ago.

Example (15)

Husband: I got a visa to Thailand. But you didn't come with me.

Wife: cut the crap, you didn't do that.

Example (16)

Wife: If you were brave enough to admit your mistakes, we wouldn't end up in this.

Husband: (silence)

Example (17)

Husband: they asked me what my mother- in- law had said?

Wife: it is none of your business! Did you ask what others did in their wedding?

Example (18)

Husband: everyone who has a job like my job has a life like that of mine too.

Wife: you were wrong to pick me to marry.

Example (19)

Husband: why were the dirty dishes in the sink last night?

Wife: because I was angry with you, I said to myself to hell with him. Let him wash them.

Example (20)

Husband: we went to the sea, the North and Akbarjouje!

Wife: it dates back to the period before the marriage. It was the time when you were trying to fool me!

### ***Qualitative analysis:***

In all of these conversations, the wives belittle their husbands for some reasons like anger, sadness and dissatisfaction with marriage. It caused them to use these contemptuous words with a high frequency. These statistics prove that the wives have the verbal power in the family.

### ***3. Insulting the spouse's family***

Example (1)

Husband: my mom doesn't interfere in our problems. She raised Kimia who is a very polite girl.

Wife: yes! She is very impolite and spoiled too.

Example (2)

Husband: let me say one word! Just one word! That night your mom wanted me to finish the engagement party because your brother would get mad.

Wife: can you teach your brother manners?

**Qualitative analysis:**

In the example (1), the main discussed topic is about training and nurturing their child. The husband believes that his mother-in-law trained her child badly, then he pointed out his nephew who was trained by the husband's mom but the wife insulted that child by using negative adjectives to describe the child's personality. In fact she insulted her mother-in-law's upbringing. In example (2), husband complained about his wife's brother, but the wife insulted him directly.

**b. The use of Bald on record impoliteness by men**

**1. Insulting one's self**

Wife: Do you admit you were silly?

Husband: I am still silly, I am proud.

**Qualitative analysis:**

The husband could direct the contemptuous remarks toward his wife but he insulted himself instead. Insults to the other person in interactions are equal to insults to one's self.

**2. Insulting the spouses**

Example (1)

Husband: one of the problems which bother me is your laziness.

Wife: which laziness?

Example (2)

Husband: the problem is that I don't accept your behavior because your behavior is problematic. I don't trust you yet.

Example (3)

Husband: you're so myopic as far as financial affairs are concerned. You say "let's seize the day" and never think about the future.

Wife: to its normal limit. I don't want to waste whatever you gain.

Example (4)

Wife: my happiness lasted only one year.

Husband: if it is true, you are so foolish that you stay with me, you could let me enjoy a moment of comfort.

**Qualitative analysis:**

In all these conversations, men used direct insults toward their spouses. Utilizing words such as "laziness" and "foolish" proves that.

**3. Insulting the wife's family**

Example (1)

Husband: my problem is your cunning father. He is pretentious and promiscuous. He is a liar.

Wife: (angrily) what do you mean by promiscuous?

Example (2)

Husband: your father is a robber because he doesn't give back my money. He is sly because the checks he gave me all bounced. He is pretentious because he prays but he doesn't act like a Muslim.

Wife: what are you saying?

Example (3)

Husband: your father is irrational, pretentious like a pheasant. He is an unsuccessful person who doesn't have a good life.

Wife: what about you?

Example (4)

Husband: your father is the quintessence of corruption on earth.

Wife: stop!

Example (5)

Husband: considering your family, your biggest aim is to follow in your mother's footsteps. I hate that. I dislike that. I don't appreciate your family culture, your behavior.

Wife: who has taught you this behavior?

Example (6)

Husband: your father ruined your life by his thoughts, behavior and foolish actions! This is important.

Wife: why did he ruin my life? My life was good until I married you!

#### **Qualitative analysis:**

In these conversations, husbands insulted their spouse's families directly.

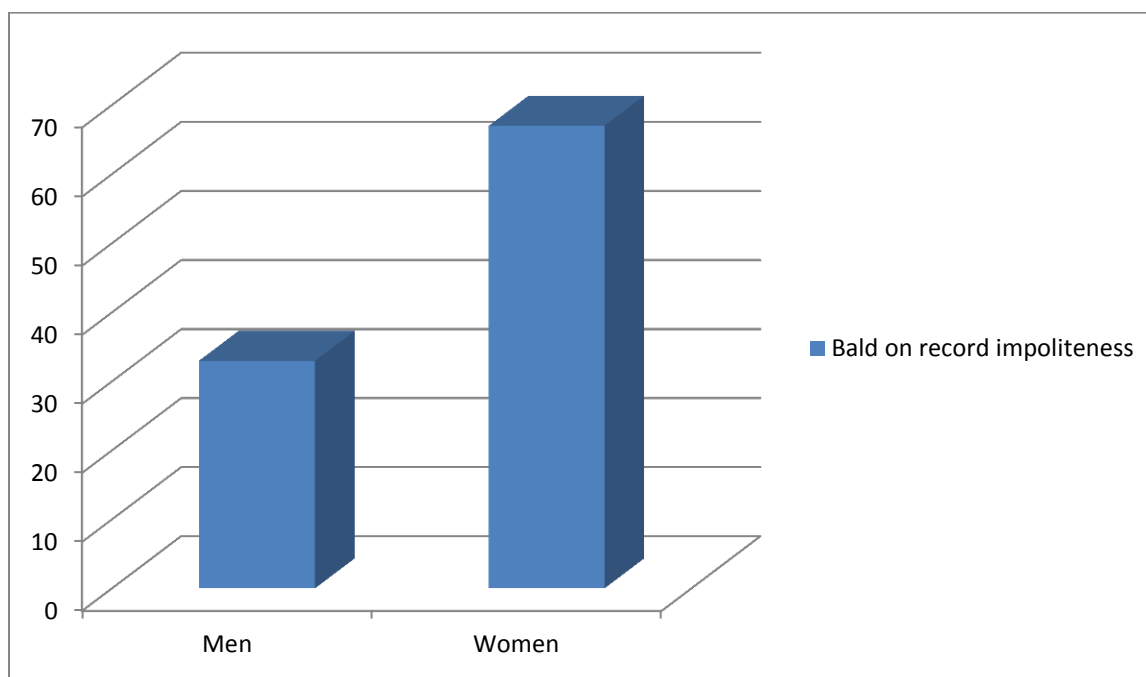
#### **Quantitative analysis:**

Considering the use of *Bald on record impoliteness* that included direct insults, there are 36 cases. Women have used this strategy 24 times and the husbands utilized it 12 times.

**Table 1: the number of applied insults**

Types of insults	Women	men
Insulting one's self	2	1
Insulting the spouses	20	4
Insulting spouse's family	2	6
Total	24	11

The total number of the insults is 35. It is clear that women insult themselves twice as much as men do. Women insult their spouses five times more than men, but men insult their spouses' families three times more than women. In total, women use the insults in 24 cases and men use them in 12 ones. It indicates that the women's percentage in using *Bald on record impoliteness* is 67% and this portion for men is 33% . The chart of this analysis is drawn below:



*Chart 1: Bald on record impoliteness*

### 5.1.2. Positive impoliteness

These are strategies designed to damage the addressee's positive face wants.

#### 1.a. Ignore, snub the other (by women)

Example (1)

Husband: you didn't say hello to me!

Wife: why didn't you answer me when I said hello to you?

Example (2)

Wife: you don't care about me, a woman want to have money.

Husband: I think about your future.

Example (3)

Wife: nobody understands how much I suffer, not my children, not anybody else, they always ask me how I spend my life all alone. I have to do your duties as well as mine.

Husband: you don't have any problems.

#### *Qualitative analysis:*

In this conversation, the husband is addicted and the wife is complaining about his unfulfilled duties. She criticized him using indirect statements. In this part, women use examples of Ignore, snub the other 14 times. Here only 3 of them are given due to its great volume.

#### 1. b. Ignore, snub the other (by men)

Example (1)

Wife: your mother tells me many things in a short phone call, but I keep silent.

Husband: I'm not in mood for talking now.

#### *Qualitative analysis:*

The husband is tired of what her wife says about her mother- in- low and he prefers to ignore her saying: 'I'm not in mood for talking now'.



Example (2)

Husband: you shouldn't have said such a thing, never!

Wife: but I did it!

Example (3)

Husband: when I need you to understand me and sympathize with me, where were you?

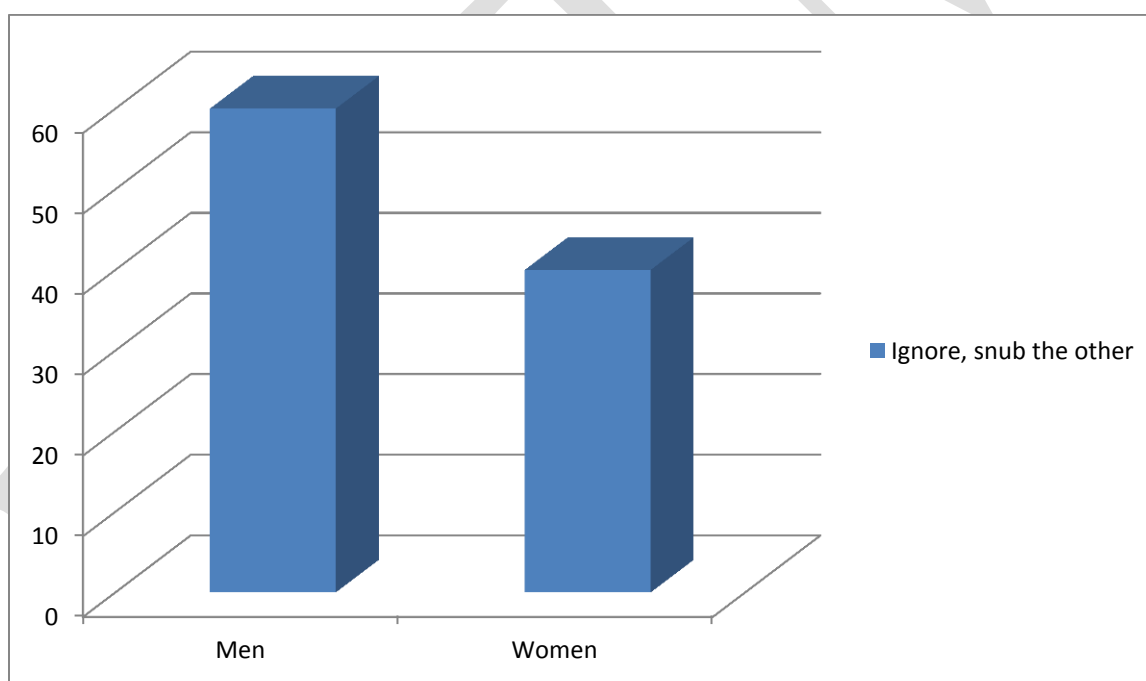
Wife: I always understood you, in all situations. Men use examples of Ignore, snub the other 21 times. Here only 3 of them are given owing to its massive volume. Men have utilized this impoliteness strategy 1.5 times more than women.

**Table 2: using Ignore, snub the other maxim**

Type of insult	Men	Women
using Ignore, snub the other maxim	21	14
Total	35	

#### *Quantitative analysis:*

In total, men use Ignore, snub the other in 21 cases and women use in 12 cases. It means that the men's percentage in using the Ignore, snub the other factor is 60% and this percentage for women is 40%. The chart of this analysis is draw below:



**Chart 2: Ignore, snub the other**

#### *2. a. Exclude the other from an activity (by women)*

Example (1)

Wife: I always fast during Ramadan.

Husband: yeah. You do it hypocritically!

Wife: I'm not a hypocrite. You have no right to speak like this about me!

Example (2)

Husband: at the beginning of our married life, I wanted to visit my aunt more often. But you didn't let me do it. Why?

Wife: because they came over to my house twice a week and we dropped in on her twice a week too. It was unbearable. One should pay a visit to their relatives once a month, once in two months.

**Qualitative analysis:**

In these two conversations, the women excluded their husbands from doing something.

**2. b. Exclude the other from an activity (by men)**

Example (1)

Wife: why didn't you let me to go my uncle's house? Because your father had a problem with him, I wasn't supposed to go there.

Husband: I had a personal problem with your uncle and for that I didn't let you go there.

Example (2)

Wife: I can't speak like you. I can't uphold my rights.

Husband: you had no rights to uphold. If you had the right, you could defend it well.

**Qualitative analysis:**

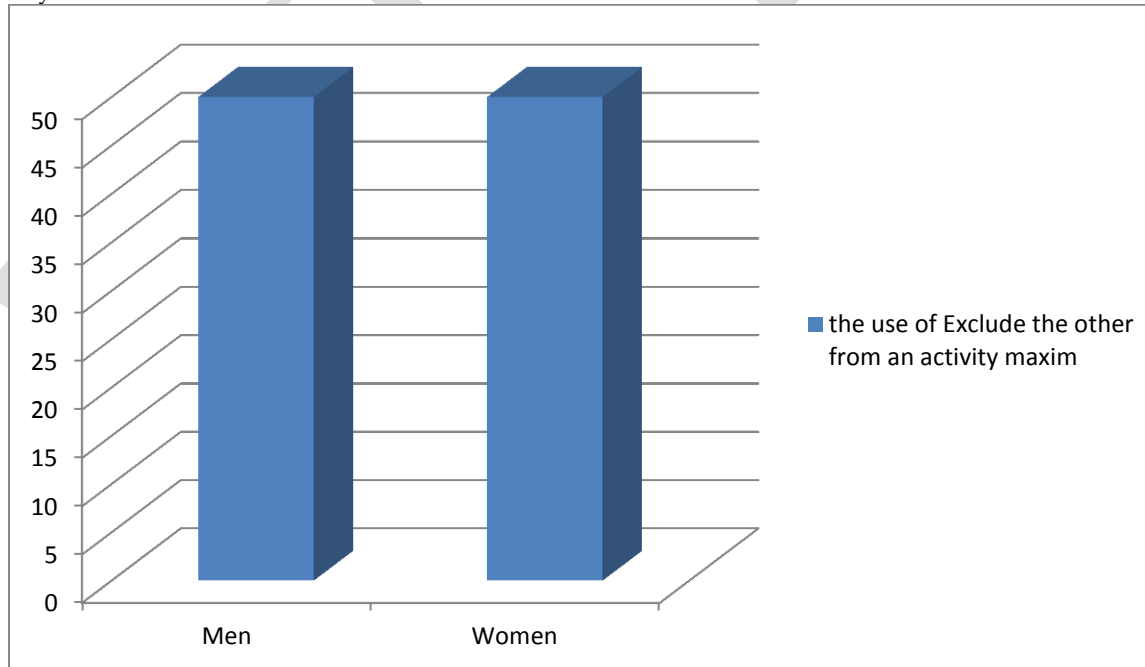
In these two conversations, the men like women excluded their spouses from doing something, too.

**Table 3: the use of Exclude the other from an activity maxim**

Type of insult	Men	Women
the use of Exclude the other from an activity maxim	2	2
Total	4	

**Quantitative analysis:**

In total, men use exclude the other from an activity maxim in 2 cases and women use in 2 cases. This means that the men's percentage of men and that of women in this factor are both 50%. This is depicted graphically down below:



**Chart 3: Exclude the other from an activity**

**3. a. Disassociate from the other (by women)**

Example (1)

Husband: our journey to North was so nice and enjoyable.

Wife: (sobbing) no, not at all. It wasn't nice.

Example (2)

Husband: your sister was interfering in our life.

Wife: she didn't interfere in our life!

Husband: yes, she did.

Wife: she was just speaking about her problems and her life.

Example (3)

Wife: who should we invite to the birthday party?

Husband: your family or my family. It's better to pick one of them.

Wife: what kind of party is it? Only my family or yours! I've never seen such a party!

### *Qualitative analysis:*

In these dialogs, the couples don't have the same idea about inviting their guests to the party and thus fail to come to an agreement in this respect. The husband suggests that they invite one of the families, either invite his family or his wife's family, not both of them. But the wife disagrees with him. In her opinion, both families should be invited to the party.

### *3. b. Disassociate from the other (by men)*

Example (1)

Wife: if you do that again, he (their child) won't have lunch when he comes upstairs.

Husband: he will have lunch.

Example (2)

Husband: I don't want to discuss that topic.

Wife: on the contrary, it is better to discuss it.

Husband: it dates back to several years ago. I can't speak about it.

Example (3)

Wife: you know I've spoken with Saied about these problems many times.

Husband: I don't know anything.

### *Qualitative analysis:*

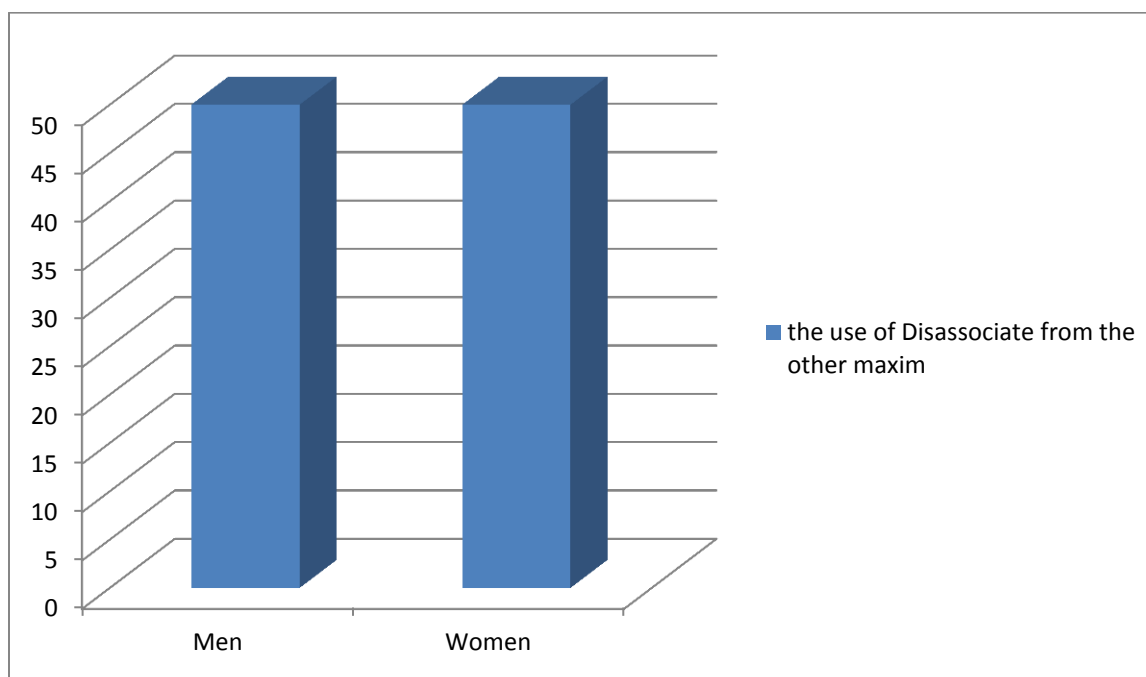
In using this factor, women and men have scored equal numbers. Each of them made use of this factor 11 times. Only 3 examples are provided due to its great volume. The correspondent table is presented below:

**Table 4: the use of Disassociate from the other maxim**

Type of insult	Men	Women
the use of Disassociate from the other maxim	11	11
Total	22	

### *Quantitative analysis:*

In total, men and women made use of this factor 11 times. They have scored equal numbers. This means that the men's percentage and that of women in this factor is 50%. This is displayed below:



*Chart 4: Disassociate from the other*

**4. a. Be disinterested, unconcerned, unsympathetic (by women)**

Example (1)

Wife: I have no feelings for you. Considering the way you've been treating me recently, I even hate you.

Husband: like I have good feelings for you!

Example (2)

Husband: I suggested we live with each other like a brother and sister, just because of our child.

Wife: our love died the moment you said that.

Example (3)

Wife: as a wife, I don't have any feelings for you.

Husband: what have I done?

**4. b. Be disinterested, unconcerned, unsympathetic (by men)**

Example (1)

Husband: I think that our main problem is that we are not satisfied with each other.

Wife: what does satisfaction mean?

Husband: it means that we aren't interested in one another. We are not pleased with each other.

Wife: all right, we should get divorced.

Example (2)

Wife: whenever I wanted you to take me somewhere, you didn't do it!

Husband: there was nowhere to go, no place, no motivation, no new words!

Example (3)

Husband: when we go out, we have nothing to talk about. We don't have a romantic relationship at all. Have you ever been to a coffee-shop with your husband? No, Never!

Wife: going to a coffee shop is suitable for a boyfriend and a girlfriend, not for a married couple!

**Qualitative analysis:**

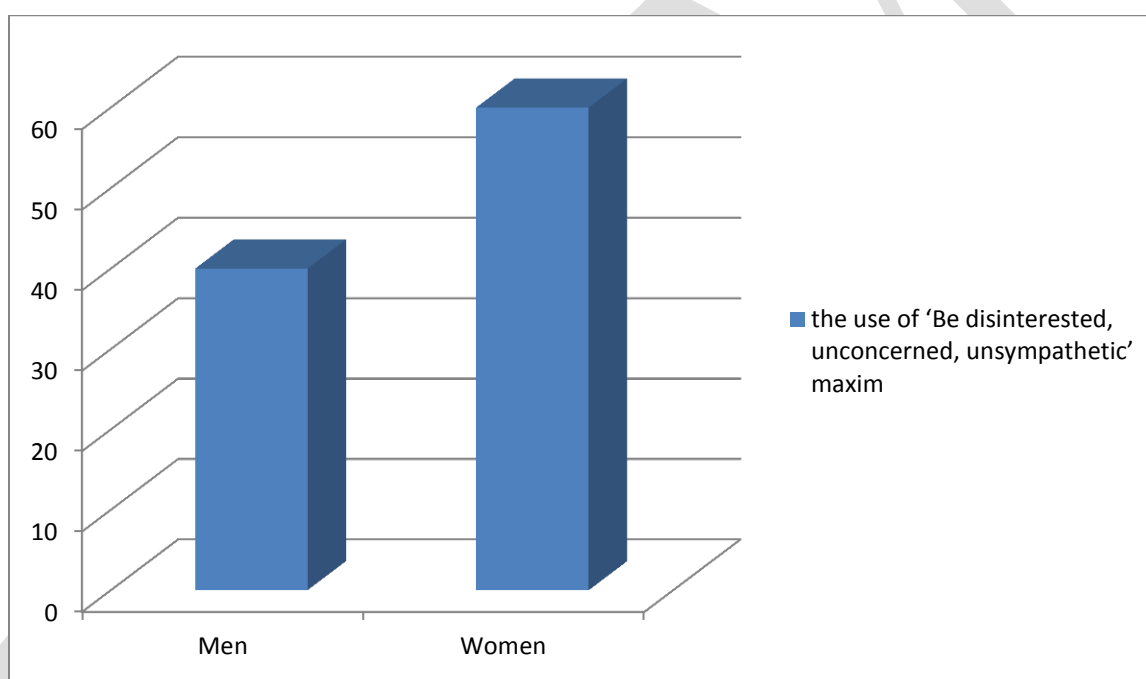
In these dialogues, to be disinterested, unconcerned, unsympathetic expressed by men is clear. The use of words such as: not satisfied, no place, no motivation, nothing to say, etc. vividly shows this point. Only 3 examples are provided owing to its great volume.

**Table 5: the use of 'Be disinterested, unconcerned, unsympathetic' maxim**

Type of insult	Men	Women
the use of 'Be disinterested, unconcerned, unsympathetic' maxim	8	12
Total	20	

#### *Quantitative analysis:*

According to the data, men used the maxim of being disinterested, unconcerned and unsympathetic 8 times and women in 12 cases. This means that the men's percentage is 40% and that of women in this factor is 60%. This is shown below:



**Chart 5: Be disinterested, unconcerned, unsympathetic**

#### **5. Use inappropriate identity markers**

Not found within the corpus.

#### **6. Use obscure or secretive language**

Not found within the corpus.

#### **7. a. Seek disagreement (by women)**

Example (1)

Wife: my problem is distrust. I mean I think this is going to happen again. I know, it will be just as before.

Husband: did that problem recur?

#### *Qualitative analysis:*

In this conversation, the wife mentions that her husband will repeat what he has done before. This reveals the fact that the husband has done the same unpleasant deed in the past many times and the wife is distrustful of him and thus disagrees with him on this account.

Example (2)

Husband: I love you and my child.

Wife: it is easier said than done! You have been treating me like a slave for 4 years. Now that your bank account is blocked, you tell me such things.

#### *Qualitative analysis:*

In this conversation the husband tries to get emotionally closer to his wife. But his wife disagrees with him and brings new topics into the discussion. This can be inferred that she is not pleased with their relationship.

Example (3)

Wife: anytime we decided to celebrate Amir hossein's birthday it did not turn out to be what I had planned. Since the very first year, I have craved for a birthday party in which we invite Amir hossein's friends over.

Husband: Amir hossein's friends, relatives, sister,....

#### *7. b. Seek disagreement (by men)*

Example (1)

Husband: I don't see it necessary now to take you to the best restaurant in Tehran. Even if you keep asking me to do it 100 times, I won't do it.

Wife: I don't have a mental complex regarding this matter.

Example (2)

Wife: don't you talk about my family! Do I ever talk about yours?!

Husband: do it, talk about them if they annoy you! One of my problems is your family, your mom.

Example (3)

Wife: what did we quibble about that night? I don't remember!

Husband: I guess you said I chat up girls.

#### *Qualitative analysis:*

In the above conversations the husbands have utilized this maxim through clear statements which show seeking disagreement. These statements are "one of my problems is your family, your mother" and " I don't see it necessary". Only 3 examples are given due to its great volume.

#### *Quantitative analysis:*

With regard to "seek disagreement maxim", eight examples were detected in the corpus. 4 of them were used by the wives and four by the husbands. Therefore we have:

**Table 6: the use of seek disagreement maxim**

Type of insult	Men	Women
the use of seek disagreement maxim	4	4
Total	8	

Statistically, women and men have equal scores in this maxim and each represents 50% of the total number of the Examples.

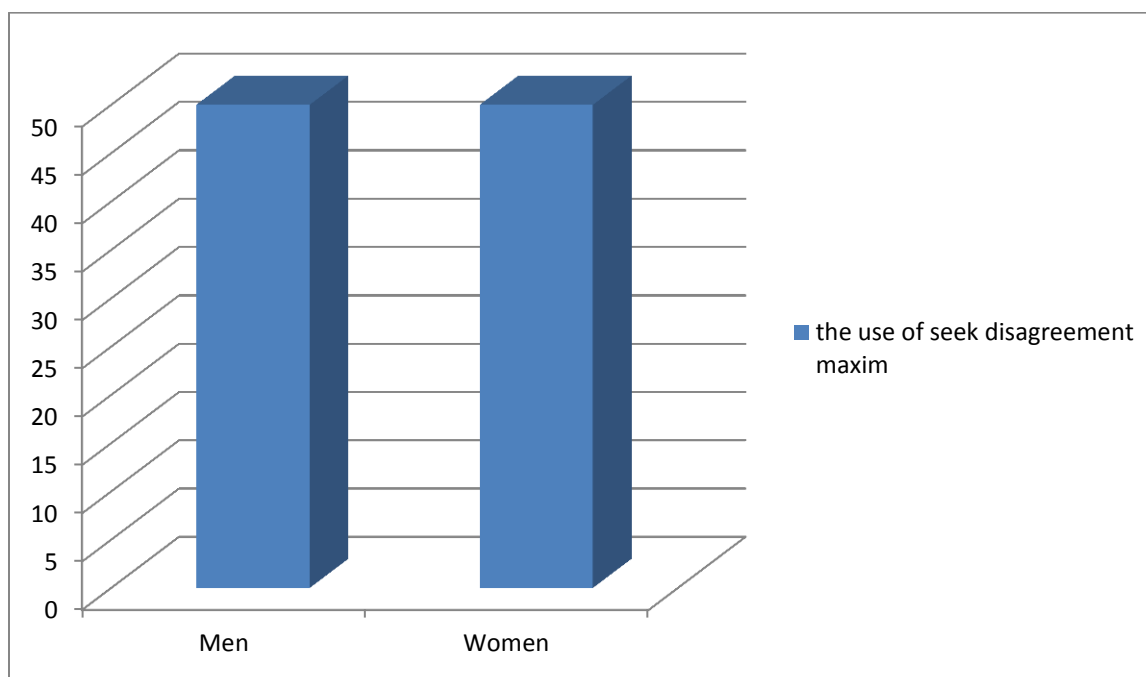


Chart 6: seek disagreement maxim

#### 8. a. Make the other feel uncomfortable (by women)

Example (1)

Wife: this is exactly what you said.

Husband: I don't remember.

Wife: why don't you remember? Why don't remember what you should and why do you remember what you shouldn't.

#### Qualitative analysis:

In this conversation the wife has pressed charges against her husband. As a result her husband bank account has been blocked. By saying "Why don't remember what you should and why do you remember what you shouldn't" the wife seeks to remind him of his block account and make him feel uncomfortable.

#### 8. b. Make the other feel uncomfortable (by men)

Example (1)

Husband: it is going to be like this for a while, there is no other way.

Wife: you mean, there is no other way for you to work?

#### Qualitative analysis:

In this conversation the husband makes his wife feel uncomfortable by saying "there is no other way". This is due to the fact that the wife hopes the situation will change, but the husband takes away all her hope.

#### Quantitative analysis:

With regard to this maxim, the husbands and wives have used it equally and hold 50% of the total amount.

Table 7: use of seek disagreement maxim

Type of insult	Men	Women
the use of seek disagreement maxim	1	1
Total	2	

Since this maxim has been used by men and women only once, a chart analysis can't be provided. It can only be counted in classifying impoliteness types.

#### 9. Use taboo words

Not found within the corpus.

#### 10. Call the other names

This maxim was used only once by a husband. It is depicted bellow:  
Illogical pretentious pheasant!

#### 5.1.3. Negative impoliteness

These are strategies designed to damage the addressee's negative face wants

##### 1. a. Frighten (for women)

Example (1)

Wife: I have suffered a lot during all these years. You must suffer to see how it feels to undergo such a thing.

Husband: why are you unfair?

Example (2)

Husband: I will be proud of your success.

Wife: you will have no role in my life then to be proud.

*Qualitative analysis:* Here the wife is threatening her husband with divorce.

##### 1. b. Frighten (for men)

Example (1)

Husband: you used only one of your breasts to breast feed the baby. This will make me get even with you one way or another.

Wife: you appear confident and everyone thinks you are right.

Example (2)

Wife: I can do it, give you a gift and say that your dad didn't give anything.

Husband: do it and see what will happen.

*Qualitative analysis:* Here the husband means he will make his wife regret it.

*Quantitative analysis:* husbands and wives have both used this maxim twice.

##### 2. a. Condescend, scorn or ridicule (by women)

Example (1)

Husband: we went to Afsariye, Cocacola, Sepahsalar, but you couldn't choose any thing! Where else can we find it?

Wife: all the shops are full of clothes. We can choose the best, but not with this budget.

Example (2)

Wife: you were so stupid that you ruined our marriage because of your personal problems with my father.

Husband: he meddles in our life.

##### 2. b. Condescend, scorn or ridicule (by men)

Example (1)

Husband: even a Tractor can't work like this.

Wife: (silence).

*Qualitative analysis:* When a couple is satisfied with each other, they will ignore the annoying talks.



Table 8: use of Condescend, scorn or ridicule

Type of insult	Men	Women
use of Condescend, scorn or ridicule	4	4
Total	8	

**Quantitative analysis:**

Men and women have equal scores in using this maxim. The percentage for each of them is 50%.

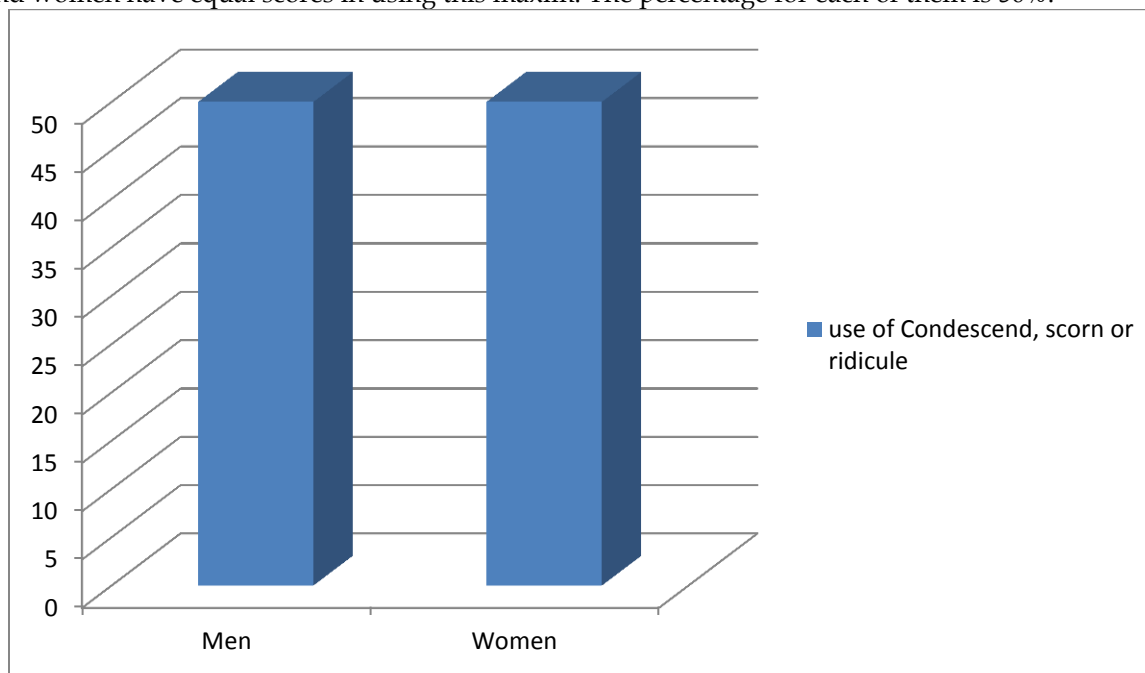


Chart 7: Condescend, scorn or ridicule

**3. Invade the other's space**

Not found in the corpus

**4. a. Explicitly associate the other with a negative aspect (by women)**

Example (1)

Husband: thank God I have never used narcotics in my life!

Wife: why don't you say thank God I've never drunk or smoked!

Husband: you knew I drank from the very beginning.

Wife: that was an example.

**4. b. Explicitly associate the other with a negative aspect (by men)**

Husband: anyone who lives according to what the Quran says won't be a pretentious fanatic like your father!

Won't do the unpleasant things that your father does!

Wife: (silent)

**Qualitative analysis:** In this conversation, the husband associates his father-in-law with pretense and fanaticism.

Table 9: the use of Explicitly associate the other with a negative aspect

Type of insult	Men	Women
the use of Explicitly associate the other with a negative aspect	1	1

Total	2
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**Quantitative analysis:**

Both men and women have used examples of this case only once. Therefore, no accurate statistical analysis can be provided. This maxim can only be accounted for in counting impoliteness types.

**5. a. Put the other's indebtedness on record (by women)****Example (1)**

Wife: you can't do it. Everyone is addicted, but no one is like you.

Husband: you mean I am the only exception?

**Example (2)**

Wife: you have no relationship with your relatives! Your grandmother did know you had gotten married. Later on, when she died, no one attended her funeral.

Husband: (silent)

**Example (3)**

Wife: why did you insist on taking a trip together with your female employee?

Husband: I had no special intention, it just happened like that. And besides, her travelling companion was her husband on that trip. You were with me, too.

Wife: you are married, but you flirt with many women!

Husband: You must be ashamed of what you say.

**Qualitative analysis:**

In these conversations, women used statements such as 'everyone is addicted, but no one is like you', 'you have no relationship with your relatives' and 'you are married, but you flirt with many women' in order to reveal their husbands' negative personality traits.

**5. b. Put the other's indebtedness on record (by men)****Example (1)**

Husband: You did confess that you were this way all due to what your father had done. Your sister is going to elope!

Wife: why should she elope?! She is getting married.

**Example (2)**

Husband: your father has beaten your sister to death many times.

Wife: Why are you talking nonsense?! Did it happen in front of you?

**Example (3)**

Husband: I've got to keep silent because no one knows when your sickness began.

Wife: I've become vulnerable.

**Qualitative analysis:**

In these conversations the husbands used statements such as 'you did confess that you were this way all due to what your father did', 'your sister is going to elope', 'your father has beaten your sister to death many times' and 'no one knows when your sickness began' to reveal a secret in their wives' private lives.

**Quantitative analysis:**

There were 20 examples relevant to this case in this study. Half of them were used by men and the remaining half by women. Only 3 examples are provided above due to its great volume.

Table 10: the use of Put the other's indebtedness on record

Type of insult	Men	Women
the use of Put the other's indebtedness on record	10	10
Total	20	

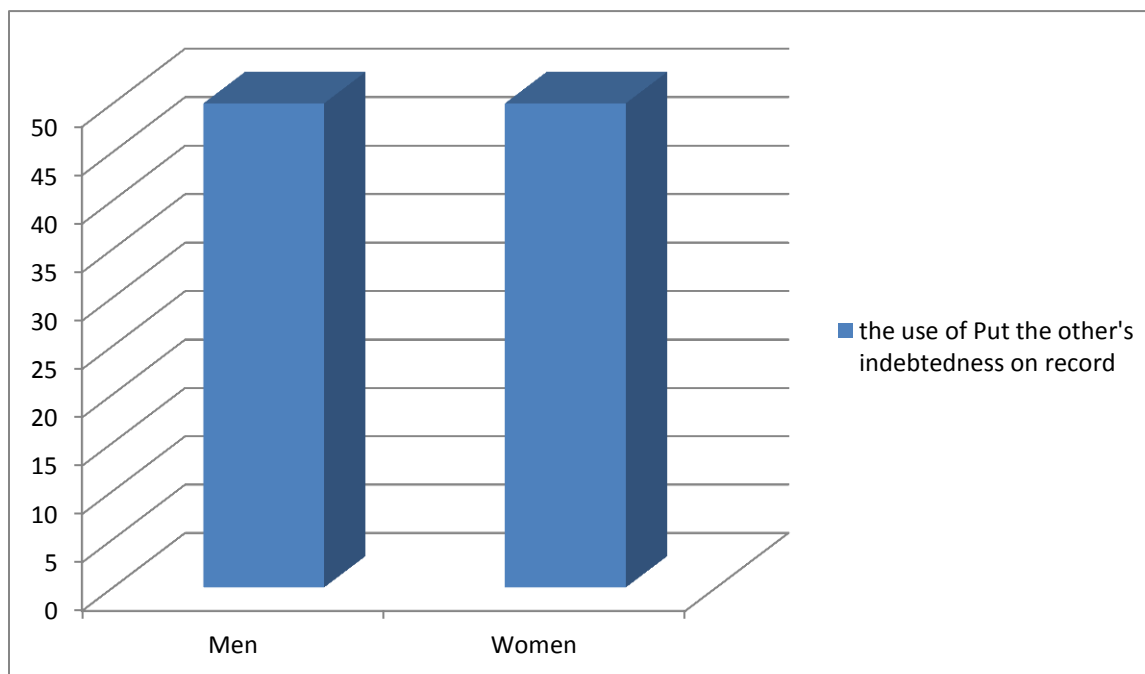


Chart 8: Put the other's indebtedness on record

#### 6. The use of physical barrier

Not found in the corpus

The following table summarizes this section.

Table 11: use of negative impoliteness

Maxim	Women	Men
Frighten	2	2
Condescend, scorn or ridicule	4	4
Invade the other's space	0	0
Explicitly associate the other with a negative aspect	1	1
Put the other's indebtedness on record	10	10
use of physical barrier	0	0
Total	17	17

#### 5.1.4. Sarcasm or mock politeness

This section is about performing the FTA with politeness strategies that are obviously insincere.

##### 1. a. Sarcasm or mock politeness (by women)

Example (1)

Husband: I don't see it necessary to take you to the best restaurant in town.

Wife: And you would take me there if I told you!

Example (2)

Husband: I can't control myself.

Wife: yes, your heart is brimming with emotion!

Example (3)

Husband: you aren't a hypocrite. You just have a limited understanding of everything!

Wife: You are the only wise person with full understanding!

### *Qualitative Analysis:*

In the last example the wife means that her husband is stupid. In fact, in all these examples, the wives have made use of sarcasm (mock politeness).

#### *1. b. Sarcasm or mock politeness (by men)*

Example (1)

Wife: didn't you have fun there?

Husband: You had fun only because we were in company with those two gatecrashers!

Example (2)

Wife: it is your duty.

Husband: How wonderful! Wisdom is a great asset!

Example (3)

Wife: should it be a coed ceremony?

Husband: I personally want it to be coed. But your respectable cultured family won't like it that way!

### *Qualitative analysis:*

In these examples, husbands try to upset their wives intentionally using biting statements such as 'wisdom is a great asset' and 'your respectful cultured family won't like it that way'.

**Table 12: the use of Sarcasm or mock politeness**

Type of insult	Men	Women
the use of Sarcasm or mock politeness	4	8
Total	12	

### *Quantitative analysis:*

As the table above shows, the wives have utilized sarcasm twice as many times as the husbands have. The statistical analysis, provided down below, graphically depicts the exact percentage regarding this case. Only 3 examples are given above due to its great volume.

**Withhold politeness**

It is about not performing politeness work where it is expected. (Culpeper 1995).

Nothing is found in the corpus related to this section.

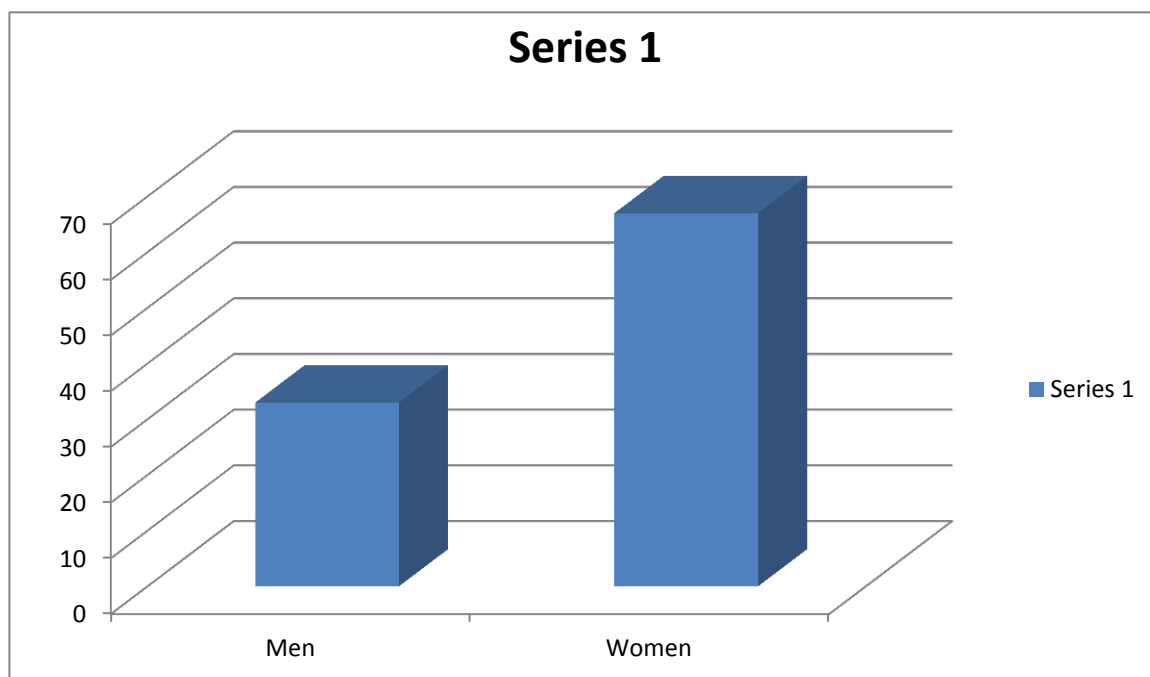


Chart 9: Sarcasm or mock politeness

**6. Conclusion**

The total number of impoliteness types in the current corpus is 175. There is a chart down below which displays these impoliteness strategies and the way they have been utilized by men and women in this study.

Table 13: the chart of impoliteness strategies

Impoliteness strategies	Women	Men	Total
Bald on record impoliteness	24	11	35
Positive impoliteness	44	49	93
Negative impoliteness	18	18	36
Sarcasm or mock politeness	8	4	12
Withhold politeness	0	0	0
Total	93	82	175

In reply to the first question, it could be said with a high degree of certainty that there was no significant difference between using impoliteness strategies and maxims by men and using them by women. Women insulted themselves twice more compared to their husbands and insulted their spouses 5 times more, while men's insults were directed at their wives' families 2.3 times more compared to the other way around. But on the whole, women used impoliteness twice as much as men did. It had been hypothesized that men utilized impoliteness more than women did. But the findings revealed that out of 175 impoliteness examples, 93 cases were utilized by women and 82 ones by men.

In reply to the second question, it is worth mentioning that the findings of this study were contrary to expectations in that they depicted that although women, in order to save their face, were normally more conservative in verbal communications in different contexts in society and thus appeared politer than men, they tended to be more impolite in family discourse. It indicated that women were less concerned about their face in family conversations in comparison with other contexts. This study is the first research in impoliteness within family discourse in Iran.

## 7. Limitations of the study

The chief limitation in this study was the scarcity of the studies and scientific papers on impoliteness in family discourse in Iran. As a matter of fact, this study is the very first research in this field in Iran which deals with this interdisciplinary topic and provides a detailed statistical analysis based on Culpeper's recent impoliteness model.

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# THE RHETORICAL STRUCTURE OF M.A ABSTRACTS WRITTEN BY STUDENTS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING, ENGLISH TRANSLATION AND CHEMISTRY IN IAUSH

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## Abstract

The present research was conducted in order to investigate the rhetorical structure of the genre of abstract among the abstracts written by Iranian M.A. students of English teaching, English translation and Chemistry. To this end, a total number of 90 MA theses abstracts written in English by the students of English teaching, English translation and Chemistry, 30 each, which were submitted during the period 2013-2015 were used in the present study. The abstracts were selected from among the existing corpus in Shahreza University. The Three move theory developed by Swale (1990) and comprised of 12 steps was used to investigate the abstracts. The findings showed that the move named outlining purpose and announcing present research shaped the highest percentage of the used rhetorical structures. It was also found that all of the abstracts of *TEFL* and *Translation* had made use of these steps, while only limited number of the abstracts of chemistry had used the step, *outlining the purpose*. A Chi-square was run among the rhetoric structures of the abstracts of the three disciplines under study and it was found that there was no statistically significant relationship between the three fields of study in terms of moves and steps used in them. The findings of the study can also provide insights for university language professors by demonstrating the role of knowing about the rhetoric structures of the genre of abstract.

## Introduction

Rhetorical Structure Theory (RST, hereafter) is a framework which explores the text structure above the clause level, by focusing on the relations between parts of text. The developers believe that this theory takes clauses as its atoms, and relates them hierarchically, using some rhetorical relations. In their model, these relations are defined functionally, in terms of what their effect on the reader is. Examples of such relations are justify, elaboration, purpose, antithesis, and condition.

RST is being used not only as a tool for analyzing the structure of natural language text, but also as a planning help in text generation. They also believe that rhetorical structures are a way to present the functional potential of text, its capacity to achieve the purposes of speakers and produce effects in hearers. It also shows a way to distinguish coherent texts from incoherent ones, and identifies consequences of text structure. The most obvious of the rhetorical structures is the use of text connectives like because and if. But researchers have established that syntactic means for expressing relations between text spans can also be exploited by a text generator.

One of the final things a student needs to do is to write an Abstract. The Abstract is an important piece of work as it is one of the first things an examiner will look at. An abstract gives readers a chance to quickly see what the main contents and sometimes methods of a piece of writing. They enable readers to decide whether the work is of interest for them. Cooley and Lewkowicz (2003) give this advice on the Abstract:

The Abstract is written after the research has been completed and the writer knows exactly what is contained in the body of the text. It is a summary of the text and it informs readers of what can be found in the dissertation and in what order, functioning as an overall signpost for the reader. Although it is the last part of a dissertation to be written, it is generally one of the first a reader will look at. Indeed, if the Abstract is not well written, it may be the only part of the dissertation a reader will look at!

Abstract writing is a skill that all students from different fields have to master when they write a thesis while doing their postgraduate course or research. Most of the theses and dissertations are prefaced by an informative abstract, which contains a "factual summary of the much longer report, and is meant to give the reader an exact and concise knowledge of the full dissertation." (Bhatia 1993, P. 78).

The abstract, as a genre, has some communicative functions for the post graduate students and professors. Irrespective of the subject they serve, abstracts function as being "advance indicators of the content and structure of the following text." (Swales 1990, P. 179). Writing thesis or dissertation in addition to writing and publishing articles in all fields including TEFL is a necessity for post graduate students. All of these publications have abstract. Nearly all journals need the articles to be accompanied with an abstract up to 250 words. Post graduate students usually have difficulty writing an abstract. This can be due to the fact that abstracts should be as informative as possible and it should contain certain pieces of information.

Each genre has a communicative purpose articulated by its overall rhetorical organization. Most of Iranian post graduate students are not familiar with this genre, and this leads to many problems in jotting down an abstract. Having students work on the rhetoric of the abstracts is a technique which can be of great positive effect for Iranian post-graduate learners. On the other hand, not many studies have so far been conducted to elaborate the rhetoric structure of their abstracts. Thus, this study tried to fill the gap and investigated the rhetoric structure of the abstracts of the theses written by Iranian post graduate students of TEFL, English translation and chemistry.

### **Research Questions**

The present study intended to answer the following questions:

- RQ1- What is the rhetorical structure of abstracts written by M.A students in TEFL?
- RQ2- What is the rhetorical structure of abstracts written by M.A students in English translation?
- RQ3- What is the rhetorical structure of abstracts written by M.A students in chemistry?
- RQ4- Is there any significant relationship among the abstracts written by students of the three fields?

### **Review of literature**

Theses in applied linguistics especially abstract section are of the neglected genres and need to be explored. Nasser and Nematollahi (2014) made an attempt to study these genres for their generic structures and contrast this structure between Iranian and Natives' Master of Arts (MA) theses. In analyzing the abstracts five moves were identified, "Situating the research, Presenting the research, Describing the methodology, Summarizing the results, and Discussing the research, among these moves in both groups only the last move, Discussing the research", with some variation between the two groups. Move marker analysis was another phase of this study with some aims the first of which was finding lexico-grammatical patterns and it did not yield so promising results. The other aim which was scrutinizing writer identity in theses gave the overall conclusion that in abstracts both groups try not to include their identity in their theses. The findings of this study may be of use in ESP material designing and classroom discussions for consciousness rising.

Ismail & Mohamed (2014) investigated the rhetorical structure of the abstracts of the Islamic research articles. In fact, they analyzed the rhetorical structure of the abstracts of the Islamic research articles written for research papers in journals and devoted to various topics in Islam. For this purpose 100 abstracts were chosen from five Islamic journals. Specifically, the paper sought to find out if these abstracts followed or deviated from Swales' IMRD (Introduction-Method-Results-Discussion) model. The results showed that only very small



percentage of the abstracts follow this model. The paper also analyzed the abstracts from a micro-structure level using the CARS (Create a Research Space) model. The results also showed that most of the Introduction sections of the abstracts themselves have all the moves prescribed by the CARS model. However, the number of abstracts that follow the linear order 1-2-3, was relatively small. Though most of the authors followed the rhetorical moves, they deviated in terms of its organization. Some pedagogical implications are drawn from the study.

Terzi and Arsalanturk (2014) aimed at evaluating English abstracts of MA and PhD dissertations published in Turkish language and identifying translation errors and problems concerning academic style and discourse. In this study, a random selection of MA and PhD dissertation abstracts both from the dissertations of Turkish speaking researchers and English-speaking researchers were used. The corpus consists of 90 abstracts of MA and PhD dissertations. The abstracts of these dissertations were analyzed in terms of problems stemming from translation issues and academic discourse and style. The findings indicated that Turkish-speaking researchers rely on their translation skills while writing their abstracts in English. Contrary to initial expectations, the results of the analysis of rhetorical moves did not indicate great differences in terms of the move structures, from which we concluded that there might be some universally accepted and attended rhetorical structure in dissertation abstracts.

Khasseh and Biranvand (2013) investigated the quality of the structured abstracts versus unstructured abstracts in terms of content comprehensiveness and also observed the items in APA manual. They collected their data through study of abstracts they got from Journals like: Faslname-ye Ketab, Journal of Academic Librarianship and Information Science, Iranian Journal of Information Processing & Management, Library and Information Science Quarterly, Ganjine-ye Asnad, and Research on Information Sciences & Public Libraries. They used a content analysis method to analyze their data. Forty nine point four percent of 245 abstracts were structured and 50.6 percent were unstructured. The score mean for structured abstracts was higher than unstructured ones. The findings showed that structured format increases the quality of abstracts.

Talebinezhad, Arbabi, Taki and Akhlaghi (2011) in a study aimed at finding structural variations in the translated abstracts from Persian into English and comparing them with abstracts originally written in English and published in international journals in the area of medical sciences. To do this, 64 medical article abstracts (32 in Iranian journals, 32 in international journals) were analyzed and compared on the basis of Swales' model (1990). More detailed analysis was done in the Introduction unit regarding CARS model (Swales, 1990) and also language features of each unit were identified. The IMRC (Introduction, Methods, Results, Conclusion) sequence was considered as the structural conventions for the analysis. The results showed that in terms of structural units, there was a significant difference in using the Methods unit between the two groups of abstracts ( $p=0.002$ ). Some variations were observed in the Introduction unit and language features. The data revealed that the translated abstracts from Persian into English in research medical articles meet the determined criteria for scientific writing while the original ones often ignore the criteria, although they are linguistically superior to the original English ones.

All these studies have greatly contributed to the field of English for academic purposes. However, there are not many studies in the literature focusing on the abstracts of MA and PhD dissertations and not many studies have been conducted on the studies of Iranian researchers. Therefore, this paper was an attempt to contribute to the literature by providing insights into the nature of abstracts of MA produced by Iranian researchers.

## Methodology

### *The construction of the corpus*

To find out reasonable response to the research questions, a total of 90 MA theses abstracts written in English were used in the present study. The corpus in English TEFL was made up of 30 English abstracts written by the students of TEFL (33.3% of the corpus), and were submitted during the period 2013-2015. The abstracts were selected from among the existing corpus in Shahreza University, and thirty others were the abstracts of translation from the same university. The thirty translation abstracts (33%) were selected from among the theses

which were submitted during the period of 2012-2015. The thirty chemistry abstracts (33%) were chosen from among those theses which were submitted during the time period of 2011-2015. All these abstracts were chosen randomly. The reason for choosing a high number of abstracts was due to the fact that more abstracts would be more representative of the data.

### 3.2 Research Instrument

As the instrument, Swales' (1990) "Creating a Research Space model (the CARS model)" was used. Swales focused on the research article, and in particular the introduction section of the research article genre (Swales, 1990). His famous work under the title of "Creating a Research Space model (the CARS model)" is very well known. The model proposes three main Moves for the introduction and a number of Steps used to express

each move: Move 1: Establishing a Territory

Step 1: Claiming Centrality and/or

Step 2: Making Topic Generalizations and/or

Step 3: Reviewing Items of Previous Research

Move 2: Establishing a Niche

Step 1A: Counter-claiming or

Step 1B: Indicating a Gap or

Step 1C: Question Raising or

Step 1D: Continuing a Tradition

Move 3: Occupying the Niche

Step 1A: Outlining Purposes or

Step 1B: Announcing Present Research

Step 2: Announcing Principal Findings

Step 3: Indicating Research Article Structure

Step4: Evaluation of the study

A move based approach has also been used for the analysis of the research article, e.g. the abstract (Salager-Meyer, 1990). A fundamental assumption of all these move-based models is that they are common to all academic disciplines. Swales (1990) notes that different steps may be used in different disciplines, but also suggests that many of these steps will be widely distributed across the disciplinary areas. The rhetorical structure of abstracts of the present thesis was analyzed in terms of the component moves that formed each text.

Since move analysis involves a degree of subjectivity that is perhaps unavoidable, a PhD candidate was asked to identify the component moves of the 90 abstracts. Then the researcher and the PhD candidate set together to check the degree of conformity in their analysis. There were slight differences found, but a consensus was reached after discussing the differences. The researchers compared and contrasted the abstracts in the corpus in order to find the similarities and differences between the three groups of abstracts in terms of the type, frequency, number and language used to express the component moves employed by the writers.

## Results

### Research question one.

As it was stated earlier, the first research question sought to investigate the rhetorical structure of abstracts written by M.A students in TEFL. The rhetorical structure of abstracts of the present thesis was analyzed in terms of the component moves that formed each text. The results are presented in the following section in detail. In Table 1.

**Table 1**  
*Component Moves of abstracts of TEFL*

Component moves of Abstracts in TEFL	Frequency of moves (%)	Percent
Move1- Establishing a territory		
Step1- Claiming Centrality	12	8.21
Step2- Making Topic Generalization	7	4.79

Step3- Reviewing Item of Previous Research	3	2.05
Move2- Establishing A Niche		
Step1- Counter-Claiming	1	.68
Step2- Indicating A Gap	3	2.05
Step3- Raising A Question	3	2.05
Step4- Continuing A Tradition	2	1.36
Move3- Occupying the Niche		
Step1- Outlining Purposes	30	20.54
Step2- Announcing Present Research	30	20.54
Step3- Announcing Main findings	30	20.54
Step4- Indicating Structure of the Paper	4	2.73
Step5- Evaluation of Findings	21	14.38
Total	146	100

Claiming centrality is the first step of move one. Authors, in this move, appeal to the peer members of the academic discourse community that - the research is part of a significant or well-established research area (Swales 1990, p. 144). The frequency of occurrence of this move in TEFL abstracts (8.21%) is relatively higher than most of the other moves. The second option of introduction openers is making a topic generalization, and making statements about knowledge or practice (Swales 1990, p.146). This component occurred in 4.79% of TEFL corpus.

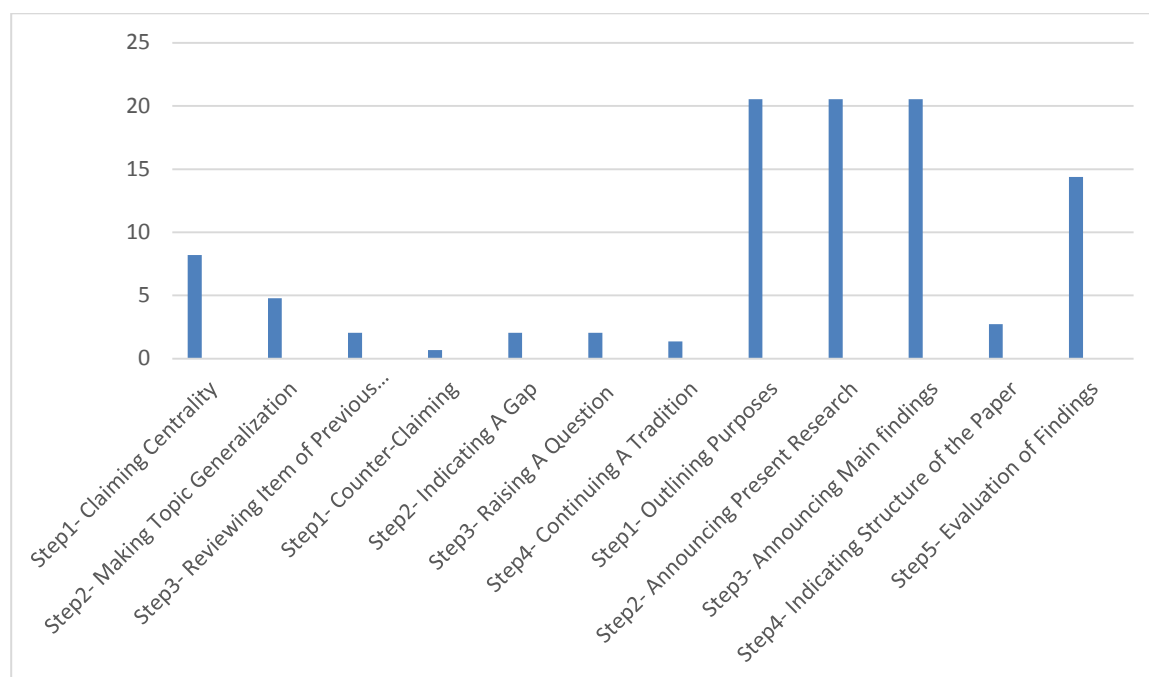
The aim of referring to previous research is to indicate that the thesis derives from a lively tradition of established works in the field. This component move was found in 2.5% of abstracts of TEFL. The analysis revealed that the authors of abstracts in TEFL either specify the names of other researchers, or refer to previous studies in general (e.g. recent debates, previous studies...). The verb tense accompanying these subjects is the present simple. The first step of move two, is titled "counter-claiming" which is rarely used in the abstracts of TEFL (.68%). In fact, this step of move two is the least used step.

The move indicating a gap points out that the previous research has some limitations that need investigation. The data revealed that this component occurred in 2.5% of the TEFL abstracts. From among the corpus relating to TEFL, only 3 abstracts have used the step, raising a question that is only 2.5%. The reason for this may turn back to the fact that this step to some extent is similar to the moves outlining purposes. The step, continuing a tradition, is also rarely used in abstracts of TEFL (1.36%). This rare use of this kind of move may be due to the fact that it is somehow in common with reviewing the previous research. As the statistics show, the four steps of the second move occupy not much of the TEFL abstracts. However, the next move (occupying the niche) which is comprised of four steps constitute the main portion of the TEFL abstracts.

Outlining Purposes, Announcing Present Research and Announcing Main findings, these three steps of the last move were found in all 30 TEFL abstracts. According to Swales' CARS model, after indicating a gap in the related literature, research writers are expected to fill this gap (i.e. occupying the niche). This move was found to be obligatory (100%) in the TEFL abstracts. Utilizing this option, the TEFL students describe what they consider to be the main features of their research using English verbs such as *investigate*, *describe*, *present* and, *examine*, in addition to nouns like *aim* or *purpose*.

Announcing present research is another step which is used in all of the TEFL abstracts. Having explained the way the research was conducted, 100% of the abstracts of TEFL (20.54% of all the used moves and steps) explained the main results and findings. This part also seemed to be an obligatory part of the abstracts in TEFL. In the move, indicating thesis structure and content, the writers indicate the thesis structure in terms of the chapters and they often provide a summary of each chapter. This component was found only in 4 abstracts which constituted 2.73% of the TEFL abstracts. The reason for this may be the fact that in TEFL theses, mostly the summary of the whole thesis comes at the end of chapter one, and to some extent it is considered

unacceptable to put the summary of the thesis in the abstracts. Out of 30 abstracts of TEFL, 21(14.38%) evaluated the findings. The students of TEFL are sensitive about language usage and they care about conveying message; therefore, they most likely try to be as comprehensive as possible. To this end most of the authors of abstracts in TEFL have tried to evaluate the findings and give an account of that.



**Figure 1.** The Percentage of Moves and Steps used in TEFL Abstracts

As shown in figure 1, the steps of the last move, which deal with the purpose, methodology and findings of the thesis, constitute the main portion of the TEFL abstracts, and the item of counter- claiming is the least move used in TEFL abstracts.

### Research question two

The second research question dealt with the rhetorical structure of abstracts written by M.A students in English translation. Using the Swales' (1990) "Creating a Research Space model (the CARS model)" the abstracts were analyzed and the frequency and percentage of occurrence of each move was calculated. Table 2 presents the results of the survey.

**Table 2**  
*Component Moves of abstracts of Translation*

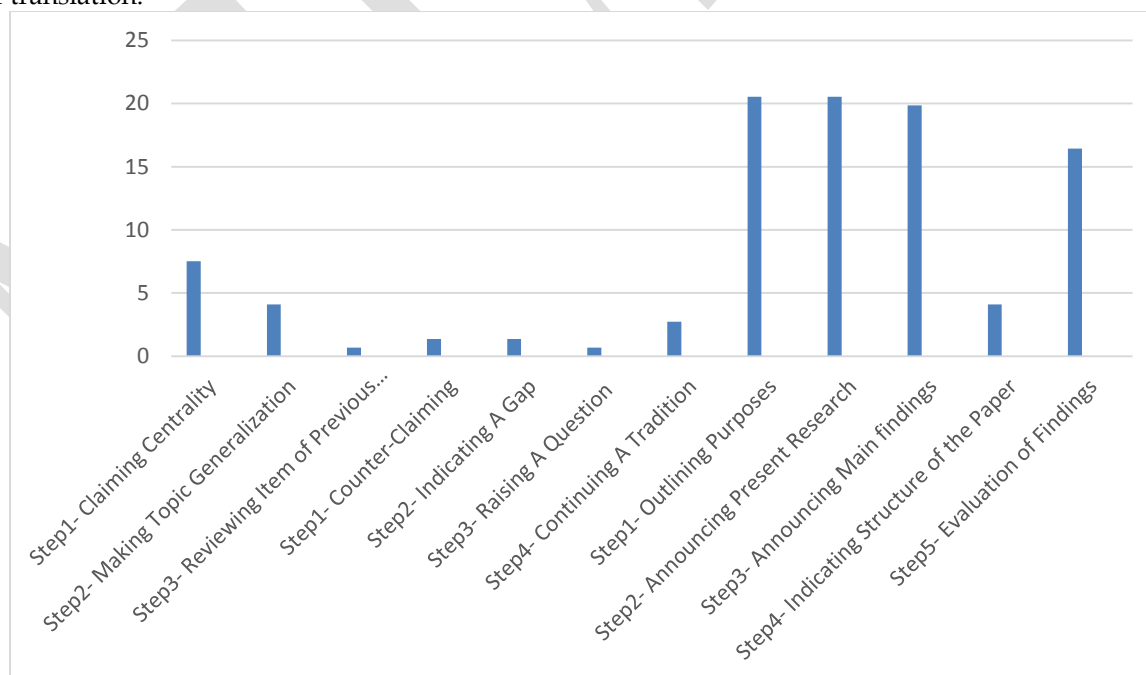
Component moves of Abstracts in Translation	Frequency of moves (%)	Percent
Move1- Establishing a territory		
Step1- Claiming Centrality	11	7.53
Step2- Making Topic Generalization	6	4.10
Step3- Reviewing Item of Previous Research	1	.68
Move2- Establishing A Niche		
Step1- Counter-Claiming	2	1.36
Step2- Indicating A Gap	2	1.36
Step3- Raising A Question	1	.68
Step4- Continuing A Tradition	4	2.73

Move3- Occupying the Niche		
Step1- Outlining Purposes	30	20.54
Step2- Announcing Present Research	30	20.54
Step3- Announcing Main findings	29	19.86
Step4- Indicating Structure of the Paper	6	4.10
Step5- Evaluation of Findings	24	16.43
Total	146	100

As it is seen in this table, the steps of the last move constitute the major section of the abstracts written by the students of translation, with outlining the purpose and announcing the present research as the first moves with 20.54%. Expressing the findings of the study and evaluating the findings were the next moves with 19.86% and 16.43%, respectively. The reason why the steps of move three form the highest percentage of the abstracts, may be the fact that this move forms the gist of the abstracts written by students of translation. However, the last step of move three which deals with the structure of the thesis was found only in 4.10% of the translation theses.

The steps in the move one which mostly deal with introducing the topic rank the next among the abstracts written by the students of translation. Claiming centrality with 7.53%, making topic generalization with 4.10%, reviewing item of previous research with .68% were the steps in move one. At the beginning of abstracts usually a general statement is given which common in abstract writing, that is why claiming centrality scored higher than other steps.

The move which scored the last among the translation abstracts was the second move with 4 steps including continuing a tradition (2.73%), counter-claiming and indicating a gap (1.36, each), and raising a question with .68. The underlying reason for such classification could be attributed to the fact that the items in this move to some extent overlap with the items in the last move; therefore, these items usually are given in the last move. Table 2 depicts the frequency and percentage of different moves used in the abstracts written by students of translation.



**Figure 2.** The Percentage of Moves and Steps used in Abstracts of Translation

As shown in figure 2, the distribution of various moves in the abstracts written by the students of translation, to a great extent correspond to the moves in TEFL abstracts.

**Research question three**

The third research question of this study was intended to investigate the rhetorical structure of abstracts written by M.A students in chemistry. The results of the analysis are presented in Table 3.

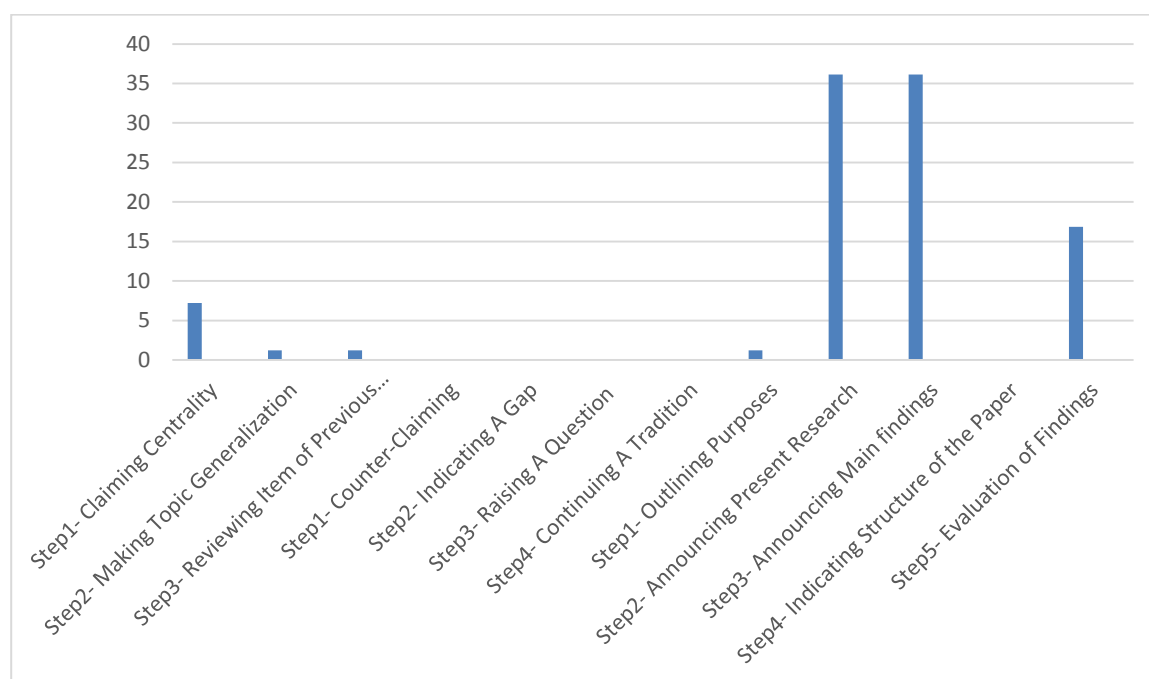
**Table 3**  
*Component Moves of abstracts of Chemistry*

<b>Component moves of Abstracts in Chemistry</b>	<b>Frequency of moves (%)</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Move1- Establishing a territory</b>		
Step1- Claiming Centrality	6	7.22
Step2- Making Topic Generalization	1	1.20
Step3- Reviewing Item of Previous Research	1	1.20
<b>Move2- Establishing A Niche</b>		
Step1- Counter-Claiming	0	0
Step2- Indicating A Gap	0	0
Step3- Raising A Question	0	0
Step4- Continuing A Tradition	0	0
<b>Move3- Occupying the Niche</b>		
Step1- Outlining Purposes	1	1.20
Step2- Announcing Present Research	30	36.14
Step3- Announcing Main findings	30	36.14
Step4- Indicating Structure of the Paper	0	0
Step5- Evaluation of Findings	14	16.86
<b>Total</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>100%</b>

As shown in table 3, most of the moves and steps, are used rarely in abstracts of chemistry. The only two steps which are used more than others are the two steps in move three, namely, announcing present research and announcing main findings with 36.14%. Evaluation of the findings was the next step among the steps and moves under study with 16.86%.

The next item is the first step of move one which is claiming centrality with 7.22%. Making topic generalization, outlining purpose, reviewing items of previous research are the next items which occurred only once in the abstracts of chemistry, with a percentage of 1.20%. As the analysis showed, the other moves did not occur in the abstracts of chemistry.





**Figure 3.** The Percentage of Moves and Steps used in Abstracts of Chemistry

According to the statistics presented in Table 3, and the analysis given above, an important difference exists between the frequency of different types of moves among the abstracts written by the students of chemistry and those abstracts written by students of language. It seems that the abstracts by the students of language teaching and translation mainly focus on the linguistic and rhetoric features of the text, while the abstracts of chemistry focus on the content of the text rather than its structure.

#### Research question four

The fourth research question sought to find out if there was any significant relationship among the abstracts written by students of the three fields. In order to obtain a more comprehensive view of the issue under question, a Chi-Square was run among the number of moves and steps of the abstracts of the three fields of study. The results are presented in table 4.4.. The results are presented in Table 4.

**Table 4**  
*Chi-Square Tests Among The Moves of Three fields of Study*

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	6.000 <sup>a</sup>	4	.199
Likelihood Ratio	6.592	4	.159
N of Valid Cases	3		

a. 9 cells (100.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .33.

According to the figures given in Table 4 the significance level is 0.199, which is higher than the observed level of significance ( $.05 < .199$ ). This tells us that there is no statistically significant relationship between the three fields of study in terms of moves and steps used in them.

#### Conclusion

The present research was conducted in order to investigate the rhetorical structure of the genre of abstract among the abstracts written by Iranian M.A. students of English teaching, English translation and Chemistry. The Three move theory developed by Swale (1980) and comprised of 12 steps was used to investigate the abstracts. The general conclusions based on the findings of the study are as follow. The move named

outlining purpose and announcing present research shaped the highest percentage of the used rhetorical structures. It was also found that all of the abstracts of *TEFL* and *Translation* had made use of these steps, while only limited number of the abstracts of chemistry had used the step, *outlining the purpose*. All other moves were used more and less similarly in the abstracts of three disciplines. According, all in all, more attention should be given to such techniques as rhetoric structure of abstracts. The findings of the study can also provide insights for university language professors by demonstrating the role of knowing about the rhetoric structures of the genre of abstract.

Since this study was done among abstracts written by Iranian MA students of TEFL, Translation and Chemistry, its results may reveal the possible effects of integrating activities to improve the awareness of Iranian MA students of the structures of abstracts, in order to enhance their writing ability. This study can be a starting point to improve the quality of abstracts and article and finally thesis writing in Iran. It is hoped that the findings of the current study can be used to familiarize both the MA students across disciplines with the generic options, and also the necessary genre knowledge required of MA students to succeed in writing abstracts.

The findings of the study can also provide insights for university language professors by demonstrating the role of knowing about the rhetoric structures of the genre of abstract. This way the Iranian professors who teach the credit course of "Research methodology" may come to know how to teach the instructional materials relating to abstract writing, and how to improve writing ability of MA students across different fields of study.

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# THE INFLUENCE OF TEACHING METACOGNITIVE READING STRATEGIES ON THE READING SELF-EFFICACY BELIEFS OF IRANIAN EFL LEARNERS: AN EXPERIMENTAL STUDY

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## Abstract

The aim of the present study was to examine the influence of teaching metacognitive reading strategies on the reading self-efficacy beliefs of Iranian EFL learners. To this end, 90 upper-intermediate students (50 females and 40 males) were selected in several English language institutes in Shiraz, Iran. A pre-test of reading and a pre-test of reading self-efficacy beliefs were administered to the students to make sure about the homogeneity of their reading ability and their reading self-efficacy beliefs. They were then divided into experimental and control groups based on their scores. Therefore, 49 students were in control group (22 females and 16 males), and there were 51 students (27 females and 24 males) in the experimental group. The students in the experimental group were taught metacognitive reading strategies for two months, each month 12 hours and the students in the control group received no instruction regarding metacognitive reading strategies. After the two-month instruction, the two groups filled out the Reading Self-efficacy Beliefs Questionnaire. The data were analyzed through Independent-samples t-test. The results indicated that there was a statistically significant difference between the two groups. In other words, the students in the experimental group outperformed those in the control group. Moreover, there was no statistically significant difference between boys and girls regarding their metacognitive strategies. The findings of this study imply that teaching metacognitive reading strategies can influence students' reading self-efficacy beliefs.

**Keywords:** Metacognitive reading Strategies, reading self-efficacy beliefs, gender

## 1. Introduction

Reading is a complicated cognitive activity which is vital to the obtaining of information (Alfassi, 2004). Reading strategies have attracted the researchers' attention about how readers interact with a written text and how these strategies influence the comprehension of a text. Research shows that readers utilize a wide range of strategies which help them with the storage, acquisition, and retrieval of information (Rigney, 1978). Reading strategies show how readers understand a task, how they perceive what they read, and what they do when they do not comprehend a text. In summary, such strategies are the processes which are used by the readers to increase their reading comprehension ability and to tackle comprehension problems.

Metacognitive reading strategies are the strategies which are specific to reading and can be classified as: monitoring, evaluating, and planning strategies (Israel, 2007). Planning strategies are utilized before reading.

They prepare readers by activating their background knowledge (Israel, 2007). Similarly, previewing a picture, a title, or a heading can help readers to understand a text. Readers can also preview the information in the passage and they can notice the structure (Paris, Wasik, & Turner, 1991). Another instance of planning strategy is setting the purpose for reading (Paris, Wasik, & Turner, 1991; Pressley, 2002). Monitoring strategies are used while reading a text. Examples of monitoring strategies include understanding vocabulary, summarizing, self-questioning, and inferring the main idea of each paragraph (Israel, 2007). Readers might recognize the key words in a text and focus on them. Ignoring the unimportant parts of a text and emphasizing the important parts can also be considered as a monitoring strategy (Hudson, 2007). Evaluating strategies are used after reading a text. For instance, readers might think about how to use what they have read in other situations. To put it in a nutshell, metacognitive reading strategies can be classified as planning strategies (pre-reading strategies), monitoring strategies (while-reading strategies), and evaluating strategies (post-reading strategies). There are several factors which affect reading comprehension. Researchers believe that some learners are fast-achievers in learning a language while some learners achieve the same level of ability in a longer span of time. Some learners have some specific characteristics which help them to be more successful than others. One significant factor which influence the reading performance of learners is their reading self-efficacy beliefs.

## 2. Review of literature

Reading is regarded as an important skill because it is a major source of language input (Ediger, 2001), therefore it is vital that students improve their reading comprehension ability. Reading self-efficacy beliefs mediate the role of learners' experiences and backgrounds with reading on students' reading performance. It has been found that students with higher self-efficacy beliefs have a better reading performance in comparison with others (Chapman & Tummer, 2003). According to Paris & Oka (1986), reading self-efficacy is closely related to reading performance.

### 2.1 Self-efficacy beliefs

Self-efficacy is an issue which was first proposed by Bandura (1977). Then in 1986, Bandura put this construct in a socio-cognitive theory of human behavior. This theory assumes that individuals are able to think about their actions in order to shape their environment instead of reacting passively. Social-cognitive theory also states that human behavior is goal-oriented. It assumes a meta-cognitive activity which means that humans are able to analyze their own behavior through controlling the conditions in their environment. He believed that self-efficacy is what people believe about their abilities to control the events which might affect their lives and also the abilities which they have in order to put together the cognitive resources, motivation, and other actions which are essential in controlling task demands (Bandura, 1989). Therefore, self-efficacy is a rather new concept in academic research (Schunk, 1994).

Recent studies have found that there is a strong link between the use of strategies and success (Magogwe & Oliver, 2007). Therefore, it can be concluded that self-efficacy beliefs and the use of strategies might be related. Some researchers found that self-efficacy beliefs have a positive relationship with the use of strategies. For instance, Pajares and Schunk (2001) found that learners who believed that they managed to do tasks used more cognitive and metacognitive strategies. This result may be because efficacious students work harder to avoid failure, and they attribute their failures to their insufficient or lack of efforts. Mills, Pajares & Herron (2006) maintain that students' beliefs about their abilities can affect their performance and behaviors. Some researchers have investigated the relationship between self-efficacy beliefs and language skills. For instance, Mills, Pajares & Herron (2006) examined the relationship anxiety, self-efficacy, and French proficiency in reading and listening. Results showed that there was a positive relationship between reading self-efficacy and reading proficiency while reading anxiety was not related. And also, there was a positive relationship between listening self-efficacy and females' listening proficiency and there was a positive relationship between listening anxiety and listening proficiency of males and females. In another study, Ghonsooly & Elahi (2011) investigated the relationship between EFL learners' reading self-efficacy and their reading anxiety and also the relationship between students' reading achievement and their self-efficacy. The results indicated that high efficacious individuals achieved higher scores in their reading comprehension exam than low self-efficacious learners.

In order to examine the interrelationships among self-efficacy, language learning strategy use, and language learning ability, Gahungu (2007) conducted a study on 37 college students at Chicago State University. A four-item questionnaire was used in this study which was adapted from Oxford's (1990) Strategy Inventory for Language Learning. Students' self-efficacy was measured via a forty-item questionnaire and their language ability was

measured by a cloze test. The results of the study showed that there existed a positive and significant relationship among those mentioned variables. These results clarify that self-efficacy theory is of great significance in explaining students' achievements.

Self-efficacy beliefs are context-dependent. In other words, when an individual might have high self-efficacy for solving mathematical problems, but have low self-efficacy for learning a language (Bandura, 2006). Self-efficacy is necessary for individuals to make use of all their capabilities. However, having the required knowledge or skill to achieve success does not mean that an individual has a high sense of self-efficacy. Therefore, we should raise learners' self-efficacy beliefs so that they have better academic achievements (Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2003). Moreover, self-efficacy is domain-specific. In other words, teachers can help students achieve better academic achievements in reading via raising their reading self-efficacy beliefs. This can be done through metacognitive reading strategy instruction. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to investigate whether teaching metacognitive reading strategies affect learners' reading self-efficacy beliefs. Thus, two major factors affecting students' reading comprehension achievement are reading strategies and reading self-efficacy beliefs which are the main focus of this study. On the other hand, this study attempted to explore whether there was any gender difference regarding reading self-efficacy beliefs.

### 3. Method

#### 3.1 Participants

In this study 90 students in some English language institutes in Shiraz participated ranging from 18 to 30 years of age. The researchers put students in one experimental group (N=51; 27 females, 24 males) and in one control group (N=49; 22 females, 16 males). The participants have been learning English for two years so they are considered to be at upper- intermediate level based on the institute's placement test scores. However, in order to make sure about the homogeneity of the students, Cambridge ESOL Preliminary English Test (PET) was administered to the students. Having received the results of this test, the researchers assigned students to control group and experimental group.

#### 3.2 Instruments

The first instrument used in this study was Cambridge ESOL Preliminary English Test (PET) in order to homogenize the participants. Another instrument was Reading Self-efficacy Beliefs Questionnaire (RSEQ) which was developed based on guidelines proposed by Bandura (2006). This questionnaire consists of 10 statements which is scored on a 10-point Likert scale (See Appendix). The reliability of the RSEQ was found to be 0.82 using Cronbach's alpha.

##### 3.2.1 Training instrument

In order to train students in the experimental group, Chamot & O'Malley's "Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (CALLA)" (1994), was used. There were five phases in teaching metacognitive reading strategies which will be discussed later.

#### 3.3 Procedure

In order to ensure the homogeneity of students, the students were required to take Cambridge Preliminary English test of reading. Then, a pre-test of reading self-efficacy beliefs was administered to the students again to ensure the homogeneity of students regarding their reading self-efficacy. After that, the students in the experimental group received metacognitive reading strategies instruction which had five phases. Those phases were as follows:

*Preparation:* In the first stage the students were informed about the significance of metacognitive strategies and in each session a few strategies were taught. In this stage, learners used such strategies in order to plan their ideas and create new ones.

*Presentation:* In the second phase, the teacher explained the features, application, and the usefulness of such strategies. Then, students used those strategies to organize their ideas regarding the topic being discussed in the classroom.

*Practicing:* In this stage, students were given the chance to practice the strategies in an authentic task.

*Evaluating:* In the four stage, the students were required to do some activities for the purpose of evaluation like self-questioning and reported the result after using the strategies. Then, they shared their ideas with the teacher and with their classmates.

*Applying learning strategies:* In the final stage, the students were encouraged to apply the strategies which they believed were more useful. Also, they were asked to use those strategies in new contexts. Finally, they were required to make interpretations regarding metacognitive learning strategies.

Having received instruction on metacognitive reading strategies, the students in the experimental group were administered the reading self-efficacy beliefs post-test. The students in the control group were also required to take the reading self-efficacy beliefs post-test to find out whether there was any significant difference between the two groups. The results of the data analyses are presented in the next sections.

### 3.4 Data analysis

In order to analyze the data, the researchers used Independent-samples t-test and on way ANOVA using SPSS Version 22. The results are presented in the following section.

## 4. Results

### 4.1 Reading comprehension ability pre-test results

In order to find out whether the participants in the two groups are homogenous in terms of their reading comprehension ability, a reading comprehension test from Cambridge ESOL Preliminary English Test (PET) was administered to the students. The results ( $t=0.764$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). An ANOVA analysis was conducted to make sure about the homogeneity of males and females. Again, there was no statistically significant difference between the two groups and therefore, they were homogenous as well (Table 1).

**Table 1. Reading comprehension ability pre-test results: Within group differences using ANOVA**

Group and Gender (A)	Group and Gender (B)	Mean Difference (A-B)	Std. Error	Sig.
Experimental Group:	Experimental Group:	.052	1.512	.894
Control Group: Male	Control Group: Female	.071	1.342	.873

The mean difference is not significant at the 0.05 level.

### 4.2 Reading self-efficacy pre-test results

The results of reading self-efficacy pre-test analysis indicated that the two groups were homogenous since there was no statistically significant difference between them ( $t=1.423$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). Also, an ANOVA analysis was run to ensure that males and females are homogenous regarding their reading self-efficacy using the Reading Self-efficacy Beliefs Questionnaire (RSEQ). According to the results, there was no statistically significant difference between males and females regarding their self-efficacy beliefs before treatment (Table 2).

**Table 2. Reading self-efficacy beliefs pre-test results: Within-group differences using ANOVA**

Group and Gender (A)	Group and Gender (B)	Mean Difference (A-B)	Std. Error	Sig.
Experimental Group:	Experimental Group:	5.897	4.432	.723
Control Group: Male	Control Group: Female	2.042	4.067	.879

The mean difference is not significant at the 0.05 level.

#### 4.3 Reading self-efficacy beliefs post-test results

Based on the results of the Independent-samples t-test analysis, there was a statically significant difference between the experimental and groups ( $t=3.587$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) regarding their reading self-efficacy. But the results of ANOVA analysis indicated that there was no significant difference between males and females regarding their reading self-efficacy beliefs (Table 3).

Table 3. Listening Self-efficacy Post-Test Results: Within Group Differences using ANOVA

(I) Group and Gender	(J) Group and Gender	Mean Difference	Std. Error	Sig.
Experimental Group:	Experimental Group:	-.427	3.651	.974
Control Group: Male	Control Group: Female	2.419	3.892	.961

The mean difference is not significant at the 0.05 level.

## 5. Conclusion

The findings of this study are in line with those which concluded that teaching strategies affect learners' self-efficacy (Khajavi & Ketabi, 2012; Shang, 2010). Therefore, based on the results of the study, teaching metacognitive reading strategies has an influence on students' reading self-efficacy beliefs in Iranian context. However, there was no gender difference with regard to reading self-efficacy beliefs.

## 5. Implications of the findings

The findings of this study can be used by the education department by providing students with metacognitive reading strategies courses in educational settings. Metacognitive strategies can help students improve their reading ability and their reading self-efficacy beliefs. Therefore, course should be planned in a way that students make practical use of three skills while reading a text. It is worth mentioning that these strategies must be reinforced continually so that students can use them efficiently. This would save students' time and energy while reading and they can retain information for a longer time. Thus, teachers should understand their students' reading processes to help them use those strategies to deal with voluminous texts. On the other hand, students should try to use these strategies consistently while reading in order that they will be able to monitor their reading comprehension.

## 6. Limitations and suggestions for further research

Like any other piece of study, this study also suffered from some limitations. The participants in this study were EFL learners, and since metacognitive reading strategies can be applied to every kind of text, more studies can be done with students of other majors and other languages. Also, larger samples could be investigated to make sure about the generalizability of the findings. Moreover, since this study investigated only the effect of metacognitive reading strategies, future studies can be done on other kinds of strategies and compare the results.

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Appendix  
EFL Reading Self-Efficacy Beliefs Questionnaire

1.	I can identify the parts of speech of the words in an English text.	0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100
2.	I can understand the meaning of words in an English reading text.	0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100
3.	I can guess the meaning of a word from its context in a reading text.	0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100
4.	I can connect my real-life knowledge and text information.	0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100
5.	I can identify most of the denotations and connotations of a word in a text.	0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100
6.	I can find the main idea of a reading text.	0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100
7.	I can understand the writer's purpose in a text.	0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

# DIFFERENT APPROACHES TO ENGLISH GRAMMAR FROM TRADITIONAL TO MINIMALIST AND THEIR PEDAGOGICAL EFFECTIVENESS

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## ABSTRACT

English grammar has gone through numerous approaches since 1950s. Michael (1991) through an extensive research came across more than 850 English grammars which were published between 1801 and 1900 particularly to be applied at schools. The principle approaches to English grammar initiating from traditionalism, and proceeding further to structuralism, transformationalism, government binding, and ending with minimalism have been introduced and described in this study. The deficiencies associated with each that resulted in the emergence of the subsequent school of grammar have also been presented. The present study has finally touched upon the efficacy that these schools of grammar might have on English language teaching as well as learning. The study is concluded with that each school of grammar has its own pedagogical influence on language teaching and learning which must be taken into consideration by both English language teachers and educators. Minimalism as the last approach to grammar, however, proved inefficient in English language teaching and this is found out to be due to its abstraction.

**KEY WORDS:** English grammar, Traditionalism, Structuralism, Government binding, Minimalism, Pedagogical influence

## 1. Introduction

Throughout history the main concern of investigation of all schools of grammar has been sentence structure. That is why grammarians have constantly endeavored to employ various approaches in order to define and explain this mental knowledge of language. They started from traditional approach. But owing to its deficiencies in satisfying some requirements of the learners, they proceeded further to structural grammar which was followed by transformationalism, government-binding, and finally to minimalism. These approaches to English grammar regarded as the primary ones will be taken into consideration in this paper; in other words, the study aims at introducing and describing the main types of grammar. Then the weak points related to each that might have led to the subsequent type of grammar will also be stated. Finally whether they can exert any positive impact on language pedagogy will be discussed.

## 2. Main Schools of Grammar

The grammar of a specific language is somehow totally different from the grammar of another language. Even though the whole typical components of grammar are taken into account from among a large number of



definitions, another problem may come up which is how this type of grammar should be explained and analyzed? This point has led to the emergence of many schools of grammar, each of which regards grammar on the basis of their own descriptions. Among all types of grammar five appear to be better recognized than others, that is to say, traditional, structural, transformational, government binding, and minimal approach.

### 2.1. Traditional Grammar

Traditional grammar originated from European languages, especially Latin and Greek. It is the most pervasive and intricate type of grammar which is extensively applied in language teaching, hence called pedagogic grammar. "Parsing", the method applied for analyzing sentences, commonly comprises five features: (1) specifying elements of the sentence, classifying them as subject, predicate, object, attribute, adverbial, etc.; (2) recognizing part of speech of each word; (3) indicating the inflection of the words; (4) identifying the correlation between the words; and (5) describing the order of words. Basically, this approach to sentence structure analysis is theoretical in nature and classifies words and parts of sentences mainly on the basis of their meanings (Anonymous, n.d.)

In spite of the fact that traditional grammar is properly constructed and extensively applied, modern linguists have identified a number of deficiencies related to it. First, it is prescriptive in essence, which strives to set down principles for speakers of a language. Secondly, its grammatical units are solely developed from European languages and are considered inappropriate for characterizing other languages. Thirdly, owing to the absence of a theoretical organization, this type of grammar is inadequate to explain the characteristics of language. Therefore, structural grammar came into being as an effort to diverge from traditional grammar (Anonymous, n.d.).

### 2.2. Structural Grammar

Due to the extinction of various local languages, American anthropologists and linguists started to give an account of American Indian language at the beginning of the twentieth century. They attempted to introduce new approaches to language analysis as they discovered that traditional grammar failed to describe native languages of America. Two notions can be regarded as the most significant in their new linguistic method (Anonymous, n.d.).

The first one is form class that is more extensively used than part of speech. Linguistic categories emerging in the same unit are in the same form class. For example, *a(n), the, my, that, every, etc.*, that appear before nouns fall into one form class. Practically, these linguistic categories are found to have identical classification. This formal approach to syntactic categories is more feasible in describing and characterizing unfamiliar languages.

The second crucial idea of structural grammar is that of immediate constituent. Contrary to traditional grammar assuming a bottom-up processing, structural grammar is identified by a top-down approach to syntax. A sentence is considered as a constituent structure and the constituents as its components. Thus, the structural ambiguity can be accounted for by the horizontal as well as vertical analysis of immediate constituent structure.

Structuralist grammar originates from the American Structuralist tradition going back to Bloomfield (1933). A Structuralist grammarian categorizes the sample patterns of the target language the same way as a biologist sorts butterflies. Linguists' responsibility concerning this practice, as Cook and Newson (1996) put it, is "to bring order to the set of external facts that make up the language". They describe this type of grammar "in terms of properties of such data through 'structures' or 'patterns'". Chomskyans reject externalized language in favor of grammar as internalized language. They believe that it must take mental features of human beings into consideration in order to describe language knowledge (Cook 1988; cited in Bourke 2005).

Structural grammar has had an everlasting and negative influence on ELT. It significantly affected syllabus design as well as teaching methodology. Teachers planned their syllabus solely on the basis of the linguist's classification; that is, syntax. The grammarians' analysis rather than the requirements of the learners is taken into consideration. Organizing and arranging the structures are carried out in accordance with linguistic principles: simplicity, regularity, frequency, and contrastive affinity. SLA researchers expressed their doubts regarding the validity of these principles, and according to McDonough (1977) it is difficult to support the structural syllabus,

which assumes an "atomistic approach". He argues that its focus on usage rather than on use resulted in 'structure speech' a term usually utilized to explain the output of structurally qualified but communicatively unqualified learners (cited in Bourke, 2005).

Structural grammar indicates a move away from traditional grammar and strives to characterize all languages impartially. Even though the eminent properties of structural linguistics endeavored to give reasons for the deficiencies of traditional grammar, the elimination of semantics from linguistic analysis (Sadighi, 2008) led to the emergence of transformational grammar.

### 2.3. Transformational grammar

In the primitive account of syntactic theory published as *Syntactic Structures* (1957), Chomsky viewed syntax as a set of rules for associating semantics with phonology. Syntax comprised of three types of principles: (1) The phrase structure rules, (2) the transformational rules, and (3) morphophonemic rules (e.g. go + past = went). The deep structures of sentences were generated by phrase structure Rules. Then the surface structures were created by the transformational rules after working on the deep structures (Clair, 2011).

Aspects of the Theory of Syntax by Chomsky comprised a comprehensive version of the semantic component: projections rules, global insertion rules, selectional limitations, rules for the interpretation of subcategorization, and semantic distinguishers. The phonological component was also expanded to a great extent by the addition of underlying phonemic forms, ordered rules, and phonetic outputs which supply the theoretical framework for a universal theory of phonology; that is, distinctive feature theory, the principle of stress rules, the phonological cycle, phonological constraints, and so on (Clair, 2011; Katz and Postal, 1964; Katz and Fodor, 1964; Chomsky and Halle, 1968).

After going through some modification by 1972 the above mentioned pattern was named The Extended Standard Theory which takes both the syntactic component of the language as well as the semantic component into consideration. The deep structure is processed syntactically while going through transformational rules then transformed to the semantic component for more interpretation (Clair, 2011).

According to Bernardi (2005) Extended Standard Theory proposed by Chomsky possesses some deficiencies regarding the following aspects:

**Semantics:** It affected the generation of such Phrase Structure grammars as GPSG or HPSG.I

**Psycholinguistics:** Since the transformational model is unable to describe the speakers' competence, it did not prove to be reasonable.

**Representation:** Tree illustrations proved to be insufficient for non-configurational languages characterized by non-rigid phrase structure.

**Implementation:** The incorporation of transformational grammars and computational systems does not seem to be simply feasible for the purpose of describing natural language.

Besides the elements stated above, the inclusion of notional components and empty categories into the deep structure of sentences indicated a crucial decisive point in linguistic theory. The resulting imperfection led to the emergence of Government Binding Theory in the school of grammar (clair, 2011).

### 2.4. Government Binding Theory

Government and Binding Theory was initially developed as a modular model in 1977 by Chomsky and Lasnik who proffered some essential modifications in the Extended Standard Theory. They challenged the requirement of phrase structure rules in the context of lexical subcategorizational rules in the lexicon which came up with

identical information. They were also concerned with the question of transformational rules with respect to stylistic rules versus meaning changing rules. In his writings concerning Lectures on Government and Binding (1981) and Some Concepts and Consequences of the Theory of Government and Binding (1982) Noam Chomsky became less involved in the base generalizability in transformational grammar and more interested in Structure-Preserving Constraints on language. The alterations resulted in a modular model of transformational grammar (Clair, 2011).

Clair (2011) maintains that as the notions of Deep Structure and Surface Structure were considerably modified by the insertion of abstract elements, trace elements, and empty categories, a new system of naming was utilized; that is, d-structure and s-structure respectively. These two concepts are associated to each other by movement rules. S-structures were more expanded into Phonetic Forms or Logical Forms. Phonetic form did not comprise mere acoustic and articulatory information, but rather it involved semantic properties, and low-level transformational rules (such as stylistic rules), deletion rules, contraction rules and phonological rules. The Logical Form Component is concerned with the meaning of sentences. Due to their extremely dissimilar features as well as their grammatical relations, it was imperative to distinguish PF and LF components from each other.

Binding Conditions are incorporated in the LF Component since they deal with such semantic issues as referential dependencies, coreferences, and so on. Likewise, quantifier raising was concerned with semantic issues in the context of the LF Component. This component was initially used to specify information regarding standard logic; it was then adapted to comprise constituent command, trace theory, and other linguistic matters (Clair, 2011).

The variations between a d-structure and an s-structure represent the kinds of alterations that arise when a movement rule has been employed. But Government Binding Theory comprises much more than just modifying the deep structure of a grammar. It involves the following new categories:

D-Structure, Fully Recoverable D-Structures, S-Structure, X-Bar Theory Movement Rules, Trace Theory, Empty Categories, Case Filters, Theta Theory, Well-Formedness Conditions

Despite the fact that GB accounts for most of the shortcomings included in the earlier theories of grammar, it cannot afford to differentiate A- from A-bar positions, to completely describe the notion of government which is an "arbitrary syntactic relation" (Lasnik, 1993), and to explain why subjects move to the specifier of AGR to get Nominal Case in place of maintaining the position of the specifier of TP (Sadighi, 2008). These problems in addition to the other limitations concerning redundancy, ambiguity, optionality of arguments, and incompleteness of parsing (Frank, 1990) resulted in the appearance of the following program.

## 2.5. The Minimalist Program

The Minimalist Program resulted from the attempts of researchers in the framework of Principles and Parameters. The inclusion of merely two levels of representation; that is to say, Logical Form (LF) and Phonetic Form (PF), distinguishes it from the Government Binding. In addition, it precludes every nonessential concept, maintaining only those of definite conceptual and physical (phonological) significance (Allot, 2003); that is, the theory of syntax was made as simple as possible (Chomsky, 1993).

The Minimalist program, followed from an earlier work in transformational generative grammar, proffers that the computational system which has been regarded fundamental to human language is a 'perfect' resolution to the effort of associating phonology and semantics. The intricacies apparent in previous patterns are excluded resulting from more profound but plainer features. The best illustrations of this point involve the subtraction of the linguistic levels of representation as well as the restrictions on syntactic developments with regard to economy and computational explicitness (Lasnik, 2002). The economy that MP is concerned with comprises economy of derivation and economy of representation that had begun to be viewed crucial in the early 1990s.

Nonetheless, even now the Minimalist Program is greatly notional, and there are a large number of propositions related to it that deal with linguistic complications in noticeably various ways. Lappin et al.(2000b) contend that the minimalist program is a fundamental deviation from preceding Chomskyan linguistic effort that is not prompted by any modern practical findings, just the reverse by a common plea for "perfection", which is both experimentally unprompted and so ambiguous as to be unalterable. The selection of the minimalist program is considered as an "unscientific revolution", which is developed mainly by Chomsky's authorization concerning linguistics. The Minimalist program is vindicated in various ways. Some researchers assert that it is not in reality innovative or not indeed greatly approved. Despite the others' acceptance of this viewpoint they justify the ambiguity of its frame as not troublesome considering its position as a research program instead of a theory. A substitute to the minimalist program is thus often thought to be Optimality Theory (OT) based on what is stated in Chomsky (1995).

### 3. Pedagogical Effectiveness

There have been different approaches to language and grammar throughout history. Traditionalists, as the earliest group of grammarians regard language and its grammar as initiating from words, proceeding to phrases and terminating with the sentence. Traditional grammarians or prescriptivists have widely been under the influence of Greek, Latin and Roman grammars by adopting their main grammatical expressions that are being utilized up to the present time. On the contrary, structuralists begin with sounds and proceed to larger linguistic units until they get to the sentence level. Transformationalists, on the other hand, begin with sentence and descend it until they come to the sound (Alduais, 2013).

It has been claimed that every kind of the major schools of grammar can be employed for educational objectives in accordance with the students' level and their intentions to acquire the language. In other words, traditional grammar has been found out to be worthwhile for not only second and foreign language learners but also native speakers of English up to the present time whilst other researchers have asserted that traditional grammar is beneficial and helpful regarding non-native but not native speakers. That's why they propose that structural (descriptive) grammar should be taught to native speakers of English. A great number of studies have also shown that both structural and traditional grammar don't prove successful to a certain degree to attain some pedagogical objectives mostly in specific advanced courses such as writing in particular and grammar in general. Instead, transformational generative grammar can be made use of in order to achieve these objectives. In other words, being technical and scientific, such grammars as transformational generative and structural are restricted to particular educational utilizations (Alduais, 2013).

Government Binding Theory views English grammar differently from the preceding ones; in other words, it regards word order as the main part of syntax placing restrictions on the word order of a sentence (Black, 1998, as cited in Woudenberg and Lafferty, 2013). Whether a pronoun is truly employed in a specific place is clarified by The Principles of Binding Theory in case a pronoun is not correctly associated with its antecedent. English language Learners, therefore, should be clearly taught and trained concerning the primary aspects of GBT to be able to carefully view the pronouns, that is, verify the bound pronoun regarding its case features and free pronouns concerning its contextual clearness or adjacency, up until it becomes naturally habitual. Considering the presented explanations, FonF (Focus on Form)- based education has nothing to do with grammar-translation method and agreement drills related to the past, rather it is an active, reciprocal, repetitive method among the student, the teacher, and the written material. A large amount of reading texts in the target language, field of study, and journals is essential in order to present a pattern for learners to utilize an appropriate pronoun for CALP(cognitive academic language proficiency). These kinds of tasks can also fortify writing activities which correspond with the principles of GBT. The teacher' responsibility is to attract learners' attention to the striking aspects of model texts, extract comparisons to equivalent features in their own texts, hence providing them with the metacognitive facilities required to allow self-determined, principled, and assured amendments of their own and compeers (Woudenberg and Lafferty, 2013).

Various kinds of grammars in terms of pedagogy are considered to be formal. They include morphosyntactic principles of traditional, structural, and to a limited extent, Generative Linguistics. As Chomsky (2004, as cited in Larsen-Freeman, 2009) points out, the capability for learning languages must first clearly state a well-

organized list of likely semantic elements carrying meaning and second the grammatical principles based on which unlimited number of signs can be merged and orderly arranged. These rules can be used as a means of creating endless kinds of interior constructions going into mind, understanding, designing, and variant intellectual activities of human beings. The principles and parameters approach of Generative Linguistics remains constructive to justify the similar and dissimilar features among languages; its more up- to- date minimalist Program, nevertheless, has not exerted any influence on pedagogical grammars. This is due to the fact that the focus of Generative Linguistics has been placed on recognizing more extensive principles with regard to grammar, to the extent that the fundamental nature of grammar has been condensed to Merge and Move, or possibly just to Internal and External Merge in the minimalist program (Culicover & Jackendoff, 2005). This sort of minimal approach to grammar can be employed as a worthwhile means to achieve its objective in terms of language development or language learning in case there is no exposure to sufficient data; however, it does not aim at promoting the way second or foreign languages are to be taught which is due to its abstract status (Larsen-Freeman, 2005, 2006a, cited in Larsen-freeman 2009)

#### 4. Conclusion

Grammarians adopted different types of grammar in order to satisfy the numerous requirements of each area and era which contributed to the emergence of various schools of grammar such as traditional, structural, transformational, government binding, and minimalist approach discussed above. Similar to other types of schools some shortcomings are associated to each in addition to their positive pedagogical efficiency.

Pedagogical grammar, an up- to- date approach in linguistics, is defined as a description of the grammar of a language which is intended for teaching and learning objectives in order to contribute to the teaching and learning of that language (Wikipedia). With regard to pedagogical grammar, Livia ( 2006) states that:

"Drawing on work in several fields such as linguistics, psychology and second language acquisition theory, pedagogical grammar is of a hybrid nature, which usually denotes grammatical analysis and instruction designed for the needs of second language students. In its expanded view it involves decision making processes on behalf of the teacher which requires careful and time-consuming interdisciplinary work. This process is influenced by the teachers' cognition, beliefs, assumptions, and attitudes about the teaching of grammar."

Pedagogical grammars, according to Odlin (1994), usually call for specific, organized, non-mechanical, accumulative and "heuristic" principles. When these principles are brought together, "an axiomatic system" is constructed between the two languages that allows the native speaker of the first language to acquire the second language (Thomann, 2002).

The pedagogical effectiveness of the grammars under consideration in this study, thus, proved to be of great benefit to English language teaching and learning with the exception of minimalist program which cannot be used as a means of developing language teaching methods owing to its high abstract and conceptual status. It is the teacher's duty and responsibility to decide based on the current situation, the learners' levels and requirements, the available time and the facilities at hand what approach and method to apply and how to employ it in order to attain the most appropriate and satisfactory result concerning second and foreign language learning.

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# EFL TEACHERS' POLITENESS STRATEGY USE IN CLASSROOMS: IRANIAN EFL TEACHERS IN FOCUS

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## ABSTRACT

Politeness is a common social phenomenon and is regarded as a moral code in human communication and social activities. In EFL classes, as in other situations, this aspect of language use plays a very important role. This study was then designed in order to verify whether there was a distinct pattern in EFL teachers' activities in their interactions with EFL learners in the class and whether teachers used politeness strategies on a regular basis. For this purpose, the data were voice-recorded from the classes of 10 male teachers in language institutes in Isfahan, Iran. After transcribing and analyzing the data, it was observed that a distinct pattern in the teachers' activities emerged with an emphasis on academic instruction and evaluation as the most frequently used activities. Moreover, the teachers tended to use politeness strategies on a regular basis with positive politeness and bald on-record as the prominent ones. The findings could imply that the use of politeness strategies needs to be regarded as an integral part of English teaching and learning as it can play an important role in students' academic achievement.

**Keywords:** politeness, politeness strategy, teachers' activity, EFL classroom

## 1. Introduction

Teachers' language has an important role in both the organization of the classroom and the learning process. It has the ability to reduce tension and create a more positive learning atmosphere by breaking down barriers to communication. The teacher's role and domination in classroom discourse in terms of initiating the topic, allocating turns and evaluating comments can have important, positive and long-lasting implications for students' academic and social development. Sometimes students do not raise their hands if they know the answer of a question. They even do not want to correct teachers' mistakes. It is because they are afraid of being challenged by teachers or being introduced to new topics (Dellar, 2004).

Started in the middle of 1990s, research on teachers' roles and activities has been carried on by many western scholars. Undoubtedly, this trend shows that teachers play an important role in language teaching and learning. The role of teachers, as put by the Chinese scholar Han Yu (768-824 A.D.), has been defined as "knowledge spreader, skill instructor, and problem solver". More specifically, the role of teachers is supposed to be a patient motivator, a helpful facilitator and a positive counselor.

Ellis (1985) has defined teacher talk as the special language that teachers use when addressing L2 learners in the classroom. It can be regarded as the type of language that teachers use in language classrooms and also the type of language they use in subject lessons. The language that teachers address to L2 learners is treated as a register, with its own specific formal and linguistics properties (Ellis, 1985). The teacher's language is believed to have a crucial role in managing classroom interaction (Ellis, 1990; Hakansson, 1986).

Jiang (2010) noted the important role of politeness in EFL classroom and observed that it does contribute to both teaching and learning. Senowarsito (2013) observed that teachers and students basically employed positive, negative, and bald on-record strategies. In a more recent study, Peng, Xie, and Cai (2014) investigated two 45-

minute classes given by a 30-year-old male teacher. Through analyzing the data collected, the researchers found out that the college teacher conducted his class on terms of positive politeness and negative politeness in a practical way. Evidently, the adoption of politeness strategies created a comfortable language learning environment.

Following the same line of research, this study tried to shed more light on research regarding Iranian EFL teachers' politeness strategy use in classrooms, which is an important factor involved in the process of second or foreign language learning. Specifically, the following questions were addressed:

- 1) What pattern emerges from Iranian EFL teachers' activities in their interactions with EFL learners in the class?
- 2) How are politeness strategies used by Iranian EFL teachers in their interactions with EFL learners in the class?

## 2. Literature Review

Learning a foreign language involves not only knowing how to speak and write, but also how to behave linguistically. Therefore, the teacher-student interaction in class is influenced by their pragmatic knowledge, how to behave and respond in different situations and contexts. Since 1970s, many scholars both home and abroad have conducted research on teachers' language. Language classroom can be seen as a sociolinguistic environment and a discourse community in which interlocutors use various functions of language to establish a communication system. This teacher-student interaction is believed to contribute to students' language development to a large extent (Consolo, 2006). Bardovi-Harlig (2013) explains that the classroom is a place where pragmatic instruction can occur. In order to be successful in communication, it is essential for second language learners to know not just grammar and text organization but also pragmatic aspects of the target language (Bachman, 1990). Pragmatic knowledge has a close relationship with knowledge of socio-cultural values and beliefs.

Despite the vast amount of research conducted on linguistic politeness, little research has examined politeness in the classroom. In a study by Sabee and Wilson (2005), college students' primary goals, attributions, and face work during conversations with their teachers about disappointing grades were investigated. Three primary goals, namely learning, persuading, and fighting, were initially assumed, and a fourth, impressing, later emerged. Moreover, the differences in students' primary goals for talking with their instructors were related to the attributions they made for the low grade as well as to the various FTAs and politeness strategies they performed. Based on the findings, the authors concluded that primary goals were not necessarily instrumental and that instructors could benefit from learning how to diagnose and negotiate with students about primary goals. Similarly, in a different study, Dunleavy et al. (2008) examined American college students' nagging behavior as a potentially face threatening act. Students described a nagging exchange with a teacher by reporting one of eight nagging strategies. Based on the findings, the authors concluded that nagging was threatening to the positive and negative face of both students and instructors. Interestingly, the 'elicit sympathy' nag was found to be the most threatening to the students' positive face, and the 'demonstrate frustration with the instructor' nag the most threatening to the instructors' positive face. Finally, Bell, Arnold, and Haddock (2009) used politeness theory to analyze the developing tutorial relationship between students and writing center peer tutors in an American university. Findings revealed that tutors used politeness strategies to shift between collaborative and authoritative roles as tutors, relying more on negative politeness strategies during the first six weeks of tutorial sessions and shifting to more positive strategies later.

Following the same line of research, the present study sought to examine how EFL teachers in Iran would use politeness strategies as they perform their routine procedures in the class.

## 3. Method

### 3.1. Participants

Ten Iranian male EFL instructors with about 10 years of working experience, teaching upper-intermediate level students in three different language schools in Esfahan, Iran were selected. Upper-intermediate level students were selected so that there would be enough teacher-students interactions in the class. Also, younger teachers were selected as they are believed to be more conscious of the use of politeness strategies in class (Peng et al., 2014). There were 15-20 students in each class and their age range was between 18 and 23. In order to preserve the anonymity of the participants, the teachers were identified as teacher 1, teacher 2 and so on up to teacher 10. To further protect the identities of the teachers, fictitious names were used to identify language institutes.



### 3.2. Materials

The materials used in this study included all the interactions between the teachers and the students. All the interactions were audio recorded and then transcribed. This resulted in a fairly large corpus. In line with the objectives of the study, from the interactions only those utterances produced by the teachers were all identified and selected. The utterances were then categorized according to the model presented below.

### 3.3. Procedure

For each teacher, two 90-minute classes were observed. The data were voice-recorded using a standard MP3 player with voice record function. In order to decode the recordings into written form to get the detailed data of teachers' instructional activities and their use of polite language Jiang's (2010) model and Brown and Levinson's (1987) model were used, respectively.

According to Jiang's model (2010), teachers have the following roles in class: instructional, motivational, evaluative, and managerial. They control learning and behavior in the classroom through these activities, so any instance of teachers' activities can be assigned one of these functions. In this study, the teacher's politeness as related to these activities were also analyzed. According to Brown and Levinson (1987), there are four politeness strategies: a) bald on-record, b) positive politeness, c) negative politeness, and d) off-record

Using the above-mentioned models, the patterns emerging from Iranian EFL teachers' activities in their interactions with EFL learners in the class were described. Any instance of language that was to benefit the interaction between the teacher and students was classified as instances of politeness in this study. The data were independently coded by two raters and the percent agreement was found to be 80.

### 4. Results

As demonstrated in Figure 1, the teachers appeared to follow certain patterns while they were presenting or teaching a lesson. The most prominent activity turned out to be academic instruction (55.38%).

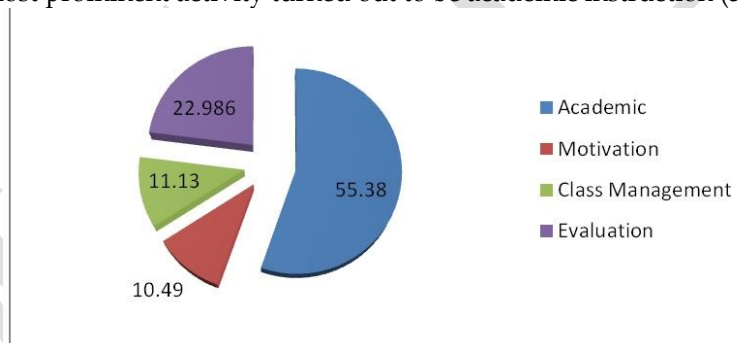


Figure 1. Iranian EFL teachers' activities.

This activity refers to the teacher's academic presentation and is related to situations where teachers answer students' academic questions, support them, or give them corrective feedback. Instances of this type of activity as used by the teachers are presented below.

- Please, read part B and find the answers.
- Can you name some communities?
- So guys, let's go to listening comprehension.
- Now, let's go to Page 25, Part 5, vocabulary.
- Ok guys; now, let's talk about these pictures
- Can you tell me what's the difference between these two words?

The second most prominent activity, according to Figure 1, turned out to be evaluation. In fact, from the total sum of all activities which amounted to 5164, a total of 1187 items (22.98%) related to this activity.

As an indispensable teachers' activity in English class, evaluation refers to teacher's positive and negative feedback. It is best depicted when the teacher is encouraging as well as discouraging the students through different forms of oral, written or even gesture feedback. The examples shown below are the most utilized sentences regarding the activity of evaluation.

- Exactly!

- Well done every body!
- Good!
- Thank you so much Gentlemen. That was great.
- Yes, Mr. Dadgar. You did a great job. Your parents are so proud of you.

Management, ranking in the third place (11.13%), is another activity performed by the teachers. It refers to discipline instructions, discipline directives (orders, requests, questions, and calls), procedural instructions, and procedural directives. Following are some examples of this activity.

- I want you to be quiet please; I'll leave the class for 2 minutes.
- It'll be great if you two change your seats.
- You, come here.

Finally, motivation as a teacher activity in the class appeared to be employed the least frequently (10.49%). It can be defined as the illocutionary act aimed at activating students through participation, academic questions, and initiative feedback (Jiang, 2010). The following are the most used examples in the class:

- What about this movie? For sure you have watched this and have some information about it.
- Would you like to talk about it?
- Maybe you can explain this part.
- What's your opinion about fashion, Mr. Reisi?

The teachers' use of politeness strategies in their interactions with the learners were analyzed based on Brown and Levinson' (1987) model. These strategies include bald on-record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off-record. Figure 2 demonstrates the results of this analysis.

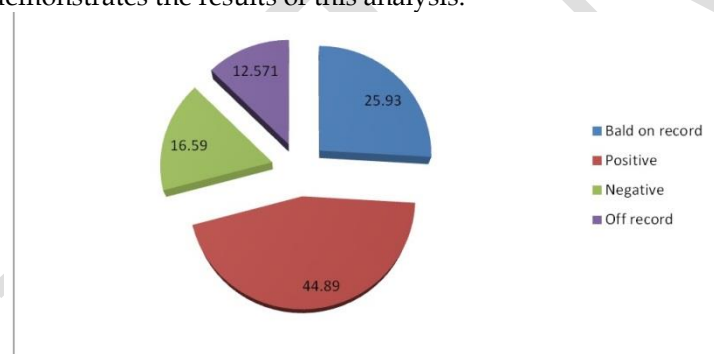


Figure 2. EFL teachers' politeness strategy use

Positive politeness appeared to be the most frequently employed strategy in performing different activities (44.89%). Following it, as can be seen in the figure, bald on-record ranked the second (25.93%). Negative politeness and off-record strategies followed. To further analyze the data, the chi-square test was run to see whether there were any significant differences in using these strategies. Table 2 shows the results.

Table 2. Results of Chi-Square Test for Politeness Strategies Used by Teachers

Category	Observed <i>n</i>	Expected <i>n</i>	Residual	Observed Prop.	Test Prop.	Chi-Square Test
Bald on-record	1308	1260.75	-47.25	.26	.25	$X^2 = 28.45$ $df = 3$ Exact Sig. (2-tailed) = .000
Positive	2264	1260.75	1003.25	.45		
Negative	837	1260.75	-423.75	.17		
Off-record	634	1260.75	-626.75	.12		
Total	5043			1.00		

According to the results depicted in Table 2, there were significant differences in the participants' use of politeness strategies ( $p = 0$ ,  $df = 3$ ). Through post hoc analyses, further details were also obtained. The use of positive politeness was significantly different from other politeness strategies. Furthermore, the use of bald on-record was also significantly different from negative politeness and off-record.

## 5. Discussion and Conclusion

From the results obtained it can be vividly seen that there are distinct patterns in Iranian EFL activities in their interactions with EFL learners in the class. Basically, the activities could be grouped into four types: instruction, evaluation, management, and motivation with instruction ranking in the first place and motivation having the lowest frequency. In some other studies also distinct patterns in EFL teachers' activities similar to those above were reported (e.g., Jiang, 2010). The observed pattern would be expected as this traditionally takes place in the Iranian educational settings in which teachers occupy the most dominant role while students play their marginal role as a response to teachers' demands (Karimi & Daeipour, 2007).

Moreover, the teachers appeared to favor certain types of politeness strategies while interacting with the students as they performed different activities. Predominantly, they resorted to positive politeness strategies to fulfill their purposes. This finding lends support to some other research findings which report that positive politeness strategy has the highest proportion among teachers' politeness strategies (Jiang, 2010) and is preferable to negative politeness strategy (Peng et al., 2014). Studies have revealed that politeness strategies are generally employed by teachers to reduce face threat (Senowarsito, 2013).

The teachers' use of positive politeness and bald on-record, which account for almost two thirds of the strategies, can depict them clearly as leaders who possess more authority and power over students. It seems that they decided to use the direct way to maintain the discipline and give procedure orders in order not to spend much time in managing the class.

However, negative politeness and off-record strategies were not employed as often. This is again in line with the teacher's authoritative role in the class (Bell, Arnold, & Haddock, 2009) though it might not be regarded as a threat to students' face because giving commands and instructions are acceptable in classroom interactions and teachers and students feel that they have a close relationship.

All in all, the teachers dominated in giving instruction and explanation while the students mainly responded to teachers' instruction, questions and encouragement. The findings show that politeness strategies were generally employed by teachers to reduce face threat. However, because politeness is a first step to develop positive personal and social attitudes, those strategies which encourage students to take risk and be more active in class activities need to be prioritized. As concluded by Liu and Le (2012), English teachers need to use more appropriate discourse in their teaching to improve classroom interaction.

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# THE EFFECT OF TASK-BASED LANGUAGE TEACHING (TBLT) AND TASK-SUPPORTED LANGUAGE TEACHING (TSLT) ON IRANIAN FEMALE INTERMEDIATE EFL LEARNERS' WRITING PROFICIENCY

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## ABSTRACT

This article investigated the impact of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) and Task-Supported Language Teaching (TSLT) on writing proficiency of the Iranian intermediate EFL learners. There were three groups of sixty students of the intermediate female learners studying English in Jahad-e-Daneshgahi Language Institute, ranging in age from thirteen to nineteen. They were the students of the researcher and participated in their regular classes in the institute and were assigned to three groups including two experimental groups of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) and Task-Supported Language Teaching (TSLT) and a control group. In order to provide homogeneity, all students in three groups took an achievement test before conducting the treatment. As a pre-test; students were assigned to write a task at the beginning of the course. One of the classes received TBLT approach on their writing, while the other class received TSLT approach.

For both groups there were the same tasks chosen from learners' text book. The task selection was in accordance with learning standards for ESL and TOFEL writing sections. At the end of the treatment, a post-test was administered to both experimental groups and the control group. Scoring was done on the basis of scoring scale of "Expository Writing Quality Scale". The researcher used ANOVA to analyze the collected data. The data analysis revealed that the subjects in TSLT group performed better on the writing proficiency post-test than TBLT. The findings of the study also demonstrated that both types of TBLT and TSLT enhance writing proficiency in both groups. However, it was indicated that TSLT has been more effective than TBLT in teaching writing proficiency to Iranian EFL learners.

**Key words:** Task-Based Language Teaching, Task-Supported Language Teaching, task, language teaching approaches, writing proficiency, EFL learners.

## 1. Introduction

Tasks have a central role in modern SLA research and especially in language pedagogy. It is in the natural setting where the word "task" entered language teaching through work with adults who needed to use the second language outside the classes (Allwrights, 1979; Breen, 1984; Nunan, 1989; 1993 as cited in Megias, 2004).

The principle of "task" can be traced back from 1980s, responding to dissatisfaction with dominant principles of traditional methods (Norris, 2009). They resulted in disappointing outcomes and unsuccessful learners. At that time, tasks were considered as mechanisms for production phase of teaching.

Scholars have defined tasks in different ways. Long (1985) has defined task as a piece of work undertaken freely or for the same rewards: painting a fence, filling out a form.... For Crooks (1986) task is a piece of work or activity with a specified objective, as a part of educational course, or at work. According to Bygate (2001) task is an activity which requires learners to use language with emphasis on meaning to attain an objective.

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Considering the importance of task, two approaches have been proposed on the notion of “task” namely Task-based language teaching and Task-supported language teaching.

TBLT is a process-oriented approach to language teaching that focuses on communication (Little wood, 2004; Nunan, 2004; Richards, 2005 as cited in Lai & Li, 2011). The main point in Task-based language teaching is communicative tasks that serve as basic units of curriculum while the primacy is on meaning (Lai & Li, 2011).

Rod Ellis (2003) was the pioneer researcher who termed “Task-supported” instructional programme, which encompasses tasks of various kinds to develop learners’ communicative language ability through pedagogic intervention

Task-supported learning tasks engage the learners, in pairs or groups, in meaning-focused production and comprehension of target language, aiming at achieving a non-linguistic goal (Wray, 2011). Therefore, tasks in Task-supported language teaching are used for functional and communicative purposes.

Wray (2011) believes the main difference between TBLT and TSLT (task-supported language teaching) is that Task-based language teaching emphasizes on the complexity of tasks, while Task-supported language teaching is likely to emphasize on language features. Basically, according to Ellis (2003), TBLT involves taking task as the basic for the whole language curriculum, while Task-supported language teaching combines tasks with traditional methodological procedure of presentation-practice- production (PPP). He states that “tasks are seen not a means by which learners acquire new knowledge of restructuring their inter-language, but simply as a means by which learners can activate their existing knowledge of the L<sub>2</sub> by developing fluency” (Ellis, 2003, p. 30). TSLT can be the moderate and applicable model of Task-based language teaching which is more compatible with a perceived sense of innovation.

In an attempt to operationalize Task-based theory, Brenda Dyer (1996) investigated L<sub>1</sub> and L<sub>2</sub> composition theories according to Hillock's environmental mode and Task-based language teaching. Hillock (1986) concluded that a Task-based, process / product combination was the most effective mode of teaching composition.

At the same time, Swain and Lapkin (2000) examined the use of first language in Task-based language learning. They concluded that there was more use of L<sub>1</sub> than was expected, so judicious use of L<sub>1</sub> can support L<sub>2</sub> learning. Meanwhile, Carless (2003) conducted a case study, implementing Task-based language teaching in Hong Kong to observe determining factors in the implementation of Task-based teaching in primary schools. Besides distinguishing the factors, he found out that examination would have some impact on what is going on in class, as well as the point that lack of teacher's proficiency will inhibit implementation of communicative approach.

In 2004, Sánchez examined the role of Task-based approach in language teaching. Sánchez tried to bring positive results of using Task-based approach such as: more refined and complete foreign language syllabus, motivating students and focusing the attention of teachers and students on meaning and communicative language use. At the same time Megias Rosa (2004) investigated the effect of TBLT on young learners. He believed translation is a compulsory step, especially in reporting phase. One year later, in an attempt to reconsider Task-based language learning, Slimani-Rolls (2005) claimed that one-way and decision-making tasks are preferred regarding language development.

During a case study for Korean Secondary School classroom practice, focusing on EFL teachers' perceptions of Task-based language teaching, Jeon and Jung - Won Hahn (2005) stated that majority of teachers have a higher level of understanding about TBLT, although there are some negative views on using TBLT in class practices. In 2011, Zhao questioned the role of Task-based theories in combination with communicative and form-focused approaches. He approved superiority of Task-based language teaching over traditional methods. At the same time in Asia, Goto Butler (2011) investigated implementation of communicative and Task-based language teaching in Asia-Pacific region. The researcher found TBLT being adopted and used in many countries, while facing some challenges like: conceptual constraints, classroom-level constraints and societal-institutional level constraints.

A dissertation by Jacobsen (2012) examined the relationship between Task-supported language teaching and cognitive linguistics in learning conditionals. She addressed the efficiency of applying cognitive linguistics to second language instruction through using of focus on form and Task-supported language teaching. She concluded that participants from the cognitive group outperformed the participants from the task-supported and control groups.

Sadeghi and Fazelijou (2011) from Urmia University conducted a research focusing on the role of Task-supported language teaching in EFL learner's writing performance and grammar gains. They concluded students using revised PPP approach (TSL) learning did significantly better in grammar recognition section of the post-test, but students in Task-based language teaching did better on writings.

Shabani and Ghasemi (2014) , examined the effect of TBLT and CBLT(context-based language teaching) on Iranian ESP learners' Reading Comprehension, preferring TBLT as more effective approach as the result.

As its clear many studies have conducted on TBLT and TSLT so far, but to the researcher's best knowledge, no study has yet compared these two approaches to determine the most beneficial one in teaching language, especially in the Iranian context and among intermediate EFL learners. Therefore, a research question has been formulated dealing with exploring the efficiency of two different types of instructions (Task-Based Language Teaching and Task-Supported Language Teaching) for the development of writing proficiency. The study has addressed the following question:

RQ: Does teaching writing through task-based language teaching and task-supported language teaching have any significant effect on Iranian intermediate EFL learners' writing proficiency?

## 2. Research methodology

### *Participants*

As the research question entail, the required participants need to be of the same intermediate level of second language proficiency. Since the purpose of this study is to examine potential and practical ideas for how Task Based Language Teaching and Task Supported Language Teaching can be applied to Iranian language learners, this study employed a quasi-experimental design including two experimental groups and a control group of participants in intermediate level of second language proficiency.

Sixty intermediate female learners studying English in Jihad-e-Daneshgahi Language Institute were selected to take part in this research, ranging in age from thirteen to nineteen. They were researcher's students that participated in their regular classes in the institute who were assigned to three classes. Three students of each class were omitted due to age limitation or unmatched proficiency level after the homogeneity test. Random selection of participants in a class was impossible because they had already been assigned to their existing classes by the institute.

### *Instruments*

To accomplish the purpose of the research, three instruments were determined as required for the study:

#### *Homogeneity Test*

In order to provide homogeneity, all students in three groups have taken an achievement test before conducting the treatment. The "General English Proficiency Test", Nelson(400B) was administered before the treatment. It consisted of four sections, i.e. vocabulary, structure, reading comprehension items. This was conducted to evaluate and ensure the proficiency level of students which was supposed to be the intermediate level. Among learners, based on their scores on Nelson proficiency test, those placed in intermediate level (within one standard deviation below and above the mean), were considered as main participants.

#### *Pre/Post-Test*

It is worth noticing that since the pre-test and post-test utilized in this study were researcher-made ones, they were piloted prior to use. Reliability indexes for the pre- and post-test (0.70) revealed that the researcher-made tests were accepted for the purpose of the study. Besides, the test content was validated with regard to test instructions, the relevance of questions to content, its suitability to the research goals and objectives, and the suitability of the time allocated to the tests. The remarks of the validating team, their notes and suggestions were taken in to account, and the researcher made the necessary modifications before applying the test.

#### *Scale for Assessing Writing*

The scale for Evaluating Expository Writing developed by Quellmalz (1982) was used as the framework in rating students' writing. This is a holistic analytic instrument that has six- point scales for assessing four dimensions of writing competence, focus/organization, support and mechanics. Inter-reliability test(using Cronbach alpha) indicates that the total reliability is 0.918 from the rator,s perspectives and the reliability of each of them is obtained as 0.848.

### *Material*

The specifically regular text books of the institute are Top Notch Books series written by Saslow and Ascher(2005), which were chosen to be the base of the treatments of this study.

### *Procedure*

This study has a quasi-experimental design including two experimental groups and one control group. The participants needed to be of intermediate level of second language proficiency. In order to provide homogeneity, all students in three groups took an achievement test before conducting the treatment.

Additionally, as a pre-test, students were assigned to write a task at the beginning. The treatments were about 20-30 minutes during each session. One of the classes received TBLT approach on their writing, while the other class received TSLT approach. For the first class the teacher taught according to pre-task, task and post-task phases. The focus was on communication and meaning, but for the second class, teaching would be in the task-supported language approach. Following the process of teaching tasks, students were asked to write about the topic in groups of two or three.

For both groups there were the same tasks chosen from learners test book. The task selection was in accordance with learning standards for ESL and TOFEL writing sections. Consequently, their writings were collected and scored by the teacher. For the end of the treatment, a post -test was administered to both experimental groups and the control group. The writings were examined in terms of subject clearness, main idea clearness, beginning and end relevance, logical planning and the number of digressions. Scoring was done on the basis of scoring scale of "Expository Writing Quality Scale"

### 3. Results

Null hypothesis: Teaching writing through task-based language teaching and task-supported language teaching does not have significant effect on Iranian intermediate EFL learners' writing proficiency.

Table 1  
*Levene test*

Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
1.792	2	57	0.239

The results of Levene test are employed to study the assumed homogeneity of dependent variable variance among the groups. Since the test level of significance is greater than 0.05, one can state that the homogeneity of variances has been met.

Table 2  
*ANOVA test*

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	12.175	2	6.088	3.516	.036
Within Groups	98.675	57	1.731		
Total	110.850	59			

A one-way between subjects ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of tasks on improving EFL learners' writing performances in task-based, task-supported and no-task conditions. As indicated in table 2, there was a significant effect of using tasks on EFL students' writing performances at  $p < .05$  level for three conditions [ $F(2,57) = 3.51, p = 0.036$ ].

	(I) Group	(J) Group	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
Tukey HSD	Control Group	task-supported	-1.10000*	.41607	.029
		Task based	-.47500*	.41607	.028
	task-supported	Control Group	1.100000*	.41607	.029
		Task based	.62500*	.41607	.049
	Task based	task-supported	-.62500*	.41607	.028
		Control Group	.47500*	.41607	.049

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



As seen in the above table, the level of significance pertinent to variables are less than 0.05 in Tukey test and this indicates that all variables of the Tukey test have two by two effect. Also, there is significant difference among the groups. It can be concluded from the mean differences that Task-supported mean is significantly greater than that of Task-based and control group. In addition, Task-based variable mean is significantly greater than that of control group. This implies that Task-supported Language Teaching is more effective when compared to Task-based Language Teaching. Moreover, post hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score for the task-supported condition was significantly greater than that of the task-based condition. Also, task-based condition mean is significantly greater than that of control condition.

#### 4. Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher drew the conclusion that Task Supported Language Teaching and Task Based Language Teaching had significant effect on Iranian intermediate EFL learners' writing proficiency in isolation. Also, it is clear from the study findings that these two approaches had significant effect on Iranian intermediate EFL learners' writing proficiency when employed simultaneously. When the two approaches i.e. Tasked Based language Teaching and Task Supported Language Teaching were compared with each other, it became clear that Task Supported Language Teaching was more effective.

The findings of this study can be employed in classroom teaching and instruction. By considering the limitations of TBLT and adapting this method in Iranian context, the results of the study can be useful and helpful for instructors, researchers, syllabus designers and teachers in presenting efficient and effective writing tasks. Also text-book developers for junior and senior high schools may benefit from the findings of this study in designing new materials and possibly in changing the current grammar-based textbooks used in Iran.

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# THE EFFECTIVENESS OF STRATEGY BASED INSTRUCTION OF SUMMARY WRITING(SBI) ON IRANIAN INTERMEDIATE EFL LEARNERS' READING COMPREHENSION ABILITY

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## Abstract

This study investigated the effectiveness of Strategy Based Instruction of Summary Writing (SBI) on Iranian EFL Learners' Reading Comprehension ability. The participants of the study were 80 learners out of which 44 were homogenized by a MELAB test and randomly assigned into two groups, control and experimental. Then a pre-test of Reading Comprehension was administered to both groups. The purpose of this test was to measure the learners' initial subject knowledge of reading comprehension. Then control group received no treatment and approached the traditional method of teaching reading comprehension. But, the experimental group received treatment based on Strategy Based Instruction of Summary Writing (SBI). The whole treatment procedure took for 7 sessions. Finally at the end of the course both groups sat for the post test of reading comprehension. The analysis was run through *t*-test and a one way analysis of covariance (ANCOVA). It was found that Strategy Based Instruction of Summary Writing (SBI) has significant effect on Iranian Intermediate EFL Learners' Reading Comprehension ability.

**Key words :**Summary Writing, EFL Learners, Reading Comprehension

## Introduction

Reading comprehension involves a complicated combination of skills in which students utilize their understanding of various elements, the how of finding main ideas and details and make a distinction between the two. Some might suppose that summary writing, as a kind of reading strategies would be an effective strategy to smooth the progress of the cognitive process of comprehension.

As students encounter text in different areas, they need an approach to sort information, and they need to see how individuals with sufficient background knowledge identify important information and summarize. Asking students to read and summarize reading selections without the teacher describing and routinely modeling how to use an appropriate summarization strategy, especially of varying text length, content area, and complexity, will not improve the ability of students to summarize. However, if teachers become aware of the numerous advantages for students, and of effective methods of teaching it, they might be persuaded to embrace summary writing as a crucial skill that their students should practice as often as possible, as part of an integrated reading and writing program.

## Statement of the Problem

Reading plays a significant role in improving readers' language proficiency, especially in a foreign language setting. Actually, EFL learners rely on this skill to acquire knowledge as the foreign language is seldom spoken outside the classroom. The students tend to handle reading without adequate skillfulness, and this negatively affects their reading efficiencies and causes comprehension deficiencies.

In these settings the majority of students tend to dig on a written print struggling in a word by-word reading, sticking at every unknown word. This makes it more difficult to grasp the meaning of what they read and causes them to get stuck on individual words which may not be essential to the general understanding of a text. In Iran many students still have problems in reading comprehension. Some parts of problems of students are from paying more attention on forms. Reading comprehension in Iran is mainly used to teach new grammatical forms. So reading comprehension needs more attention in our country, Iran. Because originally we are a traditional country and our focus is more on the grammatical cases of language. The intention of learning English language in Iran is just knowing some grammatical rules and communicating just to satisfy our basic needs. That is why language teachers in Iran focus more on form rather than on meaning. Nowadays the goals of learning English are very different to those times. Today the focus and attention is mainly on meaning and comprehension.

There are a number of approaches to improve reading comprehension, including improving one's vocabulary and reading strategies. Reading teachers focus more on the instruction of reading content or strategies, but pay relatively less attention to the impact of writing on reading comprehension. Good readers are capable of choosing and using a variety of strategies depending on the task (Van-Duzer, 1999).

The purpose of this study is to explore the effect of summary writing as an independent variable on Iranian EFL learners' reading comprehension as a dependent variable. That is the researcher wants to clarify whether strategy based instruction of summary writing has an effect on students' reading comprehension ability or not.

### Research question

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

RQ: Does Strategy Based Instruction of Summary Writing (SBI) have any effect on the Iranian EFL Learners' Reading Comprehension?

### Research Hypothesis

In order to answer the research question, the following null hypothesis has formulated:

H0: Strategy Based Instruction of Summary Writing (SBI) does not have any effect on Iranian EFL Learners' Reading Comprehension.

### Review of the Literature

Because of important of reading comprehension in language instruction and particularly the necessity of undertaking and comprehending various texts at academic level, there seem to be still an increasing need and space for conducting more research in this field. The following sections discuss various theories and works that have been a part of growing body of ESL and EFL reading research as well as investigations concerning Strategy Based Instruction of Summary Writing (SBI) in reading comprehension.

Reading is one of the most important skills in learning English language for EFL learners. Cook, Linda, Richard, and Myer (1983) argue that reading is not just the only source of information but a means of extending knowledge. Since most of the reading materials and articles in academic courses are published in English, the ability to read and comprehend these articles and written texts is considered important for different EFL learners' and university students. Consequently, a good reading proficiency of reading comprehension should be taken into consideration. Without this ability, EFL learners cannot compete with their counterparts and extend their knowledge. Furthermore, reading is not only the source of increasing knowledge but also one way of communication. Richards and Renandya (2002) state that: reading has received a special focus due to two reasons. Firstly, students consider reading for pleasure, career, and study purposes and secondly, written texts serve different pedagogical purposes. Therefore, it seems reasonable to conduct more research to remove EFL

learners' problems in comprehending different text materials and articles. In this section, major studies on the impact of discourse markers (cohesive devices) on Iranian intermediate EFL learners' improvements in reading comprehension will be reviewed.

As it was noted, reading comprehension refers to the ability to read a text for getting message. According to Chastain (1998), the objective of EFL researchers is to reach a level at which learners have confidence in their reading ability to overcome gaps of understanding and getting the general message of the text. So, the objective of EFL teachers and researchers should be to help learners read without concentrating on structures of the text or translating into their own language.

There have been a lot of studies regarding EFL learners' improvements in reading comprehension. For instance, Brantmeier&Callender and Mc Daniel (2011) investigated the effect of embedded "what" questions and elaborative "why" questions on the reading comprehension of 97 L2 learners of Spanish. The results of this study revealed that no significant effect was found in the recalling and multiple choice items regarding inserted adjunct questions. Yildirim&Yildiz and Atesh(2011) studied fifth-grade students of a public school to investigate whether there was a significant correlation between vocabulary and reading comprehension in terms of types as well as whether the vocabulary was a predictor of reading comprehension in terms of text types. The results of this study indicated that there was a medium correlation between vocabulary and narrative text comprehension as well as a large correlation between vocabulary and expository text comprehension. In other words, vocabulary was a strong predictor of expository text comprehension, and vocabulary made more contribution to expository text comprehension text.

Mihara (2011) in his study of Japanese university students asked the participants to perform a pre-reading strategy and then asked them to answer comprehension questions. The results of this study indicated that vocabulary pre-teaching is less effective although those learners with higher English language proficiency outperformed lower level participants regardless of which pre-reading strategy was used in the study.

Guo and Roehring (2011) examined the roles of metacognitive awareness of reading strategy, syntactic awareness in English and English vocabulary knowledge in the reading comprehension of Chinese university students. Based on the results of this study, L2 specific knowledge was a stronger predictor of reading comprehension than metacognitive awareness. Rashidi and khosravi (2010) conducted a study investigating the role of depth and breadth of vocabulary knowledge in reading comprehension of Iranian L2 learners. The findings of this study indicated that students who had stronger depth and breadth of vocabulary performed better on reading comprehension. Maleknia(2010) in his study considered the application of genre-based approach in English for general purpose context. The results showed that learners did comprehend better and access the text more willingly when they were aware of the genre of the text they were reading.

## Methodology

This part pays attention to the methodology of the research study. The purpose of this part is to make clear the pedagogical and practical effect of Strategy Based Instruction of Summary Writing (SBI) on reading comprehension. This section introduces design of the study, participants of the study, materials, procedures and the statistical analysis.

## Design of the Study

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

Before starting the treatment, a test of MELAB was employed to establish the homogeneity of the subjects in terms of language proficiency. It consisted of three parts: Cloze tests, structure and vocabulary. Initially, 80 male and female students participated in the study.

After administration of MELAB test, 44intermediate students whose scores were between 31 and 50 were selected. Then they were randomly classified into two groups. One of them was considered as the control group and the other one as the experimental group.

## Participants

The participants of the study are 80 intermediate students both male and female. After administration of MELAB, 44 intermediate students whose scores were between 31 and 50 were selected. They were divided into 2 groups control and experimental group. Both groups sat for the pre-test of reading comprehension to take their initial knowledge of reading comprehension ability. Then the control group receives no treatment. However, the experimental group receives treatment based on strategy based instruction of summary writing (SBI) and finally both groups sat for the post-test, which is the same reading comprehension test.

## Materials

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

## Procedure

The procedure through which this study is conducted includes different stages of application, which embraces the selection of the subjects, instrument and materials. Basically three types of test will be used in this study, one is MELAB test which is used to make the subject homogeneous. Having been homogenized by a MELAB test 44 students were selected and they were randomly divided into two groups, control and experimental. Both groups sat for a pre-test of reading comprehension. The purpose of this test was to assess the initial knowledge of the subjects under investigation. The control group received no treatment and approached the traditional way of teaching reading. However, the experimental group received treatment based on strategy based instruction of summary writing (SBI). The treatment is asking the students to write a summary after skimming reading comprehension.

The whole project for 7 sessions, and each session for 60 minutes. And the last step was the post test of reading comprehension in which the subjects ability in both groups

**Statistical analysis:** The data were be computed through SPSS, a *t*-test and a one way analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was be powerful enough to handle the significant of the study if there is any.

## Data analysis and findings

To answer the research question of the present research, the gathered data were analyzed in the following way:

The data obtained from testing the hypothesis of the study were analyzed via calculating a *t*-test between the posttest scores of the experimental and the control groups of the study and the one-way ANCOVA (Analysis of Covariance) between the pretest and the posttests of the experimental and the control group of the study. Such analysis was done using the SPSS software. Table (4.5) shows the descriptive analysis for the pretest and the posttest of Reading Comprehension ability in the experimental group of the study:

This study was experimental in nature and focused on the effect of Strategy Based Instruction of Summary Writing (SBI) on Iranian Intermediate EFL learners' Reading Comprehension ability. The resulting data that was in hand for analysis consisted of an OPT test, Reading Comprehension scores (pre-and post test), and T-TEST. After scoring the test, the results were statistically analyzed to provide answer to the research question. The researcher used SPSS

### Descriptive Analysis of the Data

To answer the research question of the research the following were employed: descriptive analysis (mean and standard deviation), inferential analysis, T-test and one way covariance (ANCOVA). Before conducting ANCOVA its hypotheses were defined to prove its effectiveness.

1: Existence of linear relationship between pre and posttest, which is calculated by analyzing the distribution between each couple of variables.

2: Equality of variance

3: Equality of regression

Table 4.1 indicates the existence of linear relationship between pre and post test.

Figure4.1. level of Reading Comprehension in both groups (experimental, control)

As the table indicates there is linear relationship between pre and posttest. Because regression lines are parallel. It means the relation between both groups is alike. The degree of correlation between dependent variables is indicated in table 4.1.

Table 4.1. Correlation coefficient between Reading Comprehension in pre and post test

Sig.	variables
0/009337	ReadingComprehension(PRETEST)
P*<0/5	Reading Comprehension(POSTTEST)

As the table indicates here, there are meaningful correlations between pre and post test. So, conducting ANCOVA is reasonable. The descriptive analysis of pre and post test and results of T-TEST in experimental group and control group is indicated in table 4.2 and 4.3.

Table4. 2. Descriptive analysis of pre and posttest in both groups

Std Deviation	Mean	N	Group
1,885	16.87	22	Exp
1.335	8.73	22	Cont

As table indicates there is difference between mean of control group and mean of experimental group in pre-test and post test, which is meaningful ( $F(1,28)=15/287$ ,  $p=0/001$ ).

Table4.3. The results of T-TEST to examine the differences between pre and post test in control and experimental group

Group		Mean	Std deviation	Std.error mean	T	Sig(2- tailed)
Experimental	Pair Posttest	8.60	1.724	.445	-69.945	.000



Control	1	Pretest	16.87	1.88478	.487	-1.468	.164
	Pair	Posttest	8.33	1.234	.319		
	1	Pretest	8.73	1.335	.345		

As table indicates there is difference between mean of control group and mean of experimental group in pre-test and post test, which is meaningful. It means there is a difference between results of pre and post tests in control and experimental group.

As table indicates there is difference between mean of control group and mean of experimental group in pre-test and post test, which is meaningful. It means there is a difference between results of pre and post tests in control and experimental group.

Table 4.4. Mean and adjusted means of reading comprehension ability test in post test

Source	posttest		adjusted mean	
	M	SD	M	SE
Experimental	16.871.88516.741a	.213		
control	8.731.3358.859a.213			

This table indicates adjusted means of reading comprehension in post test. It means the effect of pre test is eliminated. These means indicate that mean in experimental group is higher than mean in control group. Reading comprehension ability covariance with elimination of mutual effect in both control and experimental group is indicated in table 4.5.

Table 4.5. reading comprehension ability covariance in both groups

Variable	Source	df	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F	p	Eta
Reading comprehension	Contrast	1	461.920	461.920	.679	.000	.962
	Error	27	18.350	.680	.678		

As the table indicates the degree of "F" is statistically meaningful ( $F(1,77)=679/678, P=.000, \text{Eta}=.962$ ) that indicates in terms of reading comprehension ability there are meaningful difference between experimental and control group. So, we can claim that Strategy Based Instruction of Summary Writing (SBI) affect students' reading comprehension

ability. Additional information can be obtained from graph 4.2. in this graph twofold levels of control and experimental variables are in horizontal axis and depended variables of post test are in vertical axis.

Figure4.2. means of reading comprehension ability in post test in both groups

This graph indicates that there is a significant difference between reading comprehension ability in experimental group and reading comprehension ability in control group. Graph perfectly indicates that participants in experimental group, those who received Strategy Based Instruction of Summary Writing (SBI) have higher reading comprehension after post test comparing to control group with lower ability.

### Results of Hypothesis Testing

As mentioned earlier in chapter one, the research question of this study is:

Q1: Does Strategy Based Instruction of Summary Writing (SBI) has any effect on Iranian Intermediate EFL learners' reading comprehension?

To answer the research questions, the following assumptions were formulated:

HO1: Strategy Based Instruction of Summary Writing (SBI) does not have any effect on Iranian Intermediate EFL learners' reading comprehension.

According to the findings of the research based on the data in table 4.2, the study concluded that the null hypotheses as "Strategy Based Instruction of Summary Writing (SBI) does not have any effect on Iranian Intermediate EFL learners' reading comprehension." was rejected, because there is a significant difference between students' mean scores in their pre-test and post-test in experimental group.

### Discussion

The present study aimed to investigate the Impact of Strategy Based Instruction of Summary Writing (SBI) on the Iranian EFL Learners' Reading Comprehension. The teacher in instructional program tried to introduce summary writing strategy, initiate strategy use as a model, and encourage students to practice strategy use, receive feedback, and invite students to be independent strategy users and readers, monitor themselves, and be strategic and effective readers. Based on the comparison that the researcher made between performance of students in pretest and posttest, the researcher draws some conclusions. The results support the effectiveness of instructional program. The results revealed that significant impact on students' performance on post test. The results were compatible with previous studies(Brown & Day, 1983; Kintsch and van Dijik, 1979).

The results support the idea that Strategy Based Instruction of Summary Writing (SBI) is important as a tool for improving comprehension (Pressley, 2000). Although it is good to know like any other treatment, short time use of the instructional strategy training will not have that many long lasting and enduring effects on students'

performance, in order to be efficient readers in long term academic setting, strategy use should be permanent, independent, and automatic. Some researchers claim that students outperform in post test after receiving Strategy Based Instruction of Summary Writing (SBI) training because while summarizing they pay more attention to the text. (Wilnograd & Bridge, 1986). Like any other activity motivation plays a crucial role in producing summaries. Overall, the data show that undergraduate students can reliably implement and utilize summary writing strategies and that students and teachers view them positively. Most importantly, these data support the growing body of theoretical and empirical work focusing on the importance of reading-writing connections. However, a number of questions about generalization and maintenance remain unanswered. Further research will be necessary to determine the features of the summary skills strategy that are necessary to produce generalization and maintenance of effects, the length of time students will continue to use the summary writing skills, and the factors that affect students' use of the summary writing Strategies.

### **Implications for Teaching**

The results approve the idea that explicit strategy training, here summary writing Strategies, result in higher reading ability in EFL classrooms. It is already known that in academic setting the most important skill for students is reading and helping students to be independent and critical readers is crucial. At the first steps teacher provides students with direct and deductive strategy training, modeling and scaffolding the procedure, but at later stages the teacher encourages the students to be independent users of summary writing Strategies while reading the text. All in all of the studies in SLA research verify the fact that learners definitely take benefit from inductive and deductive strategy instruction. If we, as EFL teachers only focus on explicit teaching of strategies and having students practice under their control can not affect their reading abilities in long term but helping them to become strategic and independent readers help them be effective readers on their own.

### **Implication for teachers**

Reading teachers focus more on the instruction of reading content or strategies, but pay relatively less attention to the impact of writing on reading comprehension. Based on mediation theory, the author examined the effect of summary writing about reading texts on readers' comprehension. By reviewing relevant literatures on the topic of reading and writing connections, the author explained how summarization as a way to guide English-as-a-Foreign-Language (EFL) learners to read and learn improves their reading abilities. One implication for teaching reading is that compared with exclusive reading instruction, an interactive model of reading and writing can better improve EFL readers' comprehension.

### **Suggestions for Further Research**

The subjects of this study were both male and female. The similar study can be replicated considering the sex and age distribution. The subjects of the study were intermediate learners. The similar study can be carried out regarding other levels of study such as pre intermediate or advanced learners. The subjects of the study were English learners from language institute. Other studies can be replicated at the university levels with different major field of studies or those students majoring English.

In this study, only the effects of summary writing strategy on reading comprehension were investigated. Other studies can be carried out to investigate the effect of other types of instruction on reading comprehension. In addition, the similar study can be replicated to investigate the effect of summary writing strategy on other skills of language such as listening and speaking.

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# AN INVESTIGATION OF EFL LEARNERS LINGUISTICS 'INTRINSIC MOTIVATION TYPES AND SELF-IDENTITY CHANGES

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## Abstract

EFL learners with full motivation in a society enhance from bilingualism. Motivation determines how and why people learn and how they do (pintrich&schunk.1996) motivation provides learners with power to become positive about language learning. The main aim of this study is to examine the relationship between Motivation and language learners' Self-identity in order to determine if there are differences between intrinsic motivation types and self-identity changes according to divergent university level groups and on the other hand to estimate whether there is any distinction in the dearth of motivation and self-identity changes or not. The essential data and information needed for this particular survey was conducted by the participants who responded to related questionnaires; including 240 university students ( female= 139 \_ male= 101) . Finally the results of the satisfactory questionnaires, which were held in both The Azad Universities of Chaloos and Tonekabon, revealed the following facts: There are positive correlations between several intrinsic motivation types and self-identity changes ; including intrinsic motivation which positively correlates with additive and self-confidence. Besides, productive self identity changes and the dearth of motivation positively correlate with zero, subtractive and split self -identity changes.

**Key word:** Motivation, Intrinsic motivation, self-identity

## 1.Introduction

Many factors affect EFL learners' to succeed and prosper in learning English. Motivation of English learners was regarded as one of the most important and axiomatic aspects to determine the successful learning. It was believed that students with higher motivation of learning foreign languages tend to perform better than those who have low motivation (Chang 2005). The first summary of L2 motivation research was first proposed by Robert Gardner and Wallance Lambert in 1972. Motivation is commonly considered to be an inner drive, impulse, emotion or desire that moves one to a particular action; or "In a general sense, motivation can be defined as the dynamically changing cumulative arousal in a person that initiates, directs, coordinates, amplifies, terminates, and evaluates the cognitive and motor processes whereby initial wishes and desires are

selected, prioritized, operationalised and (successfully or unsuccessfully) acted out” (Dörnyei, 1998). Self-Identity Changes Gardner (2001) identified motivation as the most important factor influencing language achievement. He also classified language achievement according to two categories—linguistic and nonlinguistic outcomes (Gardner, 1985). Linguistic outcomes include improvements in proficiency while nonlinguistic outcomes include everything outside of proficiency. This study focuses on one nonlinguistic outcome which, in fact, is any sort of conversion through self-identity the learners might experience as a result of EFL.

Self-identity, is defined from Wikipedia as the “mental and conceptual understanding and persistent regard that sentient beings hold for their own existence. The self-identity changes division integrated six main categories: self confidence, additive, subtractive, productive, split, and zero changes. I hope to figure out the correlation between intrinsic motivation and self-identity changes. Hence, this essay tries to find and describe the relationships of those L2 Intrinsic motivation types which bring about positive self-identity changes in order to be presented, modeled, and encouraged in the Iranian EFL classroom throughout the compulsory grade university years.

## 2.Statement of the problem

This study is going to show the relationship between three types of intrinsic motivation and self-identity changes in EFL language learners. In order to know whether the educational objective of having a positive attitude towards English, understanding and appreciating the culture of English speakers, or finding pleasure in using English for their work is being met or not. Whereas, the learners need an opportunity to report on the changes they feel which have certainly taken place to their self-identity throughout their EFL experiences. It is not obvious that how different types of intrinsic motivation can help learners increase and improve their self-identity. The study claims that the procedure of learning consists of more general alterations in the learner changes of learner's self-identities that should be considered.

## 3. Purposes of the study

- I. To study and probe different types of intrinsic motivation and self-identity changes among students who are learning English major according to different level groups in Chalus and Tonekabon Azad universities.
- II. To study and probe different types of amotivation and self-identity changes among students who are learning English major according to different level groups in Chalus and Tonekabon Azad universities.

## 4.Review of literature

It is generally recognized that motivation plays a serious role in university learning in common, and it is particularly true of the “sustained process of mastering an L2” (Dörnyei, 2005, p. 616). It was a theory of motivation. Rueda and Chen (2005: 210) declared that motivation of language learning had been defined as the target language learner's orientation with regard to the goal of learning a second or foreign language. Gardner and Lambert (1959) cited in Rueda and Chen (2005: 211) laid the foundation for influential theory of second language learning motivation. Many studies have been conducted to find out types of motivation and the consequences of different types of motivation on language learning outcome (Bandura, 1986; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011; Gardner et al., 2004; Spolsky, 1989).

The situation leads learners to another motivation to learn English. They learn English not only for the sake of their rank in the class but also for future purposes that is to enable and fortify them to get vacant jobs. This situation rises up the learners' motivation to study English. Based on the clarification the teacher has the predominant role to motivate the students learned counting facilitating, guiding and showing something to learn. Intrinsic motivation is a reaction to needs that exist within the learner himself. for example, curiosity, the need to know, and feelings of competence or growth (Eggen and Kauchak, 1994: 428).

Seng et al. (2003: 280) recommended that intrinsic motivation will be present when an individual worked simply because of an inner desire to accomplish a task or goal successfully. The intrinsic motivation is an inner desire, such as learning a second language for pure interest in the target language, culture, or for feelings of enjoyment in learning. (Gardner et al., 2004).

Intrinsic motivation is raised up from the students themselves when they were born and it undeniably raises accurately when it is needed. Intrinsic motivation reflects the desire to do something because it is enjoyable. If we are intrinsically motivated, we will not be concerned about external rewards such as admire or awards. If we are intrinsically motivated, the enjoyment we experience would be adequate for us so as to wish to perform the activity in the future. In wide-ranging, intrinsic motivation (IM) refers to engaging in an activity purely for the pleasure and satisfaction derived from doing the activity (Deci, 1975). When a person is intrinsically motivated he or she will perform the behavior voluntarily, in the absence of material rewards or external constraints (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Deci and Ryan posit that IM stems from the innate psychological needs of competence and self-determination.

Even though most researchers conceive the presence of a global IM construct, certain theorists (Deci, 1975; White, 1959) have planned that IM could differentiate into more specific motives. newly, a tripartite classification of IM has been postulated (Vallerand et al., 1992). This organization is based on the IM literature that reveals the presence of three types of IM that have been researched on an self-governing basis. These three types of IM have been recognized as IM to Know, IM to Accomplish Things, and IM to Experience Stimulation. 1-Intrinsic Motivation to Knowledge , This type of IM relates to several constructs such as exploration, curiosity, learning goals, IM to learn, and the epistemic need to know and understand. Thus, it can be distinct as performing an activity for the enjoyment and the approval that one experiences while learning, exploring, or trying to understand something .Intrinsic 2-Motivation Toward Accomplishments, this second type of IM has been considered in developmental psychology, as well as in university research, under such terms as mastery motivation, efficacy motivation, and task-orientation. In accumulation, other authors have postulated that individuals interrelate with the environment in order to feel capable and to create exclusive accomplishments (Deci, 1975; Deci & Ryan, 1985, 1991). Therefore, IM toward accomplishments can be distinct as attractive in an activity for the enjoyment and satisfaction experienced when one attempts to accomplish or create something. Trying to master certain difficult training techniques in order to experience personal satisfaction represents an example of intrinsic motivation to accomplish things in the sport domain. Intrinsic Motivation to Experience Stimulation. Finally 3- IM to Experience Stimulation occurs when someone engages in an activity in order to experience stimulating sensations (e.g., sensory pleasure, aesthetic experiences, as well as fun and excitement) derived from one's engagement in the activity. Research on the dynamic and holistic sensation of flow, on feelings of excitement in IM, on aesthetic stimulating experiences, and peak experiences is representative of this form of IM for example athletes who participate in their sport in order to live exciting experiences are intrinsically motivated to experience stimulation. This seventh and final form of motivation is quite similar to the concept of learned helplessness (Abramson, Seligman, & Teasdale, 1978). That is, motivated individuals do not perceive contingencies between their actions and the outcomes of their actions. They experience feelings of incompetence and lack of control (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Eventually they may even decide to stop practicing their sport. In the last decade, Deci and Ryan's motivational approach has grown in importance because the different types of motivation have been associated with important psychological consequences (e.g., learning, performance), and because their theory identifies determinants of these different types of motivation. Self-identity, adapted from Gao et al.'s (007) study, is defined as "how the learner perceives himself or herself in terms of linguistic and cultural groups that he or she belongs to, as well as the learner's values, communication styles, abilities, and worthiness" (p. 134).

Self-identity is the sum total of a being's knowledge and understanding of his or her self." So far, the most influential theory in self-identity is proposed by Carl Rogers (1947). In his view, the self is the central ingredient in human personality and personal adjustment. Rogers describes the self as a social product, development out of interpersonal relationships and striving for consistency .Self-identity change is a change in the perception of one's own ability .In addition there is an increase in the ability to do things and make decisions without the help of others. Additive change occurs when two sets of languages, behavioral patterns and values co-exist with each functioning in particular contexts. The target language and culture replaces the native language and culture in subtractive change. The increase and ease of using the English language . In productive change both the target language and the native language positively reinforce each other. With an improvement in English proficiency, . An increase in the appreciation of English literature and art .Split change occurs when identity conflicts result from the struggle between the languages and cultures. There is often confusion as to how to greet or take leave of friends whether to hug, shake hands, kiss. Zero change is the absence of a change in self-identity. It is considered futile to discuss self-identity changes after learning English.



This study is also limited to English majors in order to control one of the variables that is considered to be an influential factor for both motivation and self-identity changes (Boonchum, 2009b; Gao et al., 2007). 1. Motivation in this study utilizes Gardner's (2001) definition identifying motivation as "the driving force in any situation" (p. 6). In the EFL situation this results in the L2 learner making an effort to learn the language, displaying a consistent effort to learn the material by doing homework, doing extra work, and seeking out opportunities for further learning, and enjoying L2 learning. 2. Self-identity as used in this study is "how the learners perceive themselves in terms of linguistic and cultural groups they belong to, their values, communication styles, abilities and worthiness" (Gao, Zhao, Cheng, & Zhou, 2004, p. 1).

The participant remains the same. No matter what language is used; learning languages is an event separated from personal change. The relationships between language learning motivation and language Learner' self-identity have long attracted researchers' attention. In Iran, most students study English in order to pass the joint examination to enter into university. Such examination-oriented teaching and learning modes confine intrinsic motivation development and cultural immersion in the target language for the L2 learners. Although it is clear that EFL learners with full competence in two languages and cultures benefit from bilingualism, it is still not at all certain that how such social, lingual and cultural contexts could best help EFL learners develop a balanced-bilingual self-identity. If a person's identity was changed after or while learning foreign language. According to Gardner (1985) wondering why some students attain higher levels of proficiency than others is not a new question. In recent years second language (L2) learning motivation research has linked motivation types to learning outcomes—both linguistic and nonlinguistic—with a focus on proficiency as indicated by test scores (Gao, Zhao, Cheng, & Zhou, 2007). According to Dörnyei (2009) the researchers have generally linked the L2 to the "individual's personal 'core,' forming an important part of one's identity" (p. 9).

Bilingualism involves changes in the language learners self-concept (Gao et al. 2007, p. 134). Such nonlinguistic outcomes (Gardner, 1993) were usually regarded in an EFL context, where a learner is immersed in the environment of the target language and culture. Research on nonlinguistic outcomes in an EFL context is rather limited.

Gao et al. (2007) declared that most L2 learning motivation research to date has linked motivation types to linguistic outcomes such as proficiency test scores, but this research will add to the body that is expanding that field to include nonlinguistic outcomes as well. In classify to know if the educational objective of having a positive attitude towards English, understanding and appreciating the culture of English speakers, and finding pleasure in and using English for their work is being met, the learners need an opportunity to account on the changes they feel have taken place to their self-identity throughout their ELL experience. Finally, through identifying any correlations that may exist between motivation and self-identity change.

SUSAN TEER (April 2013) in an article entitled AN INVESTIGATION OF ENGLISH LEARNING MOTIVATION TYPES AND SELF-IDENTITY CHANGES AMONG THAI ENGLISH says that the intrinsic motivation subtypes had positive correlations with several self-identity changes as well. The stimulation subtype positively correlated with additive changes, confidence changes, and productive changes. The knowledge subtype of intrinsic motivation positively correlated with additive changes, confidence changes, and productive changes. The final subtype accomplishment positively correlated with three changes—additive, confidence, and productive. In addition the lack of motivation, or amotivation, also had positive correlations with three self-identity changes—subtractive and zero.

Mei-Hsia Dai in the study by the name of The Relationships of Language Learning Motivation and Self-Identity Changes try to investigate the self-identity change in response to EFL learners' motivation and language proficiency, which corresponds with Gardner's (1993) linguistic and nonlinguistic outcomes and Dörnyei's (2005) L2 motivational self system.

## 5. Research questions

- 1- What is the correlation between the intrinsic motivation types and reported self-identity changes?
- 2- What is the correlation between the amotivation types and self-identity changes?

## 6. Hypothesis

H0. There are no correlation between the intrinsic motivation types and self-identity changes.

H1. There are no correlation between the amotivation types and self-identity changes.

## 7. Instrument

A questionnaire was the instrument in this study. There were four parts to the questionnaire. The first part was a questionnaire checklist and the second, third, and fourth parts consisted of question responses according to the five point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree). In this study, the data were analyzed using the Statistic Package for Social Science Programs (SPSS). Analysis of descriptive statistics presented the frequency and percentage of respondents and ANOVA was carried out to test difference set to a significance level of 0.05 and analyzed the correlation between six types of changes and six independent variables (t-test).

## 8. MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Participants of the study

The participants of the study were 240 participations : both males =101 and females =139 studying English. The students of English major at the Faculty of Tonekabon and Chalus Azad Universities. The selected participants depended on gender, major, years of learning English, foreign friends, going abroad, English motivation, and attitude towards English.

### Variables in the study

The variables in the study were distributed between independent and dependent variables. The independent variables were gender, major, years of English learning, having foreign friends, going abroad, motivation to learn English, attitude towards English. The dependent variables were:

1. Self-confidence change - change in the perception of ones' own competence.
2. Additive change - the co-existence of two sets of language, behavioral patterns and values, each specified for particular contexts.
3. Productive change - the command of the target language and that of the native language positively reinforce each other.
4. Subtractive change - the native language and native cultural identity are replaced by the target language and target cultural identity.
5. Split change - the struggle between the languages and cultures gives rise to identity conflict.
6. Zero change - absence of self-identity change.

## 9. METHOD

### Measures, Motivation types

Dörnyei (2001) stressed the importance, and difficulty, of designing motivation surveys that have psychometric properties aligned with the population under study. Thus, the questionnaires were adapted for the current study. The researcher in this study made slight modification to suit the needs of the population here in Iran. The items was classified

into *A motivation* (Q 1, 2,3), *Intrinsic Motivation - Stimulation* (Q 4,5,6), *Intrinsic Motivation - Knowledge*(Q7,8,9), *Intrinsic Motivation Accomplishment* (Q10,11,12) and also Participants were asked to respond to a series of statement relating to self- identity changes. The questionnaire consists of the following six subcategories, each with 4 or 5 statements.

- *Self-confidence change* (questions 3, 5, 7, 17): Change in the perception of one's own competence.
- *Additive change* (questions 8, 16, 18, 21, 24): The coexistence of two sets of languages, behavioral patterns, and values, each specified for particular contexts.
- *Subtractive change* (questions 1, 9, 23, 26): The native language and native culture identity are replaced by the target language and target cultural identity.

- \_ *Productive change* (questions 2, 10, 13, 20, 25): The command of the target language and that of the native language positively reinforce each other.
- \_ *Split change* (questions 6, 12, 15, 19): The struggle between the languages and cultures gives rise to identity conflict.
- \_ *Zero change* (questions 4, 11, 14, 22): Absence of self-identity change.

## 10 . Data Analysis

Statistical analysis of the received questionnaire data was done using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). For the first two research questions determining the motivation types of the learners and the reported self identity changes, descriptive statistics were used. Responses were coded using the numerical values assigned to the questionnaire responses, keyed into the computer, and then checked for accuracy in order to receive a data file so that analysis could be proceeded.

### demographic information

Demographic information is provided through tables and figures

Table 4-1. Reliability

Typical	QN	Cronbach's Alpha
Stimulation	3	0.723
Knowledge	3	0.712
Accomplishment	3	0.721
Motivation	9	0.734
Amotivation	3	0.718
Confidence	4	0.724
Productive	5	0.728
Additive	5	0.736
Zero	4	0.733
Subtractive	4	0.725
Split	4	0.739
Self-Identity	26	0.768

of these two questionnaires employed in this study shown in table1 -4Cronbach's Alpha > 0 /7each respectively, which demonstrates a better reliability of the questionnaires.

Table.2-4 frequency distribution of the sample based on their sex

Jender	Frequency	Percent
Male	101	42.08
Female	139	57.92
Total	240	100

As it is shown in table 2-4, in both groups, 42/08% are male and 57/9% are female students.

Table.3-4 frequency distribution of the sample based on their age

Age	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Less than 20	72	30	30

20 to 22	113	47.08	77.08
23 to 25	43	17.92	95
More than 25	12	5	100
Total	240	100	

As it is shown in table 2-4, The most participations are (%47/08) between 20 up to 22 years and the least participations are (%5) over 25 years.

**Table.4-2 frequency distribution of the sample based on their Education**

Education	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Diploma	60	25	25
License	117	48.75	73.75
master degree	63	26.25	100
Total	240	100	

As it is shown in table 4-4, The most participations are (%48/75) license and the least participations are (%25) diploma.

**Table 4-5. Descriptive Statistics of research variable**

variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Stimulation	240	1.67	5	3.24	1.212
Knowledge	240	1.33	5	3.16	1.524
Accomplishment	240	1.33	5	3.27	1.316
Motivation	240	1.44	4.89	3.22	1.324
Amotivation	240	1	5	2.76	1.375
Confidence	240	1.25	5	3.45	1.171
Productive	240	1.4	5	3.23	1.144
Additive	240	1.6	5	3.27	1.131
Zero	240	1.25	5	3.16	1.514
Subtractive	240	1	4.75	2.92	1.549
Split	240	1.25	4.50	2.76	1.389
Self-Identity	240	2.25	4.13	3.13	0.407

**Table 4-6. One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test**

متغير	Mean	S. D	Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z	Sig
Stimulation	3.24	1.212	4.403	0.001
Knowledge	3.16	1.524	4.325	0.001
Accomplishment	3.27	1.316	4.010	0.001

Motivation	3.22	1.324	4.820	0.001
Amotivation	2.76	1.375	4.034	0.001
Confidence	3.45	1.171	3.325	0.001
Productive	3.23	1.144	2.792	0.001
Additive	3.27	1.131	2.623	0.001
Zero	3.16	1.514	4.461	0.001
Subtractive	2.92	1.549	3.768	0.001
Split	2.76	1.389	4.459	0.001
Self-Identity	3.13	0.407	1.907	0.001

Based on the information provided in table 10, the independent t-test significance level is smaller than 0.05. So that there is significant difference between the mean scores of variables, as a result for study these variables we use Test Non-parametric.

## 11. Result and Discussion

H0. There are no correlation between the intrinsic motivation types and self-identity changes.

Table the correlation between intrinsic motivation and self-identity

variable	Correlation	stimulation	knowledge	Accomplishment	Motivation
Confidence	Correlation	.775**	.749**	.590**	.731**
	Sig	.001	.001	.001	.001
Productive	Correlation	.684**	.638**	.497**	.619**
	Sig	.001	.001	.001	.001
Additive	Correlation	.702**	.650**	.499**	.631**
	Sig	.001	.001	.001	.001
Zero	Correlation	-.434**	-.392**	-.351**	-.388**
	Sig	.001	.001	.001	.001
Subtractive	Correlation	-.500**	-.476**	-.447**	-.482**
	Sig	.001	.001	.001	.001
Split	Correlation	-.476**	-.438**	-.411**	-.437**
	Sig	.001	.001	.001	.001

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

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

The intrinsic motivation subtypes had positive and negative correlations with several self-identity changes as well. The stimulation subtype of intrinsic motivation positively correlated with (r=0.775, sig=0.001) Confidence changes, (r=0.684, sig=0.001) Productive changes, (r=0.702, sig=0.001) Additive changes and the stimulation subtype of intrinsic motivation negatively correlated with (r=-0.434, sig=0.001) Zero changes, (r=-0.500, sig=0.001) Subtractive changes, (r=-0.476, sig=0.001) Additive changes.

The knowledge subtype of intrinsic motivation positively correlated with additive changes (r=0.650, sig=0.001), confidence changes (r=0.749, sig=0.001), and productive changes (r=0.638, sig=0.001). The knowledge subtype of intrinsic motivation negatively correlated with (r=-0.392, sig=0.001) Zero changes, r=-0.476, sig=0.001 (Subtractive changes (r=-0.438, sig=0.001) Additive changes).

The final subtype accomplishment subtype of intrinsic motivation positively correlated with additive changes (r=0.499, sig=0.001), confidence changes (r=0.590, sig=0.001), and productive changes (r=0.497, sig=0.001). The knowledge subtype of intrinsic motivation negatively correlated with (r=-0.351, sig=0.001) Zero changes, r=-0.447, sig=0.001 (Subtractive changes (r=-0.411, sig=0.001) Additive changes).

Motivation positively correlated with additive changes (r=0.631, sig=0.001), confidence changes (r=0.731, sig=0.001), and productive changes (r=0.619, sig=0.001). The Motivation negatively correlated with (r=-0.388,

sig=0.001 Zero changes),  $r=-0.482$ , sig=0.001) (Subtractive changes),  $r=-0.437$ , sig=0.001) Additive changes) .as a result the first hypothesis is rejected.

H1. There are no correlation between the a motivation types and self-identity changes

Table the correlation between amotivation and self- identity.

variable	Correlation	Sig
Confidence	-.629**	.001
Productive	-.538**	.001
Additive	-.547**	.001
Zero	.344**	.001
Subtractive	.439**	.001
Split	.405**	.001

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

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

In addition the lack of motivation, or amotivation, had negative correlations with three self-identity  $r=-0.629$ , sig=0.001) Confidence, ( $r=-0.538$ , sig=0.001) Productive, ( $r=-0.547$ , sig=0.001) Additive) also had positive correlations with three self-identity changes ( $r=0.344$ , sig=0.001) Zero, ( $r=0.439$ , sig=0.001) Subtractive, ( $r=0.405$ , sig=0.001) split).As a result second hypothesis is rejected.

## 12. Result and Conclusion

The results concerning motivation types found in the current study were quite similar to Noels' study (2001a). This study identified positive correlations between intrinsic motivation and self-confidence, productive, and additive changes while Boonchum's (2009a) study found positive correlations between intrinsic motivation and additive, productive, subtractive, and split identity changes and also this study identified positive correlation between amotivation and split, zero, subtractive self - identity changes.

After the teacher is aware of the students' current motivation types, steps can be taken to reinforce and strengthen the motivation types which correlate with the additive, confidence, or productive self-identity changes or to encourage students to create new goals as teachers encourage them to expand their goals for EFL and students will internalize more of the benefits of EFL and will become more self-determined in their motivation type ultimately leading to intrinsic types of motivation; increased motivation occurs simultaneously with learners becoming autonomous. In addition teachers can encourage goal-setting focusing on long-term goals to encourage intrinsic motivation rather than the often short-term goals associated with extrinsic motivation such as earning more money or getting a better job. Students should be encouraged to set realistic personal goals for their learning (Dörnyei & Csizér, 1998).

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#### Questionnaire motivation and self identity

Gender: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_ University year: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Amotivation

1. Honestly, I don't know, I truly have the impression of wasting my time studying English. 5 4 3 2 1
2. I cannot come to see why I study English, and frankly, I don't care. 5 4 3 2 1
3. I don't know; I can't come to understand what I am doing studying English. 5 4 3 2 1

#### Intrinsic Motivation - Stimulation

4. For the "high" I feel when hearing English spoken. 5 4 3 2 1
5. For the pleasure I get from hearing English spoken by native English speakers. 5 4 3 2 1
6. For the "high" feeling that I experience while speaking English. 5 4 3 2 1

#### Intrinsic Motivation - Knowledge

7. For the pleasure that I experience in knowing more about the literature of the English language group. 5 4 3 2 1
8. For the satisfied feeling I get in finding out new things. 5 4 3 2 1
9. Because I enjoy the feeling of acquiring knowledge about the English language community and their way of life. 5 4 3 2 1

#### Intrinsic Motivation - Accomplishment

10. For the satisfaction I feel when I am in the process of accomplishing difficult exercises in English. 5 4 3 2 1
11. For the pleasure I experience when surpassing myself in my English studies. 5 4 3 2 1
12. For the enjoyment I experience when I grasp a



difficult construct in English. 5 4 3 2 1

### Questionnaire Items and Corresponding Self-Identity Changes

#### Items Label

3, 5, 7, 17

2, 10, 13, 20, 25

8, 16, 18, 21, 24

4, 11, 14, 22

1, 9, 23, 26

6, 12, 15, 19

Confidence

Productive

Additive

Zero

Subtractive

Split

### Self-identity Changes Strongly Agree Agree Uncertain Disagree Strongly Disagree

1. After learning English, I feel my behaviors have become somewhat westernized. 5 4 3 2 1

2. After learning English, I have become more understanding and can better communicate with others in various cultures and languages not only Thai or English but also other languages.

5 4 3 2 1

3. I can express my opinion in public easily and confidently.

5 4 3 2 1

4. For me, it is meaningless to talk about personal changes after Learning English.

5 4 3 2 1

5. English learning makes me speak English with foreigners confidently and comfortably.

5 4 3 2 1

6. I feel a painful split when I switch between English and Persian behavioral patterns

5 4 3 2 1

7. I have the ability to do things and make decisions by myself, without needing other people to help me.

5 4 3 2 1

8. While I am talking to my Persian friends and a foreign teacher participates in our talking, I can switch easily between Thai and English according to the situation.

5 4 3 2 1

9. After learning English, I feel repugnant about some Persian conventions. For example, I think that Persian people can hold the hand of a man/woman openly anywhere.

5 4 3 2 1

10. With the improvement of my English proficiency, I can appreciate better the subtleties in Persian. For example, when I study European or American history, I am more proud of Persian history.

5 4 3 2 1

11. I have not felt any change in myself after learning English; an instrument is an instrument.

5 4 3 2 1

12. After learning English, I am often caught between

contradicting values and beliefs. 5 4 3 2 1

13. After learning English, I find myself more sensitive to changes in the outside world. For example, when I read or know English news about global warming, I feel more aware of the preservation of the environment.

5 4 3 2 1

14. It is impossible for me to change into another person after learning a language. 5 4 3 2 1

15. When parting with foreign friends, I'm frequently confused as to whether I should shake hands or hug and kiss.

5 4 3 2 1

16. I prefer to listen to the original English dialogue when watching English movies, just as I enjoy the original Thai dialogue when watching Persian movies. 5 4 3 2

17. I have privacy. I can be in a place or situation which allows me to do things without other people disturbing me.

5 4 3 2 1

18. I am relatively confident when speaking in English, and relatively modest when speaking in Persian.

5 4 3 2 1

19. I feel strange when my speech in Persian is mixed with English words.

5 4 3 2 1

20. I think that punctuality is important. If I have an appointment with other people, I am always very punctual.

5 4 3 2 1

21. I can accept someone's suggestion or comment without feeling sad. 5 4 3 2 1

22. No matter which language is used for expression, I remain myself. 5 4 3 2 1

23. After learning English, I have begun to reject some traditional Persian ideas such as we should behave in the same way as our parents because of what they have experienced. However, I think that I can do it in my own way.

5 4 3 2 1

24. When I chat with my foreign friends on the phone or internet, I usually use an English name in addition to my name.

5 4 3 2 1

25. As my ability in appreciating the English language and literature and art increases, I have become more interested in Persian literature and art. 5 4 3 2 1

26. With the improvement of my English proficiency, I feel my Persian is becoming less idiomatic such as making a sound like '/s/, /sh/, /th/' in Persian words unconsciously. 5 4 3 2 1

# A COMPARATIVE STUDY ON THE EFFECT OF TASK-REPETITION STRATEGY VS. PEER COOPERATION STRATEGY ON IRANIAN INTERMEDIATE EFL LEARNERS' VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT

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## ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to investigate the effect of task-repetition strategy vs. peer cooperation strategy on Iranian Intermediate EFL learners' vocabulary development. For this purpose 100 learners of English at Iran language institute participated in this study. Having being homogenized by an Oxford placement test (OPT), 30 learners were selected and they were randomly assigned into two groups of 15, Task-repetition and Peer-cooperation. Then both groups sat for a pre-test, which was a vocabulary test. The purpose of this test was to measure the learners' initial subject knowledge of vocabulary. Afterwards, the peer cooperation group received treatment based on peer cooperation strategy. However, the task-repetition group received task-repetition strategy. The treatment procedure took 10 sessions. Finally at the end of the course both groups sat for the post test of vocabulary. According to the results obtained by the statistical calculations, the effectiveness of the treatment was very noticeable. This study suggests that teaching vocabulary through peer cooperation strategy can be a very effective as compared to task-repetition in learners' vocabulary development. However, this study provides a significant contribution in curriculum innovation and policy with respect to the learners' vocabulary development.

**Key words:** Task-repetition strategy, Peer-cooperation strategy, vocabulary development

## Introduction

Considering the point that English language has long been the language of correspondence in all over the world as well as most significant second or foreign language in the non-English speaking countries, so this language is supposed one of the extremity substantial languages in the world (Liu, 2009; Liu et al., 2010). In numerous territories, English language is believed the most significant foreign or second language (Laborda, Magal-Royo, Rocha, & Alvarez, 2010; Sun et al., 2011). In this manner, this point is a necessary argument to expand a prospect proposition by which to encourage learners in acquiring English as foreign language (Liu et al., 2010).

In order to acquire another language, it is necessary to acquire a substantial amount of new vocabulary items of that language. This large exercise takes confrontations and dilemma to all foreign language learners (Krashen, 1989; Nation, 2001). Foreign language learners are commonly aware of their vocabulary knowledge constrains for making connection in the procedure of vocabulary development and enhancement (Krashen, 1989; Nation,

2001). Various researches have suggested that lexical acquisition is the basis of learning another language (Sun et al., 2011; Wilkins, 1972). As Wilkins (1972) stated, "without grammar, very little can be conveyed; without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed". Regarding this point, the opinions can be stated successfully just when learners are armed with adequate number of vocabulary with which to do so.

A study by Rubin et al. (2007) with consideration to some researches in the area of language learning strategies recommends that training learners to learn strategies, if adequately done, develops not only their ability in learning strategies but also they will be encouraged in their performance. Based on these ideas, a valuable amount of studies on the power of learning strategies training has been done to date. The common accord in the area is that acquiring strategies assures time and attempt both in and out of the classrooms atmosphere (Oxford, 1990; Macaro, 2001; Ikeda, 2007). Specifying the high competency in teaching of learning strategies, it is reasonable that teachers try to train the strategies used by the more proficient students to less proficient ones, by that promoting or reforming their learning procedure. Utilizing strategy for language learning is the ways enable learners to enhance their learning proficiencies.

Abedini, Rahimi, and Zare-ee (2011) recognized learning strategies are methods that students apply to improve and achieve their own learning, particularly it is important for fostering learner autonomy in language learning and also as a guidance for students in developing their own success in language learning. Furthermore Language learning strategy can help English teachers achieve better comprehension of their students' prospects and contentment with their language classes (Suwanarak, 2012).

For this purpose, this study was conducted to ameliorate the status of task-repetition strategy vs. peer cooperation strategy and sheds light upon the position of task-repetition strategy vs. peer cooperation strategy on vocabulary development. It also attends to make a shift of focus in teaching task-repetition strategy and peer cooperation strategy as it is related to vocabulary development.

### Definition of key terms

The following terms are defined as they are used in this study to facilitate the reader's understanding of the study.

- **Task-repetition strategy:** Task repetition involves asking language learners to repeat the same or slightly altered tasks at intervals of, for example, one or two weeks (Bygate and Samuda 2005). In task repetition, the first performance of the task is regarded as preparation for (or a pre-task activity before) further performances (Ellis, 2005).
- **Peer-cooperation strategy:** is an educational approach, which aims to organize classroom activities into academic and social learning experiences. There is much more to Cooperative Learning than merely arranging students into groups, and it has been described as "structuring positive interdependence. Students must work in groups to complete tasks collectively toward academic goals. Unlike individual learning, which can be competitive in nature, students learning cooperatively can capitalize on one another's resources and skills (asking one another for information, evaluating one another's ideas, monitoring one another's work, etc. Ross and Smyth (1995) describe successful cooperative learning tasks as intellectually demanding, creative, open-ended, and involve higher order thinking tasks.
- **Vocabulary development:** is a process by which people acquire words. is the process of a person increasing the number of words, which he or she uses in everyday life. (Anderson, 2005).

### Traditional approaches to vocabulary development

Vocabulary is central to English language teaching because without sufficient vocabulary students cannot understand others or express their own ideas. Wilkins (1972) wrote that ". . . while without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary *nothing* can be conveyed" (pp. 111-112). This point reflects my experience with different languages; even without grammar, with some useful words and expressions, I can often manage to communicate. Lewis (1993) went further to argue, "lexis is the core or heart of language" (p. 89). Particularly as students develop greater fluency and expression in English, it is significant for them to acquire more productive vocabulary knowledge and to develop their own personal vocabulary learning strategies.

Students often instinctively recognize the importance of vocabulary to their language learning. As Schmitt (2010) noted, "learners carry around dictionaries and not grammar books" (p. 4). Teaching vocabulary helps students understand and communicate with others in English. Voltaire purportedly said, "Language is very difficult to

put into words." I believe English language students generally would concur, yet learning vocabulary also helps students master English for their purposes.

The important effect of vocabulary knowledge in comprehending language cannot be declined. In this regard, Stahl (1990) points out that vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension are closely related to each other. Admittedly vocabulary knowledge can contribute to reading and reading can enhance vocabulary growth (Chall, 1987). Indeed, the comprehension of almost every passages whether in one's native language or in a foreign language is not feasible without understanding the text's main vocabularies (Laufer, 1997).

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I can often manage to communicate. Lewis (1993) went further to argue, "lexis is the core or heart of language" (p. 89). Particularly as students develop greater fluency and expression in English, it is significant for them to acquire more productive vocabulary knowledge and to develop their own personal vocabulary learning strategies.

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## Method

### Participants

The participants of this study were 30 intermediate Iranian EFL learners at Iran language institute of Rasht branch. Their age range 14-20 without sex distribution, who were selected randomly from among 100 learners based on the results of an OPT. The Mean and SD were calculated and eventually 30 learners with the score of 1 SD above and below the mean were selected to participate in this research. This study aims to investigate the degree of improvements in learners' knowledge of vocabulary. They were divided into two groups of 15 and were randomly assigned to the peer-cooperation group as well as task-repetition group.

### Materials

Three types of materials were used in the current study: An OPT proficiency test was used to measure the learners' proficiency level of vocabulary knowledge.

Another type of material was the pretest of vocabulary to measure the learners' initial knowledge of vocabulary. And the last type of material was a post test of vocabulary to assess the learners' progress from pre to post test after specific treatment program.

This test was divided into 3 parts, cloze test, structure, and vocabulary proficiency.

The pretest of the study consisted of 40 multiple-choice items of vocabulary.

### Procedure

The procedure through which this study was conducted included different stages of application, which embraced the selection of the subjects, instrument and materials. Basically three types of test were used in this study, one is an OPT test which was used to make the subjects homogeneous. This test was divided into 3 parts, cloze test, structure, and vocabulary proficiency.

Having being homogenized by an OPT test, Those learners whose marks were between one standard deviation above and one standard deviation below the mean were chosen and they randomly were divided into two groups. Both groups sat for a pre-test of vocabulary. The purpose of this test was to assess the initial subject knowledge of the learners under investigation.

Then the first group received peer cooperation learning strategy. And the second group received task-repetition strategy. In the first group, the learners touch on peer cooperation strategy. They were exposed to learn vocabulary through the Cooperating with Peers as indirect vocabulary learning strategy training.

In peer cooperation learning strategy, learners understand what word to learn and in what manner to acquire the necessary vocabulary. They presented vocabulary in the context, So that they can retain the words

and use them frequently. Peer cooperation learning strategy allow learners to use new vocabulary by learners' cooperation during the course of the study, which help them by peers to retain vocabulary in their long term memory, giving them the chance to use the vocabulary and build upon their language repertoire.

In the second students were taught to acquire vocabulary through the repeating as direct vocabulary learning strategy.

The whole project took for 10 sessions, and each session for 60 minutes. And the last step was the posttest of vocabulary in which the subjects' ability in both groups on the specific treatment program were assessed.

## Results

To find out the differences between the peer-cooperation and the task-repetition groups on the vocabulary, their pretest scores were compared. The results are presented in Table 4.1.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for peer-cooperation and task-repetition Groups of vocabulary pretest

Group		N	Mean	SD	Std. Error Mean
Pretest	peer-cooperation	15	12.00	1.51	0.39
	task-repetition	15	12.13	1.40	0.36

As Table 4.1 demonstrates, the mean in the pretest of the peer-cooperation group was not very different from that of the task-repetition group ( $\bar{x}_{Exp} = 12.00$ ,  $\bar{x}_{Cont} = 12.13$ ). Furthermore, the scores were more heterogeneous for the peer-cooperation group compared to those for the task-repetition group in the pretest ( $SD_{Exp} = 1.51$ ,  $SD_{Cont} = 1.40$ ). It can be claimed that vocabulary knowledge of both task-repetition and peer-cooperation groups did not differ greatly at the beginning of the study.

Table 2: Comparing the pretest scores of peer-cooperation and task-repetition groups

Pretest		Independent Samples t-test					
		t	df	p	M	Difference	Std. Error Difference
		95% Confidence Interval					
		Lower Upper					
Equal Variance assumed		-.250	28	.804	-.133	.53	-1.22 .959
		-.250	27.85	.804	-.133	.53	-1.22 .959
Equal variance not assumed							

An independent samples t-test was conducted to compare the vocabulary development scores for peer-cooperation and task repetition groups in pretest. There was no significant difference for peer-cooperation group ( $M = 12.00$ ,  $SD = 1.51$ ) and task repetition group ( $M = 12.13$ ,  $SD = 1.40$ ;  $t(28) = -.250$ ,  $p = .804$ , two-tailed). This implies that the performance of the peer-cooperation and task repetition groups on the vocabulary test did not differ in the pretest.

To investigate whether there was any significant difference between the peer-cooperation and the task repetition groups in the vocabulary posttest, an independent samples t-test was run. The participants' performances on the posttest of vocabulary are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics for peer-cooperation and task repetition Groups of vocabulary posttest

Group	N	Mean	SD	Std. Error Mean
Posttest <i>peer-cooperation</i>	15	15.60	2.02	0.52
Task repetition	15	12.00	1.69	0.43

As shown in Table 3, the mean score for the peer-cooperation group ( $M = 15.60$ ) is higher than that for the task repetition group. Table 3 also shows that the scores were more heterogeneous in the posttest of the peer-cooperation group ( $SD_{Exp} = 2.02$ ,  $SD_{Cont} = 1.69$ ). It can be claimed that vocabulary knowledge of both task repetition and peer-cooperation groups differ greatly. This might be due to the teaching of peer-cooperation strategy conducted in the peer-cooperation group.

Table 4: Comparing the posttest scores of peer-cooperation and task repetition groups

Independent Samples t-test								
Posttest	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	M Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval		
						Lower	Upper	
Equal Variance assumed	5.28	28	.000	3.60	.68	2.20	4.99	
Equal variance not assumed	5.281	27.11	.000	3.60	.68	2.20	4.99	

An independent samples t-test was conducted to compare the vocabulary scores of the posttest for the peer-cooperation and the task repetition groups. There was a significant difference in scores for peer-cooperation group ( $M = 15.60$ ,  $SD = 2.02$ ) as compared to task repetition group ( $M = 12.00$ ,  $SD = 1.69$ ;  $t(28) = 5.28$ ,  $p = .000$ , two-tailed). This result implies that peer-cooperation strategy has been effective in helping the language learners in the peer-cooperation group to perform better in the vocabulary test. In other word, using peer-cooperation strategy improved the vocabulary knowledge of the participants in the peer-cooperation group.

### Conclusion

Vocabulary learning strategies simplify vocabulary learning. Training in the application of suitable vocabulary learning strategies is required for the language learning process to be efficient. Within teaching, vocabulary learning strategies will enable learners to learn the target language vocabulary more effectively, and to be able, eventually, to manage their own learning.

The purpose of education is to retain what is learnt. Finding ways that can help learners maintain what they have already learnt is of crucial importance in any educational setting. The findings can also motivate the trainers of General English course to organize an English language learning context outside the class for learners to take part in activity at their own pace, level, and interest.

The current study designed to find answers for two questions. The first question was "Does task-repetition strategy have any effect on Iranian Intermediate EFL learners' vocabulary development?"

The second question was "Does peer-cooperation strategy have any effect on Iranian Intermediate EFL learners' vocabulary development?"

The data obtained the answer to these questions revealed that learners who received the peer-cooperation strategy treatment showed higher vocabulary learning rate while concerning the task repetition strategy however, did not enhance considerably after their use of this direct vocabulary learning strategy. Although some strategies are greatly powerful learning instruments, many students are either ignorant of their existence

or they use them ineffectively. As pointed out by Oxford (2003), learners are not always knowledgeable of the power of consciously using learning strategies to make learning quicker and more effective.

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