Inflating and Persuading in the Discussion Sections of NSs’ vs. PSs’ Academic Research Articles

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Foreword

Welcome to the second edition of the year 2012. The bi-monthly Iranian EFL Journal has provided an opportunity for its readers to access to more articles. The number of our readers and the authors who send articles to us is increasing day by day. The Iranian EFL Journal has attracted many readers not only from the Middle East but also from different parts of the world. The journal has had strong growth over the last few years with a monthly readership now exceeding 2500 readers. For a journal examining the topic of EFL/ESL, Literature and Translation studies, the growth and readership has been pleasing. The journal has also received numerous numbers of articles in the areas of translation studies and English literature. Statistically, readers are coming from almost 80 countries. In this edition, our readers can also find articles from the above mentioned domains. In the second issue of volume eight we present fifteen articles for your reading. In the first article, Mohammad Ali Fatemi and Javad Nabizadeh Moghaddam present the effect of learning strategies on the speaking ability of Iranian TEFL sophomores. In the second article of the issue, the impact of TELL scaffolding on academic writing among students of teaching English as a foreign language is studied by Abdollah Baradaran and Bita Sarfarazi. In the third article of the issue, Ebrahim Khodadady, Seyyed Mohammad Alavi and Mohammad Saber Khaghaninezhad have presented a schema-based instruction and general English courses at Iranian universities. In the next article, the analysis of the effect of degree of identifiability of the mental referents on morphological coding in narrative texts is presented by Habib Gowhary. In the fifth article of the issue, Zahra Alimorad and Rahman Sahragard have presented the inflating and persuading in the discussion sections of NSs’ vs. PSs’ academic research articles. In the next article, the type and frequency of language learning strategies (LLSs) employed by Iranian EFL learners is presented by Arezoo Daneshvar.
Ali Darabi in the seventh article of the issue has presented a study on the possible relationship between receptive and productive knowledge of collocational patterns among Iranian TEFL university students. In the eighth article of the issue, Ali Panahi has presented a study from psychology of intelligence to the pedagogy of multiple-intelligences: impact of spatial intelligence-based instruction on the vocabulary performance of EFL learners. In the next article, an analysis of grammatical errors in Iranian students' English writings is presented by Ali Sattari. Mediation in second language acquisition is studied by Laleh Fakhraee Faruji in the next article. A critical look at the status of FLT in the Iranian context: challenges and opportunities, is the eleventh article and is presented by Parviz Ahmadi Darani. In the twelfth article of the issue, lexical collocations in writing production of EFL learners: a study of L2 collocation learning is presented by Maryam Bahardoust. In the next article of the issue, the effect of autonomous CALL based task on speaking skill, is presented by Mostafa Younesi. In the fourteenth article Hamid Reza Khalaji and Karim Vafaeeseresht present a new horizon on the relationship between cognitive load and reading comprehension. Ali Farahani and Anas Abdelrahim, in the last article of the issue, present a critical inquiry into EFL teachers’ perception of culture teaching and practices Tehran, Iran vis-à-vis Khartoum, Sudan.

We hope you enjoy this edition and look forward to your readership.
Title

The Effect of Learning Strategies on the Speaking Ability of Iranian TEFL Sophomores

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Biodata

Mohammad Ali Fatemi, Ph.D. in TESOL has been teaching English for three decades at different educational centers and levels. At present, he is an academic member of the Department of English and the deputy dean of research and technology of Islamic Azad University in Torbat-e-Heydarieh Branch, Iran. He has worked on Error Analysis, learning strategies and E-learning. His area of interest is teaching language skills, and psycholinguistics.

Javad Nabizadeh Moghaddam, M.A. He is an academic member of the Department of English of Islamic Azad University in Torbat-e-Heydarieh, Iran. His interest is translation and has worked mainly on literary translation.

Abstract

Learning strategies are claimed to help learners to become more autonomous, and enhance self-efficacy so that they can successfully complete a task. This study was mainly developed for two main purposes; firstly to examine if
Learning strategies are teachable to English learners of Iranian Sophomores and secondly to find out if learning strategies can affect their speaking ability. Sixty homogeneous subjects were randomly assigned into the experimental group receiving the strategy-instruction besides their usual conversation; and the control group receiving the instruction in the traditional way (non-strategy) throughout a full semester. At the very beginning of the study both groups took part in two pre-tests which were given to them in the form of an interview for testing their speaking ability and a questionnaire for checking their strategy awareness. Finally both groups took the same instruments as post-tests. The results of data analysis indicated that strategy instruction makes a positive significant difference in the learners' strategy use; moreover, it was found out that, even though both groups improved in their speaking ability, results of t-test proved that the group of strategy-instruction could significantly outperform those in non-strategy group.

**Keywords:** Learning strategies, Speaking ability, Strategy Inventory of Language Learning (SILL).

1. Introduction

Although even children can learn and speak the language with no difficulty, according to Schmitt and Celce-Murcia, (2002), this is not such a simple issue; language is considered to be a very complex phenomenon and there are many unanswered questions about it. Scholars in different fields (linguistics, psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics, neurolinguistics, etc…) are engaged in finding logical answers to some of those questions.

Learning a language is not a simple phenomenon either. It is as complex as the language itself (Brown, 2000). Anderson (1990) believes that learning a language doesn't only mean mastering linguistic knowledge, but it involves learning many other skills and strategies which can help learners in learning this great task.

In the process of language learning, there has always been a great emphasis on 'how to teach language' rather than on 'how to learn language' (Dordipour, Hajipour-Nezhad and Motahari 2009). This means that learners have been left alone with their own problems.
and difficulties in the process of language learning for which they may or may not find any solutions.

O’Malley, Chamot, Stewner-Manzanares, Kupper, and Russo (1985) believe that learning strategies are very strong instruments for learners to solve their problems with learning. Also, based on the information in the literature, it has been proved that strategies can help learners a lot in solving their problems. O’Malley and Chamot (1990) found that teachers may need to be convinced that strategy training is important, and they may themselves need to be trained in how to teach strategies. However, it should be pointed out that there is still some doubt about how useful strategies really are: Oxford (1990) found that Asian students of English used fewer ‘good’ strategies than Hispanics but improved their English more!

According to Brown (2000), strategies can be taught to learners. A lot of research has been developed to see if strategy-use can be effective in language learning or not. However, they are mainly in relation with receptive skills, i.e., reading and listening. Due to the difficulty of measuring the productive skills, specially speaking, few researchers are encouraged to develop projects in this respect. But we know that speaking is an important skill and mastering this skill is very vital for learners to communicate, therefore, this study investigates whether teaching learning-strategies in general could help Persian learners of English use those strategies effectively and if strategy-instruction in an Iranian context could improve learners’ speaking ability.

A distinction has been made between the definition of learning strategy and communication strategy by Richards and Schmitt (2002): "Strategy is the procedures used in learning, thinking, etc.," which serve as a way of reaching a goal, whereas "communication strategy is a way used to express a meaning in a second or foreign language, by a learner who has a limited command of the language"(p. 515). Some examples of communication strategies are: paraphrase, gesture and mime.

All language learning strategies are related to the features of control, goal-directedness, autonomy and self-efficacy. Goals are the engine that fires language learning action and provides the direction for the action (Dornyei and Otto 1998); examples of goals are to use English fluently and accurately in business, to order meals, to ask directions, etc.
Learning strategies help learners become more autonomous. Autonomy requires conscious control of one’s own learning processes (Allwright 1990; Wenden 1991; Cotterall 1995). Learning strategies also enhance self-efficacy, individuals’ perception that they can successfully complete a task or series of tasks (Bandura 1997).

Language Learning Strategies as proposed by Oxford (1990) are defined as "operations employed by the learner to aid the acquisition, storage, retrieval and use of information, specific actions taken by the learner to learn to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective and more transferable to new situations" (p. 3).

Oxford (1990) considered the strategies to fall into two main types, in terms of their relationship to the language data and the learner: direct strategies concerned mainly with processing the data, and indirect strategies concerned mainly with the learner’s response. Major varieties of language learning strategies are cognitive, mnemonic, meta-cognitive, compensatory (for speaking and writing), affective and social.

Cognitive strategies help learners make and strengthen associations between new and already-known information (O’malley and Chamot 1990; Oxford 1996) and facilitate the mental restructuring of information. Mnemonic strategies, on the other hand, help learners link a new item with something known, while meta-cognitive strategies help learners manage themselves, their learning process and learning tasks. Also, Compensatory strategies are believed to help learners make up for missing knowledge when using English in oral or written communication, whereas affective strategies include identifying one’s feelings (e.g. anxiety, anger and contentment) and becoming aware of the learning circumstance or tasks that evoke them. And after all, social strategies are considered to facilitate learning with others and help learners understand the culture of the language they are learning (Oxford 1990).

Oxford (1990) maintains that Learning-strategies are teachable. Also, it was reported that positive effects of strategy-instruction emerged for proficiency in listening (Johnson 1999), speaking (Dadour and Robbins 1996; Varela 1999), reading (Park-Oh 1994) and writing (Sano 1999). In various language learning investigations, strategy instruction led to greater strategy use and self-efficacy (Chamot et al. 1996), anxiety reduction (Johnson
1999), and to increased motivation, strategy knowledge and positive attitudes (Nunan 1997).

Furthermore, research suggests that, to improve language learning proficiency, strategy instruction should be explicit and that strategy instruction should be integrated only as part of the regular language class (Oxford 1990). Positive results about strategy instruction are pleasing; however, we might not have the complete picture because educational studies reporting ineffective treatments are rarely published.

To sum up with learning strategies, some factors which have been reported to influence strategy use are mentioned below:

1. Motivation was an important influence on strategy use (Chamot et al. 1996), with greater motivation related to higher frequencies of strategy use. As Dornyei and Otto (1998) explained, learning strategies as goal-directed behaviors inherently indicate the presence of motivation.

2. The language learning environment affected strategy use, with students in ESL environments using strategies more frequently than those in EFL environments (Oxford 1990).

3. Learning style and personality type influenced strategy use (Reid 1995).

4. Gender has frequently been associated with strategy use; with some variation across studies, females usually report greater strategy use than males (Oxford et al. 1993).

5. Culture had a strong effect on how students learn, according to general research and language learning strategy research (Bedell and Oxford 1996).

6. Age affected the kinds of strategies students reported (Gunning 1997), but even young children were able to identify and describe their language learning strategies (Chamot 1999).

7. The nature of the language task was an influence on strategy choice in many studies (O’Malley and Chamot 1990).

With regard to the above-mentioned points and claims, this study aims at finding out the effect of strategy instruction on strategy use and its impact on the speaking ability of English learners in an Iranian context.

To achieve the goals of this study, the following research questions and null hypotheses were posed:
Q1. Is there any difference between the performances of Iranian EFL sophomores on strategy use before and after the instruction?

Q2. Is there any difference between the achievements of speaking ability of Iranian EFL sophomores who use strategies and those who do not?

H01. There is no difference between the performances of Iranian EFL sophomores on strategy use before and after the instruction.

H02. There is no difference between the achievements of speaking ability of Iranian EFL sophomores who use strategies and those who do not.

2. Research methodology
2.1. Subjects
The participants of this study were selected from 90 male and female students of Iranian TEFL Sophomores who had taken Conversation III as their requisite course at BA level in English Department of Islamic Azad University, Torbat-e-Heydarieh, Iran. The participant's age ranged from 25 to 34. Having administered a test of homogeneity, the researcher could finally select 60 (16 male and 44 female) learners for the purpose of this study. The participants were randomly assigned into two groups- the experimental and the control group- each consisting of 30 subjects. This study was conducted in spring 2009.

2.2. Instrumentation
In order to collect the data, the following instruments were employed in this study:

2.2.1 A test of IELTS
Specimen Materials of IELTS (2003), obtained from the British Council, was used by the researcher in order to capture the difference between the subjects and to make sure if they were all homogeneous. This test which was used to function as a placement test was an Academic version consisted of four modules- Listening; Speaking, Reading and Writing- and totally it took two hours and 45 minutes to complete.

2.2.2 A questionnaire
It was proposed by Oxford (1990) called Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) which has been devised for measuring the strategy use of students of English as a second or foreign language (see Appendix 1).
2.2.3 A test of speaking
It was taken from O'Connell (2005, p. 183) which was based on IELTS Bands. The Speaking Module assesses whether candidates can communicate effectively in English. Candidate performance is rated using detailed performance descriptors. These describe spoken performance at the nine IELTS bands according to four different criteria: 1. Fluency and Coherence, 2. Lexical resources, 3. Grammatical Range and Accuracy, 4. Pronunciation. All criteria have equal weighting. The final speaking score is reported as a whole band (see Appendix 2).

2.3. Procedure
The following steps were taken in order to collect the data for this study:
1. A test of IELTS was administered to all sophomores (90) of Department of English of Torbate-Heydarieh Branch to ensure the homogeneity of the participants at the outset of the study.
2. Sixty learners, who met the expected score in IELTS and obtained the average score around the mean (+1 & -1 SD) were selected to be the subject of the study, were randomly assigned into two groups of thirty; one control and the other one experimental group.
3. The Oxford's SILL- the version used for Speakers of Other Languages Learning English (Brown, 2000 p. 221) - as well as a speaking test (O'Connell, 2005 p. 183) were given to both groups as pretests to be compared with their performance after the treatment. All the above activities were done in the first week of the semester (spring, 2009).
4. The speaking ability of the subjects was rated by the researcher and his colleague who are holding their PhD in TESOL. Participants were assessed according to IELTS bands out of 9. In the pre-test, the scores lower than 2 were not taken into account. The average score of the two ratters was considered to be the speaking score of the learners. Test of Speaking consisted of five parts and the time allowed was 14 minutes during which the examiner recorded the interview. (see Appendix 2).
4. From the second week of the semester on, besides teaching conversation to both groups, the researcher started teaching 3 to 4 strategies out of 50 items based on Oxford'
SILL to the experimental group. Therefore, it took 13 weeks to teach all those 50 Learning strategies. Also one more week was devoted to teaching the subcategories of strategy-use.

5. In the last week of the semester, the Oxford's SILL and the Speaking test of IELTS (O'Connell, 2005) were both given to the control and the experimental groups for two purposes; to see if the experimental group have improved in their strategy use and in speaking ability after the instruction when compared with their pretests and to find out if there is any difference between the performances of the two groups in both the SILL questionnaire and their speaking ability when compared with that of the control group. The SPSS software was used in this study for the analysis of the data.

3. Results and discussion

Having collected the required data based on the above methodology, the researcher conducted the analysis of data and tested the hypotheses for the present study.

3.1 Results of IELTS test as the Homogenizing Instrument

To check the homogeneity of the total participants (population=90), a sample test of international IELTS (Specimen Materials 2003) was administered. Table 1 illustrates the descriptive statistics of participants' scores.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>N</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IELTS</td>
<td>3.54</td>
<td>1.40</td>
<td>60</td>
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</table>

As the results in table 1 show, the mean is 3.54 and the standard deviation is 1.40. Here, only participants (N=60) whose scores fell within 1SD below and above the mean, i.e. between 2.14 and 4.94 were found valid to be included as the subjects of this study in both groups. The other participants (30) were excluded from the study.

In order to ensure true homogeneity of the subjects (60) in control (30) and in experimental (30) groups, an independent T-test was conducted, see table 2.
Table 2. T-Test analysis of homogenizing test (IELTS)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GROUPS</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cont.</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>3.03</td>
<td>1.71</td>
<td>1.35</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exp.</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>2.69</td>
<td>1.58</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As the results of Table 2 show, there is no statically significant difference [t (58) = 1.35, p = .25 (2-tailed)] between control (M= 3.03, SD= 1.71) and experimental (M= 2.69, SD= 1.58) groups with regard to language proficiency, which confirms the homogeneity of the participants at the outset of the study.

3.2 Results of Pretests

To compare the participants’ performance on the speaking test and SILL questionnaire in both experimental and control groups at the outset of the study, two independent t-tests were conducted, (see Tables 3 and 4).

Table 3. T-test analysis of speaking pretest

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GROUPS</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exp.</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>2.56</td>
<td>.568</td>
<td>1.621</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>.110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cont.</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>.698</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As the results of Table 3 show, participants in both experimental (strategy) group (M= 2.56, SD= .568) and control (non-strategy) group (M= 2.83, SD= .698) have achieved low means in speaking pretest, indicating that they were not proficient enough at speaking before the treatment.

Table 4. T-test analysis of SILL pretest

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GROUPS</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exp.</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>2.166</td>
<td>.530</td>
<td>-.737</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>.464</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cont.</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>2.066</td>
<td>.521</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As the results of Table 4 show, participants in both experimental (strategy) group (M= 2.16, SD= .530) and control (non-strategy) group (M= 2.066, SD= .521) have achieved
low means in strategy pretest, indicating that they were unfamiliar with strategy-use before the treatment.

3.3 Results of Posttests
Participants in experimental and control groups took the same pretests as the posttests. Independent t-test analyses were conducted to compare their scores in the two instruments, i.e. in the speaking test and in the questionnaire of SILL (see Tables 5 and 6).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GROUPS</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exp.</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>5.76</td>
<td>1.006</td>
<td>-11.178</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cont.</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>3.46</td>
<td>.507</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As Table 5 reveals, participants' scores in experimental (strategy) group (M= 5.76, SD= 1.006) are much higher than those in control (non-strategy) group (M = 3.46, SD = .507) and reflects a significant difference [t (58) = -11.178, p = .000 (2-tailed)] with regard to speaking ability after the treatment.

Also, by comparing Tables 3 and 5 (speaking pretest and posttest), one can see that both experimental and control groups have improved in their speaking ability, which can be attributed to the instructions. However, as the results reveal, the experimental (strategy) group (M= 2.56 in T1 and 5.76 in T2) has outperformed the control (non-strategy) group (2.06 in T1 and 3.46 in T2) in their speaking ability.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GROUPS</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exp.</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>.694</td>
<td>-12.195</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cont.</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>2.26</td>
<td>.520</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

As Table 6 shows, participants in experimental (strategy) group (M=4.00, SD=.694) significantly outperformed [t (58) = -12.195, p = .000 (2-tailed)] those in control (non-strategy) group (M = 2.26, SD = .520) in SILL posttest.
4. Conclusion
The idea that learning strategies can be taught was claimed by many researchers in the literature. Findings of this study also supports that it is possible to teach learning strategies to Iranian TEFL sophomores, something which was emphasized by Brown (2003), Oxford (1990) and Chamot et. al (1996). The obtained results also showed that teaching strategies can also help learners improve their speaking ability. This finding is also in line with what was reported by Dadour and Robins (1996) and Varela (1999) that positive effects of strategy-instruction emerged for proficiency in speaking.

Findings of this research indicated that learning strategies can be taught explicitly for EFL learners, especially if they are incorporated into a regular classroom teaching. The outcome of this study can be also beneficial for syllabus designers who can include sufficient practices in the scope of language learning strategies in EFL syllabuses in order to encourage learners to develop their competence in strategy use while learning a specific skill in target language. This is what O'Mally and Chamot (1990) stressed. They suggested that exercises should be designed in such a way that they elicit and induce learners in the use of the taught strategies.

Moreover, the findings of this study may have some suggestions for English teachers and educators. TEFL instructors can be encouraged to employ strategy instructions in their language teaching classes. Even though researchers had been repeatedly emphasizing the importance of learning strategies for decades, we can not find any systematic employing of those strategies in the syllabus or in our education. This is something which has worried many including Griffits (2006).

Of course, teaching strategies should not be viewed as the only way for solving learners' difficulties, but as Griffits (2006) proposes, it can be a good instrument if it can lead to learner's autonomy. If teachers can help learners learn by themselves, then they have taught learners how to fish rather than to provide them with a fish.

As Oxford (in Richards et al 2001) suggests, in the field of language learning, future research on strategy use must deal with a number of key issues such as:

1. How to make our language teachers aware of the importance of learning strategies.
2. How to teach strategies effectively in both linguistically homogenous and heterogeneous classrooms.
3. How to teach strategies effectively to ESL or EFL students of different ages, and cultural backgrounds.
4. How to teach strategies effectively to learners with different age, motivations, gender, instructional practices and cultural beliefs.
5. To what extent each learner can successfully challenge his culture’s values in using particular learning strategies.
6. What strategy instruction learners need.

If this were done, research results would become more comparable, and we would be able to understand more about strategies and how they operate for different individuals and groups.

Moreover; the present researcher has done the study to test the effect of strategy instruction on learning the speaking ability. However; one can do the same with other skills.

Furthermore, it is possible to draw some strategies out of SILL and study their incorporation with specific skills because some of the items of SILL are directly or indirectly related to a specific skill.

Acknowledgements
1. The authors would like to thank the students of English department of IAU for their cooperation in conducting the project and four anonymous colleagues, one for helping me assessing participants' speaking ability and the other three for their helpful comments on the earlier draft of this paper.
2. The authors should like to express their gratitude towards the Islamic Azad University of Torbat-e-Heydareih Branch, Iran for the financial support of this project.

References


**Appendix 1**


**Directions**

This form of the STRATEGY INVENTORY FOR LANGUAGE LEARNING (SILL) is for students of English as a second or foreign language. You will find statements about learning English. Please read each statement. On the separate Worksheet, write the response (1, 2, 3, 4, or 5) that tells HOW TRUE OF YOU THE STATEMENT IS.

1. Never or almost never true of me
2. Usually not true of me
3. Somewhat true of me
4. Usually true of me
5. Always or almost always true of me.

Answer in terms of how well the statement describes you. Do not answer how you think you should be, or what other people do. Work as quickly as you can without being careless. This usually takes about 20-30 minutes to complete. If you have any questions, let the teacher know immediately.

**DIRECT STRATEGIES:**

**Part A (Memory)**

1. I think of relationships between what I already know and new things I learn in English.
2. I use new English words in a sentence so I can remember them.
3. I connect the sound of a new English word and an image or picture of the word to help me remember the word.
4. I remember a new English word by making a mental picture of a situation in which the word might be used.
5. I use rhymes to remember new English words.
6. I use flashcards to remember new English words.
7. I physically act out new English words.
8. I review English lessons often.
9. I remember new English words or phrases by remembering their location on the page, on the board, or on a street sign.

**Part B (Cognitive)**

10. I say or write new English words several times.
11. I try to talk like native English speakers.
12. I practice the sounds of English.
13. I use the English words I know in different ways.
15. I watch English language TV shows spoken in English or go to movies spoken in English.
16. I read for pleasure in English.
17. I write notes, messages, letters or reports in English.
18. I first skim in English passage (read over the passage quickly), then go back and read carefully.
19. I look for words in my own language that are similar to new words in English.
20. I try to find patterns in English.
21. I find the meaning of an English word by dividing it into parts that I understand.
22. I try not to translate word-for-word.
23. I make summaries of information that I hear or read in English.

**Part C (Compensate)**

24. To understand unfamiliar English words, I make guesses.
25. When I can't think of a word during a conversation in English, I use gestures.
26. I make up new words if I do not know the right ones in English.
27. I read English without looking up every new word.
28. I try to guess what the other person will say next in English.
29. If I can't think of an English word, I use a word or phrase that means the same thing.

**INDIRECT STRATEGIES:**

**Part D (Meta-cognitive)**

30. I try to find as many ways as I can to use my English.
31. I notice my English mistakes and use that information to help me do better.
32. I pay attention when someone is speaking English.
33. I try to find out how to be a better learner of English.
34. I plan my schedule so I will enough time to study English.
35. I look for people I can talk to in English.
36. I look for opportunities to read as much as possible in English.
37. I have clear goals for improving my English skills.
38. I think about my progress in learning English.

Part E (Affective)
39. I try to relax whenever I feel afraid of using English.
40. I encourage myself to speak English even when I am afraid of making a mistake.
41. I give myself a reward or treat when I do well in English.
42. I notice if I am tense or nervous when I am studying or using English.
43. I write down my feelings in a language learning dairy.
44. I talk to someone else about how I feel when I am learning English.

Part F (Social)
45. If I do not understand something in English, I ask the other person to slow down or say it again.
46. I ask English speakers to correct me when I talk.
47. I practice English with other students.
48. I ask for help from English speakers.
49. I ask questions in English.
50. I try to learn about the culture of English speakers.

Appendix 2
Speaking Test taken from O'Connell (2005 p. 183) (see below for the sample):
This test of Speaking consisted of five parts and time allowed was 14 minutes during which the examiner recorded the interview. In the first part, the examiner asked the learners 7 general questions concerning their names, place of living, some good things about their hometown, their major, the use of English in their life, the way they spend their spare time and their hobbies as a child. This part took 5 minutes. In the other part of the Speaking test which lasted for 4 minutes, the examiner gave the learners a topic written on a card. Then he asked them to think about the topic for one minute and make notes if they wished. Afterwards they were asked to speak about the topic for one or two minutes. In the final part, the examiner asked general questions related to the topic in Part two. This part took 5 minutes to cover (see the sample test below).
Sample Speaking Test          Time: 14 minutes

PART I: General Personal Questions (5 minutes)
- What is your name?
- Where do you come from?
- What are the good things about living here?
- Where are you studying English?
- How will English be useful in your life?
- What do you like doing in your spare time?
- What hobbies did you have as a child?

PART II: Introducing a topic on a card
Describe a present you bought which gave someone a lot of pleasure.
You should say:
- What the present was
- Who it was for
- Why you chose it
And explain why the person who received it was so pleased.

PART III: Thinking and making notes about what to say (2 minutes)

PART IV: Speaking about the topic (2 minutes)
The examiner will ask one or two brief closing questions. For example:
- Have you bought this kind of present for anyone else?
- Do you prefer giving or receiving presents?

PART V: General Questions about the Topic (2 minutes)
For example:
Presents for children
- What kind of presents do children ask for today?
- What effect has advertising on this?
- Is there a case for banning advertising directed at children?

Consumerism
- Is it better to shop in big supermarkets or in small local shops?
- How can children be encouraged to develop a responsible attitude towards money and spending?
Title

The Impact of TELL Scaffolding on Academic Writing among Students of Teaching English as a Foreign Language

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Biodata

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Abstract

In a world increasingly dominated by technologies, it is unsurprising that teachers who teach writing skill are often faced with demands to integrate these technologies into their classes. So this paper with mediating computer, described how a group of EFL learners in Mashhad Azad University were guided through the process of scaffolding to produce their first academic essay in English within the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). To this end 60 out of 90 students were randomly assigned into two control and experimental groups. Then the researcher performed word processing and asynchronous email within features of scaffolding such as intentionality, appropriateness, structure, collaboration, internalization, as a treatment to experimental group and the control group did not receive the treatment.
Finally, after collecting and analyzing data, the researcher concluded that the impact of TELL scaffolding on experimental group was clear which led to the improving writing.

Keywords: TELL, Sociocultural, Scaffolding, Writing, Academic writing.

1. Introduction

The term TELL (Technology Enhanced Language Learning) appeared in the 1990s, in response to the growing possibilities offered by the Internet and Communication Technology (ICT) (Dudeney & Hockly, 2008, p.7). The rapid growth of educational technologies creates a broad spectrum of ways in which technology can be integrated into classroom instruction. These multiplying points of contact between technology and second language writing converge in the concept of technology scaffolding (Hyland, 2009, p.105). It has had a massive impact in L2 classroom over the decade or and writing instruction now makes considerable use of computer technologies (Hyland, 2009, p.143).

“All interactions, including CMC, is simultaneously situated in multiple external contexts” (Baym, 1998, p.40). Just so, computer writing practices must be considered in the social contexts where they occur, such as CMC or classrooms, since contexts can define the meanings and forms of written language (Freire & Macedo, 1987, p.18-22). In fact, writing itself is a sociocultural phenomenon that reflects a community’s values. It is “a culturally dependent variable” instead of a static form of representation (Baron, 2001, p.19). According to Murray (2000, p.44), writing is “not a set of skills, whose absence or presence in individuals or communities automatically leads to particular outcomes”. In other words, writing is not a context-free, value-neutral set of skills but “a set of social or cultural practices” and “its participants as a community of practice” (Reder, 1994, p. 33).

Vygotsky (1978, p.3) also contends that all learning is inherently social in nature. Vygotsky’s theory implies that writing arises out of and retains the functions of social uses of language because it involves a lot more than inscribing words. Writing is a social practice, interwoven into larger social practices that is developed through apprenticeship and shaped by its users to conform to social needs. It is also a linguistic process that relies not only on knowledge of vocabulary and grammar, but also on knowledge of conventions of spoken and written language. Besides, writing is a cognitive process that
involves creating links between our knowledge and textual forms and ongoing critical assessment of the quality of those links. In a word, writing is seen as a dynamic set of social, linguistic and cognitive processes that are culturally motivated (Kern, 2000, p. 5-6).

Writing is now situated within computer networks, in computer technology. According to sociocultural theories of writing, learning to write means being socialized into a set of values, practices and symbol systems; texts are cultural artifacts and the activities involved in creating texts are group-specific rather than universal practices (Dyson, 1993, p. 79-82; Heath, 1999, p.5-9). With their focus on context and text, sociocultural theories emphasize communication and thus involve linking writing closely with speech, reading and practical activities. Although some researchers focus mostly on literacy practices, sociocultural theory has generated the notion of “genres” as text forms that carry cultural norms (Cope & Kalantzis, 1993, p.14).

This study investigate the impact of technology on the Iranian EFL learners’ academic writing which have some problems in writing and the way the researcher support the learners with scaffolding features within their Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). Therefore, the following was the research hypothesis tested in this study:

H₀: TELL Scaffolding does not have any Significant Impact on EFL Learners' Academic Writing.

2. Background
2.1. What is CMC?
A working definition of CMC that, pragmatically and in light of the rapidly changing nature of communication technologies, does not specify forms, describes it as “the process by which people create, exchange, and perceive information using networked telecommunications systems that facilitate encoding, transmitting, and decoding messages” (December, 1996). This seems to encompass both the delivery mechanisms, derived from communication theory, and the importance of the interaction of people that the technologies and processes mediate (Naughton, 2000). It also provides for great flexibility in approaches to researching CMC, as “studies of CMC can view this process from a variety of interdisciplinary theoretical perspectives by focusing on some
combination of people, technology, processes, or effects” (December, 1996). CMC, of course, is not just a tool; it is at once technology, medium, and engine of social relations. It not only structures social relations, it is the space within which the relations occur and the tool that individuals use to enter that space (Jones, 1995).

2.2. E-mail vs. word processor
E-mail, a form of asynchronous computer-mediated communication, has been called "the mother of all Internet applications" (Warschauer, Shetzer, and Meloni, 2000, p.3). Since the evolution of networks, computers can offer foreign language (FL) learners more than drills: "they can be a medium of real communication in the target language, including composing and exchanging messages with other students in the classroom or around the world" (Oxford, 1990, p.79).

While the most immediately obvious feature of computer-based writing is the way that electronic text facilitate composing, dramatically changing our writing habits and laying bare the processes that we use to create texts, commonplace word processing features allow us to cut and paste, delete and copy, check spelling and grammar, import images, change formatting, and print to publishable quality, all of which mean that our texts are now generally longer, prettier, and more heavily revised. The ability of these programs to create and manipulate text easily was immediately taken up by writing teachers so that word processing is the most widely accepted and researched use of computers in education today. The impact of word processing on writing has been so great, in fact, that other uses of computers in L2 writing instruction are sometimes neglected entirely (Ferris & Hedgecock, 1998).

2.3. The notion of scaffolding
Wood, Bruner and Ross (1976) were influenced by Vygotskian (1987) views on the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) when they conceptualized scaffolding as a process that enables a child to carry out a task or achieve a goal beyond his unassisted efforts. The term scaffolding was and still is used interchangeably as a noun and a verb. It is a "structure, guided in a specific form by tacit assessment of a child's independent capabilities" (Pea, 2004, p. 425). It is also a process carried out and adjusted over time
until a child is able to successfully complete the task him/herself. While scaffolding, as originally conceived by Wood et al. (1976), described child development as a series of informal social interactions, at-home, between mother and child, the notion of scaffolding was in time embraced in formal education settings. It is now more broadly applied to curriculum structures and materials and technology.

3. Method

Getting students to concentrate on the process of writing takes a lot of time, but the rapid growth of communication have made the process writing more feasible. However, computer writing practices must be considered in the social contexts where they occur. Thus it is important to understand how computer technology functions among tools of written communication and how context influences writing.

3.1. Participants

The participants who took part in this study were university students who were studying at bachelor level in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) in Mashhad Azad University. They were both male and female with the average age range of 25. The participants were taking the essay writing course which is usually presented in the fourth semester of their education. First it should be mentioned that Preliminary English Test (PET) was piloted with 30 participants with the same characteristics as the participants in the target sample. After that 90 students attended in the piloted PET language proficiency test for homogenization in the main study. Then 60 out of 90 participants with the scores of one standard deviation above and below the mean were selected to two groups, one experimental and one control group, 30 participants in each. The participants who were familiar with the computer work were privileged to be chosen for the experimental group.

3.2. Instrumentation

In order to fulfill the purpose of the study, the researcher used a series of tests as follows;

3.2.1. Language proficiency test: PET (Preliminary English Test) was used as a pilot and language proficiency test to homogenize the participants. After piloting with 30 participants, the researcher could clarify the problematic items if any. The inter-rater reliability of its writing section was calculated as well. Then Preliminary English Test (PET) as a language proficiency test was used to homogenize the 90 participants. After
administration of this test, 60 out of 90 participants whose scores fell between one standard deviation above and below the mean were selected as the subjects of the target study.

3.2.2. The writing pretest: the writing section of PET test was administered to all 60 participants in both experimental and control groups as a pretest prior to the treatment to check any significant difference between two groups.

3.2.3. The writing posttest: an academic writing on a topic from TOEFL was performed as a posttest to both control and experimental groups in order to measure their writing performance after the treatment.

3.2.4. Rating scale: Because keeping away from subjective scores, Jacobs et al. (1981), an analytic rating scale, was used in this paper. In that scale, scripts were rated on five aspects of writing: content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics. In order to avoid subjectivity in rating two raters participated in this study to assess participants' scripts through the same rating scale which after making sure of the internal consistency between the two raters, the obtained score of each subject was considered as the average of the scores given by the two raters.

3.2.5. Computer hardware: the required computer hardware included site with: a server, a computer set which, by means of some software, provides the clients with different programs specially connecting to internet.

3.2.6. Computer software: a teacher made internet site (class-site) including the syllabus of the course which served as the main tool of instruction.

Creating e-mail addresses for the participants of both groups.

3.3. Procedure

The purpose of this study was to investigate the impact of TELL scaffolding on the EFL learners' academic writing, since most of them require to get registered, the researcher studies more than 100 sites to locate the most suitable ones in terms of their content and availability for the purpose of this study. In order to save the time of the class and also prevent chaos, the researcher decided to design a web-site to be used during the course of this study, on the basis of the fact that writing is not an isolated skill and should be taught and learned in combination with other skills, the researcher included different reading, and writing activities in the class-site.
After piloting PET test with 30 participants of the same characteristic of the main sample, the modified PET test was administered to 90 students as a language proficiency test to homogenize the students in terms of their writing. First of all the researcher performed a PET test to homogenize 90 participants and then 60 out of 90 students with the scores of one standard deviation above and below the mean were randomly selected to two groups, one experimental and one control group, 30 participants in each. The experimental group receives the treatment but the control group did not receive the treatment. Before performing any treatment, PET as a pretest was performed to check the homogeneity according to their level of academic writing. After that the treatment which was TELL scaffolding was given to the experimental group.

3.3.1. Context of study for control group
In control group, participants had to perform writing process individually without receiving any treatment or support from their teacher or other students in all process of essay writing in the classroom. The teacher implemented the traditional approach of writing process. First the teacher explained the process to participants and taught them how to write an essay. Topics were first discussed in the class and all procedures of writing were followed by the teacher, then students were asked to hand in their work. All their writing was corrected and the necessary comments were given on their final drafts with a red ink by the teacher.

3.3.2. Context of study for experimental group
In the experimental group the teacher applied Computer-Mediated-Communication (CMC) within features of scaffolding which was derived from; Applebee and Langer (1983), as cited by Zhao and Orey (1999), to help students to write effectively as follows:

• Intentionality: The task has a clear overall purpose driving any separate activity that may contribute to the whole. (The class started with a brief introduction to the computer and internet, literacy in internet was not a condition for taking part in this course, just a rudimentary familiarity was sufficient. Then the class-site was completely introduced to participants to prepare them to perform the intended activities successfully. Some necessary information such as: familiarity with word processor and email, how to save a text, how to send an e-mail, and how to search the web were primarily given. Everything should be clear for the students and they should not have any
misunderstanding or any question about the procedures in their mind. At the end of the first session, the researcher created e-mail addresses for those subjects how did not have any. In subsequent sessions, the lessons were covered. They consisted of off-line and on-line activities followed by different exercises, all of which done by the participants under the meticulous supervision of the researcher. Besides, participants were also given the same ten topics for writing, like the ones given to participants in the control group. They were supposed to e-mail their writings to the researcher).

- **Appropriateness**: Instructional tasks pose problems that can be solved with help but students could not successfully complete on their own. (First of all students were told that using these tools require special training and they should learn how to use them. Fortunately most of students because of developing technology can use word processor and Email, but some students had a few problems so they were suggested to help each other whenever it was needed. Therefore the teacher grouped students into six groups of five to collaborate together in using the computer. The teacher used topics from TOEFL in which students could not successfully complete on their own. In other words, it was beyond their Zone of Proximal Development).

- **Structure**: Modeling and questioning activities are structured around a model of appropriate approaches to the task and lead to a natural sequence of thought and language. (After grouping students into six, the teacher modeled an introduction of an essay on a specific topic in word processor, which was indicated with projector on the wall. The teacher provides a model of the process of introduction and its different sub-categories. Moreover, the teacher gave a topic to students to write it down which was the same in each group. Students collaborated and participated with motivation. They shared their information together. Each session one of the students was asked to type the assigned topic on the computer so everybody had the chance of typing. After two sessions working on the introduction, the teacher modeled body part and provided them with useful information about how they can support their claims with evidence and two sessions later the conclusion section was explained).

- **Collaboration**: The teacher’s response to student work recasts and expands upon the students’ efforts without rejecting what they have accomplished on their own. The teacher’s primary role is collaborative rather than evaluative. (After conferencing and
brainstorming on each section, students were asked to provide peer feedback on their writing over screen; moreover, each group must have mailed their writing to the teacher. Their works were quickly viewed and corrected by the teacher and were indicated on projector. The teacher explained mistakes to students so in this way they could get a response from both the teacher and their peers.

• **Internalization**: External scaffolding for the activity is gradually withdrawn as the patterns are internalized by the students. (The teacher asked students to write individually and helped them in their writing but the teacher after two sessions when students learned how to use and write in the word processor, gradually withdrawn. Later the teacher asked them to generate ideas about the assigned topic and write independently. The teacher drew their attention to the correct structure and in the last stage students provided a draft and sent their word files to the teacher to get feedback on their final writing).

At the end of the course, 10 sessions, participants in both groups, took part in the final post-test requiring them to write an argumentative essay on a given topic from TOEFL in 40 minutes in the class. This test was conducted with the aim of investigating the purpose of this study. Soon after the completion of the final test, the participants’ essay was scored analytically by two raters. Then an independent t-test was performed to compare pre-test with post-test mean scores of both groups to assess the impact of the treatment on the experimental group.

4. Results

After passing all this process, the researcher came up with a result. First of all a pilot test was performed with 30 students with the same characteristic of the target sample to calculate item facility, item discrimination, and choice distribution analysis on the basis of scores of the students in the first and second group in order to revise first draft of the test. After that the PET exam as the main administration was performed on 90 students of the target sample. Then 60 out of 90 students were assigned into two experimental and control group, 30 students in each. Then the researcher calculated its descriptive statistics and inter-rater reliability.

4.1. Descriptive data of the writing section of PET Test (pre-test)
In order to make sure of the homogeneity within groups in terms of their writing ability prior to the treatment, the writing section of PET as a pre-test was performed then its descriptive statistics was calculated.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Variance</th>
<th>Skewness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>pretest</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>41.0500</td>
<td>.83680</td>
<td>6.48185</td>
<td>-.604</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valid N (listwise)</td>
<td>60</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.309</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.2. Calculating the Reliability of the Writing Section of PET Test as Pre-test

Since in scoring the students’ productive skills more than one rater is needed, inter-rater reliability seemed necessary.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>rate1</th>
<th></th>
<th>rate2</th>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>41.0500</td>
<td>6.48185</td>
<td>60</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. Deviation</td>
<td>6.48185</td>
<td>60</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

There was a high correlation between the raters' performances on the scoring of writing. According to Pearson Correlation, the correlation between the two raters' was 0.93 which was high.

4.3. The T-test prior to the Treatment
In order to ascertain the homogeneity of groups, first descriptive statistics of each group was measured and the results were indicated below;

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Variance</th>
<th>Skewness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Statistic</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
<td>Statistic</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
<td>Statistic</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>experimental</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>32.2000</td>
<td>1.61131</td>
<td>8.82551</td>
<td>.535</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>control</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>31.5333</td>
<td>1.60512</td>
<td>8.79158</td>
<td>.622</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valid N (listwise)</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

To check this normality with each group, the statistic of skewness was divided by the standard error of skewness; the results were 1.23 (.53/.43) for the control group and 1.44 (.62/.43) for the experimental group. Because values were between – 1.96 and +1.96, it was concluded that the scores were normally distributed in each group. In order to further check the homogeneity of the two groups, an independent t-test was run to compare the mean scores of the two groups on the writing section of PET test.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Samples Test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Levene's Test for Equality of Variances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances assumed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances not assumed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As it was illustrated in Table, the result of Levene's test of homogeneity of variance also proved t-test legitimate (F= 0.009, P=.93>.05) as the other condition for t-test, i.e. homogeneity of variance was met. According to the table, the p-value for PET is 0.77, so P-value = 0.77 > α= 0.05. This means that at significant level of 5%, there is not any
significant difference between the PET mean scores of the experimental and control group prior to the treatment.

After performing the treatment on both control and experimental group, first of all, the researcher pilot post-test which was writing topic of TOEFL with a group of the same characteristics of the target sample.

4.4. Descriptive statistics and inter-rater reliability of the post-test mean scores of both control and experimental groups (main administration)

When the treatment period was finished and the post-test was piloted with a group of the same characteristics of the real sample was performed, then the researcher after collecting their final samples calculated the student's post-test descriptive statistics and inter-rater reliability for writing topics of both experimental and control groups. As the tables indicated the mean for experimental group is 75.37 with the SD of 11.17 and for control group the mean with the SD of 12.35 is 67.87. The inter-reliability is 0.91 which is high. Therefore it indicated that there was a high correlation between raters.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Variance</th>
<th>Skewness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Statistic</td>
<td>Statistic</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
<td>Statistic</td>
<td>Statistic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>experimental</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>75.3667</td>
<td>2.04011</td>
<td>11.17412</td>
<td>124.861</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>control</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>67.8667</td>
<td>2.25436</td>
<td>12.34765</td>
<td>152.464</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valid N (list wise)</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Correlations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>rater1</th>
<th>rater2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>rater1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.915**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rater2</td>
<td>.915**</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Prior to an independent t-test, the normality of the distribution of scores within each group had to be checked. The skewness of the control group divided by its standard error
was - 0.44 (-.19/.43) while that of the experimental group -1.67 (-.72/.43). Both values fell below -1.96 and 1.96 meaning that they were both normal distributions and thus running a t-test was legitimized.

**4.5. T-test of the Two Groups Post-test Mean Scores**

As the other condition for running the t-test homogeneity of variance was also checked by Levene's test and the ρ-value did not become significant (F=.29, ρ=.59>.05), and thus, homogeneity of variance was assessed. Significant at α= 0.02, P-value= 0.02<α= 0.05

**4.6. T-test from Pre-test and Post-test**

As it was mentioned, while participants in the experimental group were assigned to write within scaffolding features, participants in the control group not. The effect of TELL scaffolding on the experimental group was measured through administrating a t-test between the pre-test and the post-test which were used for this purpose in the beginning and at the end of the data collection process. The results of the two tests were illustrated as below;

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>groups</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>pretest</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>40.7000</td>
<td>6.69611</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>41.4000</td>
<td>6.35501</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>posttest</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>75.3667</td>
<td>11.17412</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>67.8667</td>
<td>12.34765</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Independent Samples Test**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Levene's Test for Equality of Variances</th>
<th>t-test for Equality of Means</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Sig.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pretest Equal variances assumed</td>
<td>.239</td>
<td>.626</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pretest Equal variances not assumed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>posttest Equal variances assumed</td>
<td>.286</td>
<td>.595</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>posttest Equal variances not assumed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It was apparent that the participants in the experimental group had higher values of the mean about 75.37 rather than the mean of control group which was 67.87 on the post-test, which showed that the experimental group performed better on the post-test. So, the result showed that the obtained t value on post-test was 1.47 at 58 degree of freedom and \( \rho \)-value was 0.02 which was lower than the significant level of 0.05. Therefore, using TELL scaffolding features in writing class did have a significant effect on improving their writing performance.

**5. Discussion and conclusion**

Since writing has always been a difficult skill for learners at all levels of instruction to master, educational practitioners have been searching for new methods to improve learners' writing ability. The idea of an innovative method in this concern which is the use of Vygotsky theory in sociocultural which is called scaffolding features were brought into focus in this study. So the teacher used CMC as a technology in the classroom to scaffold students' writing.
Both experimental and control group had the same condition such as same time, same writing topics of TOEFL. However there was one difference between them in which the experimental group received the TELL scaffolding as a treatment in the classroom whereas the control group did not. The statistics revealed a prominent difference between the mean scores of the two groups. So the results indicated that the treatment was effective and the writing skill of experimental group was improved which was absent from the control group.

The main aims and objectives of this paper were to identify and evaluate the shifts in form and function of English writing in technology and the role that technology can have in writing with use of scaffolding features. The researcher concluded that although teachers may be hesitant to make use of computers in their classrooms, but they should not be immune to the possibilities technology offers. In many circumstances, computer-based instruction presents stimulating alternatives to traditional paper materials and tasks, and much commercial software, internet sites, and chat facilities are easy to learn, straightforward to use, and technically robust. However, teachers should consider carefully why they want to use computers, how teachers might benefit from them, and how best to integrate them into a coherent writing course. Therefore the researcher came to the conclusion that

- Participants in the experimental group were more involved in the process of instruction than those in control group.
- The learners who have been taught how to write an essay by means of computer within scaffolding features could demonstrate their writing ability in a better way.
- The level of motivation and collaboration was high with students who used technology in the classroom.

References


Title

Schema-Based Instruction and General English courses at Iranian Universities

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Abstract

This study scrutinized the effect of schema-based general English teaching and testing on English language learning in an Iranian academic context. For this to achieve, 90 undergraduate theology students studying general English at Ferdowsi University of Mashhad (FUM) were assigned to an experimental and a control group. For the same course book two instructional approaches were implemented during the academic semester; schema-based instruction (SBI) for experimental and translation-based instruction (TBI) for control groups. At the semester’s commencement a schema-based cloze multiple
choice item test (MCIT) was developed on the textbook and administered as a pre-test. The same test was administered again at the semester’s termination along with a schema-based vocabulary test, a general grammar test and an unseen reading comprehension test to find out which approach was more effective. Final results showed that the performance of the experimental group was superior to the control group on all of the administered tests. The implications of the findings are discussed in terms of teaching English as a foreign language within Iranian academic context.

Keywords: Schema-based instruction, Translation-based instruction, Schema-based cloze multiple choice items tests, Schema-based vocabulary test, General grammar test, Unseen reading comprehension test.

1. Introduction

The Schema Theory believes that people do not observe any reality straight, however, just via a perceptual framework. A psychological schema is the perceptual framework which people use to make sense of the world around them (Landry, 2002). Schema is a technical word used by cognitive proponents to describe how a person processes, arranges and stores information in his mind. Schemata concerns of how we organize information to long term memory (Widdowson, 1983) and “mirrors the experiences, conceptual understanding, attitudes, values, skills, and strategies … [we] bring to a text situation” (Williams, 1999). Generally, schemata affect our lives as they organize one’s impressions and influence how he/she may observe, perceive, and interpret the surrounding world (Reber, 2001).

Schema Theory’s potentiality to explain how numerous and different types of knowledge is learned and to suggest appropriate instructional strategies, makes Schema Theory an effective and applicable rationale for educators and instructional designers. It is with the work of Bartlett (1932) that the term came to be used in its modern sense, ‘This learning theory views organized knowledge as an elaborate network of abstract mental structures which represent one’s understanding of the world’ (p. 26).

To Armbruster (1996), Schema Theory is constructivist in its very nature because rather than simply reproducing the information received, it is restructured into something that the agent can call his own. The incoming information is thus added, subtracted, ignored, or transformed.
depending on how the agent views the already established schema and whether he can form a meaningful relationship between the two. Schemata are important not just in interpreting information, but also in decoding how that information is presented. Schemata can be activated in text structures (Driscoll, 1997; Halliday & Hassan, 1989). Readers use their schematic representations of text (narrative, compare/contrast, cause/effect, etc.) to help them interpret the information in the text. It can also be activated through related image-presentation (Morimoto & Loewen, 2007) while both of these two types of activation is culturally determined according to Kaplan (2007).

So far, what was said about schemata, the plural of schema, and Schema Theory was a general, universally-accepted description. The term schema, however, has a different and narrower definition in the present study. Schemata are all linguistic manifestations employed by speakers/writers’ (henceforth addressers) to convey their intended message. These linguistic items are selected and produced in a given text on the basis of their world knowledge, expectations, personal attitudes, feelings and experiences. The reception or comprehension of the textual schemata is the function of the interaction between addressers and listeners/readers (henceforth addressees). Hence, the degree of comprehending each and all schemata depends on the amount of relevant background knowledge shared by addressers and addressees (Khodadady, 1997).

In 1977, Rumelhart published Towards an Interactive Model of Reading, which holds the fact that reading process is a complicated “interaction” process of many types of language knowledge, including letters, words, syntactic patterns and semantic meaning etc., that is, interaction of direct and implicit information; language processing interacts at different levels. Khodadady (2008) provided an operationalized definition of schemata so that reading comprehension ability can be measured as precisely as possible. He defined a schema as a single word used along with other words to form an authentic text uttered or written for being heard or read under given conditions at specific places and time. This demarcation of schema as the building block of authentic textual products provided both linguists and language teachers with an objective measure to form their analyses and pedagogy on, respectively and paved the way for the application of Schema Theory in language teaching and testing.

Although the efficacy of Schema Theory has been documented in few other studies in the context of private language institutes (e.g. Khodadady, Pishghadam & Fakhar, 2010), it seems an
educational necessity to investigate its potential for academic centers considering the huge population of Iranian university students. This cluster of studies, which are in the same direction, may confirm the superiority of Schema Theory over the current common language teaching and testing approaches in Iran and thus offer an alternative to improve their quality of education.

This study is an attempt to investigate the effect of schema-based general English teaching and testing in an Iranian academic context. It seems that general English courses at Iranian universities are taught by employing Grammar Translation Method, emphasizing vocabulary memorization, explicit grammar instruction, using students’ L1 and the direct translation of texts into L1. This prevalent approach of language teaching is called translation-based instruction (TBI) throughout this study designed to answer the following research questions:

- Is there any significant difference in the performance of translation and schema-based instruction groups on the final schema-based cloze multiple choice post-test?
- Is there any significant difference in the performance of translation and schema-based instruction groups on the final schema-based vocabulary test?
- Is there any significant difference in the performance of translation and schema-based instruction groups on the final general grammar test?
- Is there any significant difference in the performance of translation and schema-based instruction groups on the final unseen reading comprehension test?

2. Review of related literature

In contrast to Ausubel’s (1968) “Meaningful Receptive Learning Theory”, the learners in schema theory actively build and revise their schemata in the light of new information. Each individual’s schema is thus unique and depends on that individual’s experiences and cognitive processes. Ausubel postulated a hierarchical organization of knowledge where the learner more or less attached new knowledge to the existing hierarchy. In this representation, memory is driven by structure as well as meaning. Knowledge in Schema Theory is not only stored hierarchically but also meaning-driven and probably represented propositionally (Plastina, 2000). These networks of propositions are actively constructed by the learner and expressed whenever necessary. For example, when we are asked to recall a story that we were told, we are able to reconstruct the meaning of the story, but usually not the exact sentences— or even often the exact order in which
the story unfolds. We remember the story by actively constructing a meaningful network of schemata stored in our memory.

2.1. Schema Theory and reading comprehension

Differences between writer intention and reader comprehension is most obvious where readers have had different life experiences to those of writer. Readers sometimes also feel that they comprehend a text, but have a different interpretation to the author (Hudson 1982, p.187). As Carrell and Eisterhold (1983, p.80) point out, "one of the most obvious reasons why a particular content schema may fail to exist for a reader is that the schema is culturally specific and is not part of a particular reader's cultural background." It is thought that readers' cultures and life experiences can affect everything from the way readers view reading itself. Some key concepts may be absent in the schemata of some non-native readers or they may carry alternate interpretations. The concept of 'full moon', for instance, in Europe is linked to schemata that include horror stories and madness, whereas in Japan it activates schemata for beauty and moon-viewing parties.

Goodman (1994) conceptualized literacy processing as including reading, writing, and written texts. He stated,

Texts are constructed by authors to be comprehended by readers. The meaning is in the author and the reader. The text has a potential to evoke meaning but has no meaning in itself; meaning is not a characteristic of texts. This does not mean the characteristics of the text are unimportant or that either writer or reader is independent of them. How well the writer constructs the text and how well the reader reconstructs it and constructs meaning will influence comprehension. But meaning does not pass between writer and reader. It is represented by a writer in a text and constructed from a text by a reader. Characteristics of writer, text, and reader will all influence the resultant meaning. (p. 1103)

In a transactional-sociopsycholinguistic view, the reader has a highly active role. It is the individual transactions between a reader and the text characteristics that result in meaning. These characteristics include physical characteristics such as orthography, the alphabetic system, spelling, punctuation, paragraphing, text grammar and wording of texts such as the differences found in narrative and expository text.

Understanding is limited, however, by the reader's schemata, making what the reader brings to the text as important as the text itself. The writer also plays an important role in comprehension. Additionally, readers' and writers' schemata are changed through transactions with the text as meaning is constructed. Readers' schemata are changed as new knowledge is assimilated and
accommodated. Writers' schemata are changed as new ways of organizing text to express meaning are developed. According to Goodman (1994);

> How well the writer knows the audience and has built the text to suit that audience makes a major difference in text predictability and comprehension. However, since comprehension results from reader-text transactions, what the reader knows, who the reader is, what values guide the reader, and what purposes or interests the reader has will play vital roles in the reading process. It follows that what is comprehended from a given text varies among readers. Meaning is ultimately created by each reader. (p. 1127)

### 2.2. Schema-based Instruction

One of the oldest findings in educational research is the strong relationship between vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension (Hart & Risley, 1995). Word knowledge is crucial to reading comprehension and determines how well students will be able to comprehend the texts they read in middle and high school. Vocabulary experts agree that adequate reading comprehension depends on a person already knowing between 90 and 95 percent of the words in a text (e.g. Hirsch, 2003). Knowing at least 90 percent of the words enables the reader to get the main idea from the reading and guess correctly what the unfamiliar words mean, and thus will help them learn their meaning. Readers who do not recognize at least 90 percent of the words will not only have difficulty comprehending the text, but they will miss out on the opportunity to learn new words.

Schema-based instruction (SBI) can be assumed as a cover term for a cluster of language teaching techniques which attempt to relate the new linguistic items to be acquired by learners to the author’s schemata through various less demanding contexts and modes such as definitions and explanations provided orally or visually. This language teaching approach is based on the premise that readers of a given text will understand it best if they are familiar with the sense of each and all words, i.e., schemata, employed by the writer of the text. Instead of leaving the learners to themselves to look up the contextual meaning of the schemata, they need to be read by the readers and discussed with the teacher within the contexts of the texts in which they appear and whatever modes possible so that the learner’s understanding of the schemata would approach to that of the writer. This type of instruction is also called contextual vocabulary instruction (Khodadady, 1997).

The dependence of schema-based instruction on the knowledge of all the schemata comprising texts entails the teachers’ familiarity with their domain, genera, species and types and teaching
them to their learners at the beginning of a course. According to Khodadady (2008), schemata can be generally categorized into three domains, i.e., semantic, syntactic and parasyntactic;

Semantic schemata are akin to “open-class items” (Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech & Svartvik, 1985, p.42) or “content schemata” (Liu, Zhu & Nian, 2010, p.61) and consist of four genera, i.e., adjective, adverbs, nouns and verbs. Semantic schemata as they joined together by syntactic and parasyntactic schemata express the authors’ intended messages. Hence, these schemata are many in type but few in frequency.

Syntactic schemata whose isolated counterparts are traditionally known as “closed-class items” (Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech & Svartvik, 1985, p.44) or “formal schemata” (Liu, Zhu & Nian, 2010, p.61) include auxiliaries, conjunctions, determiners, prepositions, pronouns and syntactic verbs as their genera. In contrast to semantic schemata, syntactic schemata are few in type but many in frequency and thus provide addressers with a definite and finite set of items through which they can connect semantic schemata together in order to express what their authors intend to convey.

And parasyntactic schemata comprise various genera such as abbreviations, names, numerals, and para-adverbs. Parasyntactic schemata or “language schemata” (Liu, Zhu & Nian, 2010, p.61) are similar to syntactic schemata because they depend on and attach to semantic schemata in order to constrain them within intended variables such as numbers and manners. Some parasyntactic schemata like numeral are, however, similar to semantic ones in that they are many in type but few in frequency.

As a new approach to teaching English as a foreign language, the SBI provides learners with a hieratical and holistic view of language by presenting the three semantic, syntactic and parasyntactic domains right at the beginning of the term and helping them realize that English is learnable and what they need is just to master the domains and their genera by resorting to their reading comprehension ability.

Learners are asked to read the passage and assign their schemata to the three domains and their genera. As they do so they start asking what the differences among the schemata comprising a given genus such as adjectives are. At this phase, the researcher offers the species of the genera shown in Table 1. (The teacher must analyze and categorize all the schemata of whatever texts they teach on the basis of a more detailed codification system consisting of 119 codes. Interested readers can contact the corresponding author for the codes and their examples).
Table 1

The species comprising the genera of schema domains

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Genera</th>
<th>Species</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adjectives</td>
<td>Agentive, Comparative, Dative, Derivational, Nominal, Simple, Superlative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adverb</td>
<td>Comparative, Derivational, Simple, Superlative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nouns</td>
<td>Adjectival, complex, compound, conversion, derivational, gerund, nominal, simple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verb</td>
<td>Complex, derivational, phrasal, simple, slang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conjunctions</td>
<td>Phrasal, simple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Determiners</td>
<td>Demonstrative, Interrogative, Numeral, Possessive, Quantifying, Ranking, Specifying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepositions</td>
<td>Complex, Compound, Phrasal, Simple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pronouns</td>
<td>Demonstrative, Emphatic, Interrogative, Object, Possessive, Reflexive, Relative, Subject, Unspecified, Specified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbreviations</td>
<td>Abbreviations; acronyms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interjections</td>
<td>Simple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Names</td>
<td>Full, Labeling, Organizational, Single, Titles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Numerals</td>
<td>Alphabetic, Digital, Roman, Year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Para-adverbs</td>
<td>Additive, Contrasting, Emphatic, Exemplifying, Frequency, Intensifying, Interrogative, Location, Manner, Negation/Approval, Prepositional, Referential, Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Particle</td>
<td>Complex, Simple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symbols</td>
<td>Conventional, Scientific</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Facing the learners in the SBI group, it was, for example, asked who wanted to read the title and first paragraph of lesson one given below. One of the learners volunteered, as she was reading the text, the teacher wrote down the schemata mispronounced so that they could be discussed more. Since the schema particular was, for instance, mispronounced the reader was asked what type of schema it was. She said it was an adjective and meant special, however, she could not understand what role the preposition in had in the sentence. When it was said that a preposition preceding an adjective can change it into adverb, she immediately uttered particularly, specially. In response to the question, “Why had the writer used in particular?” She said that he wanted to describe the action of mentioning.
The Study of Religions

The study of the religions of the world is of great interest and importance. Three reasons for this may be mentioned in particular. Far more is known about the great religions of the world today than ever before, outside the regions in which each prevails; a great deal of impartial and accurate study during the last hundred years makes it possible to know the faith of others as never previously. It is no longer permissible to speak, as did medieval miracle plays, of Muslims worshipping an idol called Baphomet! And it should be no longer asserted that the Chinese adore Confucius, or that Christians regard the Virgin Mary as the second of three gods.

The teacher was watching all the learners while the reader was explaining her answer. This was done to find out whether the whole class was attentive to the interaction or not! In order to emphasize the necessity of their constant attention and participation, it was announced that at the beginning of the next session, the meaning of all the schemata covered in the previous sessions and their domains and genera will be asked and the responses will be scored as announced in the course outline (10% of the final score).

2.3. Translation-based instruction

The instruction of general English as a course in Iranian universities is very close to Grammar Translation Method (GTM) if not identical. GTM is undoubtedly the oldest, the easiest and understandably the most common approach for teaching English (Howatt, 1984). Although many of its shortcomings have been revealed, it is the prevalent doctrine for general English courses tertiary educational centers in Iran. This is because it is the easiest approach for the teachers and here are some theoretical supports for the application of GTM in second and foreign language learning contexts.

There seems, for example, to be a preference, explicitly stated or not, for inter-lingual strategies, which utilize the L1 in the form of a bilingual dictionary, cognates, or L1 translation equivalents, often associated with word lists, over intra-lingual strategies, which involve the use of linguistic means of the target language such as synonyms, definitions, or linguistic contexts among many teachers and researchers. As pointed out by Schmitt (1997), intra-lingual strategies are, however, ‘pedagogically correct’ because they are consistent with principles of communicative language teaching or comprehensive input. Although Freeman (2000) noted, ‘a fundamental purpose [of the TBI] is to read literature and literary prose [because it] is superior to spoken language.’ (p.13), many teachers and students alike believe that translation into their first language.
helps them understand the text easily. Besides, since the written language is considered to be more fundamental, learner’s mentality and intellect is to develop by memorizing the needed rules and words and applying this knowledge in writing and interpreting of the selected texts (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). More on the educational side, it can be pointed out that the students should be able to translate a text, write answers to the reading text and then learn grammar deductively (Freeman, 2000).

As the oldest method of language teaching, the Translation-based Instruction (TBI) is still in use in many parts of the world. It maintains the mother tongue of the learner as the reference particularly in the process of learning the second/foreign languages. The method emphasizes the study of grammar through deduction, i.e., learning its rules and applying them to sentences. A contrastive study of the target language with the mother tongue gives an insight into the structure not only of the foreign language but also of the mother tongue. Chastain (1971) referred to some of TBI’s advantages as follows:

- Translation interprets the words and phrases of the foreign languages in the best possible manner.
- The phraseology of the target language is quickly explained. Translation is the easiest way of explaining meanings or words and phrases from one language into another. Any other method of explaining vocabulary items in the second language is found time consuming. A lot of time is wasted if the meanings of lexical items are explained through definitions and illustrations in the second language. Further, learners acquire some short of accuracy in understanding synonyms in the source language and the target language.
- The structures of the foreign languages are best learned when compared and contrast with those of mother tongue.
- Teacher’s labor is saved. Since the textbooks are taught through the medium of the mother tongue, the teacher may ask comprehension questions on the text taught in the mother tongue. Pupils will not have much difficulty in responding to questions on the mother tongue. So, the teacher can easily assess whether the students have learned what he has taught them. Communication between the teacher and the learner does not cause linguistic problems. Even teachers who are not fluent in English can teach English through this method.
For teaching the control group by employing the TBI, as a sample, the paragraph given in section 2.1 was read loud by the teacher as the learners in the group followed him attentively with their books open. Then, it was translated into Persian sentences by sentences. A brief description was also presented for each of the great characters mentioned in the text such as Confucius and Virgin Mary. The students’ grammatical questions were welcome and answered by the teacher while the Persian was the medium of all instructional activities throughout the semester.

2.4. Schema-based Tests

According to Khodadady (1999), almost all traditional multiple-choice items measuring reading comprehension ability address not sentences but the words comprising the sentences. For example in the following item, if the test taker perceives that the missed word should be a noun, then, other three choices would be omitted automatically. Hence the test taker can select the only choice left (which is a noun) and answer the item correctly without comprehending the meaning of the text even without knowing the meaning of the selected word. Since words are as abstract as sentences, nobody has been able to state what alternatives should be given along with the correct response to measure test takers’ reading comprehension ability.

There is an excellent book entitled How to Argue with a Conservative that gives the reader tools necessary for success in argumentation. At times you may have to engage in a verbal skirmish with a(n) …………… It would be to your advantage if you had the proper words at your fingertips. (Bromberg, 2004, p. 112)

a) amicable  b) virulent  c) bigot*  d) haunt

Khodadady (1997) was among the first researchers who realized the difficulty of pinpointing an objective unit of language from a psychometric point of view as he embarked on developing multiple choice item tests to measure the reading comprehension ability of native and non-native university students. Almost all scholars in testing have provided some suggestions for test designers to prepare their multiple choice items (e.g. Farhady, Jafarpoor & Birjandi, 1994) none of which addresses the nature of choices offered as possible answers and where they should come from. This very allusive nature of distracters has rendered the construction of multiple-choice items very notorious and extremely difficult (Hughes, 1989). To avoid the problem, some scholars have, therefore, suggested that well-functioning multiple choice items be developed by experts (Bachman, Davidson, Ryan, & Choi, 1995).

Khodadady (1997) and Khodadady and Herriman (2000) employed schema theory to explain the nature of alternatives employed in multiple choice item tests and employed the term
competitives to replace distracters as their traditional counterparts. In contrast to distracters, competitives have semantic, syntactic and discoursal relations with the keyed response of a schema-based cloze multiple choice item and thus measure not only test takers’ vocabulary and grammatical knowledge but also their reading comprehension ability. In such a multiple choice item test the keyed response of the item is viewed as a schema whose understanding and selection will depend not only on the readers’ background knowledge of the schema itself but also on the other schemata among which it appears in the text. In fact, the difference between such an item and other traditional cloze multiple choice items is that there are semantic and syntactic relationships among the three choices given and the keyed response. Thus, answering to this test item calls for understanding not only the linguistic context in which the deleted word appears but also the three choices offered. There is usually no semantic relationship among the choices of traditional cloze MCITs (Khodadady 1997, 1999).

According to Kieffer (1979) while the importance of Schema Theory to ESL/EFL instruction seems to have been aptly and amply demonstrated, its relevance to testing models has yet to be verified. It is argued that no verification has been made so far simply because Schema Theory has traditionally been approached macrostructurally by focusing on broad terms such as genres and scripts. Schema–based language tests will accommodate both holistic and discrete principles of testing if they are designed microstructurally, i.e., on the words comprising the texts. It is also maintained that the schema-based cloze MCITs do enjoy the advantages enumerated by Keiffer as follow:

1- They would engage the conceptual processes for the students; freeing him or her for the decoding task at hand. Providing the rhetorical schema would allow students to focus on the content. This is supported by Carrel’s research (1984) in which ESL/EFL readers who recognized the text’s original discourse type and utilized this type to organized their own recall were able to reproduce more information from the original text. In addition, since L1 schema may differ sharply from English, providing the schema for ESL/EFL learners will reduce the element of cultural bias of tests.

2- Since recall, after the introduction, conforms to the idea structure rather than the linear organization, schema-based tests would be in harmony with the
psycholinguistic model of processing. This makes them more comfortable for the student and more valid for the evaluator.

3- It would ensure that a student’s grade correlates closely with her/his understanding and he can use the learnt words actively in communication.

4- Usage of Academic, test formal items will result in a polished language and will be a good basis for course-leaving examination. (p.23)

3. Method

3.1. Participants
The study included two separate but complementary phases; for the first phase which was a pilot inquiry of the implementation of schema-based testing approaches, 64 university students who had taken the general English course were recruited. 48 participants of this phase of the study were female and 16 were male English learners while their ages ranged from 18 to 43. The participants of the second phase were 78 female and 12 male general English learners whose ages ranged from 18 to 26. They were categorized into two general groups of TBI and SBI and were of approximately similar language proficiency levels _ participants had undergone English learning for at least 5 years at school and had passed the same university entrance examination_ and singled out inspired by intact group design. They were students of theology and Islamic studies at Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, Iran.

3.2. Materials
The textbook which was used for this study was *English for the students of Theology and Islamic sciences* (Ataii & Dasterjerdi, 2002), which is a common source for general English courses at theology faculties of Iranian universities. Each lesson of the book consists of a related reading comprehension followed by a set of true/false items, few multiple-choice items, a couple of fill-in-blanks exercises for newly learnt vocabularies through the passage, and a passage and some of its difficult words to be translated. For the study to be performed, a schema-based instruction and assessment of the course textbook was needed. Following Khodadady (1997, 1999) and Khodadady and Herriman (2000), all the comprising words (schemata) of eight lessons of the book were schematically categorized and codified into three domains and their constituting genus types. Table 2 shows the frequency of different genus types on the basis of which the proportion of the study’s tests items was determined.
### Table 2-
Schemata type and frequency of the study’s course book

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LESSON</th>
<th>Adj</th>
<th>Adv</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>Conj</th>
<th>Det</th>
<th>Pre</th>
<th>Pro</th>
<th>Syn</th>
<th>verb</th>
<th>Abb</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Para</th>
<th>adv</th>
<th>Par</th>
<th>Sym</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>L 1</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>486</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 2</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>471</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 3</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>629</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 4</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>581</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 5</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>552</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 6</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>580</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 7</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>598</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 8</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>532</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 3.3. Instruments
Four tests were developed in the study, i.e., a schema-based cloze multiple choice item test, a schema-based vocabulary test, a general grammar test and an unseen reading comprehension test.

**3.3.1. Schema-Based Cloze Multiple Choice Item Test**

A schema-based cloze multiple choice item (MCIT) was developed on the passages to be covered during the term in order to achieve two purposes. It was administered as a pre-test at the beginning of the term to find out whether the two TBI and SBI groups were at the same entry level and thus did not differ significantly from each other. And it was administered at the end of the term as an achievement test in order to find out whether the learners had learned the material taught.

Following Khodadady (1997, 1999) and Khodadady and Herriman (2000), all the words comprising these paragraphs (as schemata) were put into three domains of semantic, syntactic and parasyntactic and their subcategories. After the schematic categorization, eighty schemata of these paragraphs were deleted and replaced with numbered blanks. For each blank four choices were offered. As Table 3 presents the number of each domain items was determined in accordance with the proportion of these domains and their subcategories in the course book.

### Table 3
Descriptive statistics of schema types comprising the course book
3.3.2. Schema-based vocabulary test

The test tried to assess the true perception of taught semantic schemata during the semester. The employed schemata had been semantically related while having applicational differences, i.e. they could not be used interchangeably in all contexts since their incorrect usage might bring about problematic interpretations. Hence, these vocabulary items were constructed out of the categorized schemata of the texts and evaluated the participants’ knowledge of this applicational or implicational discrepancy. Vocabulary test items were constructed in accordance with the proportion of semantic type frequency in the course book. Table 4 shows the proportion of semantic types comprising the schema-based vocabulary test.

Table 4
Descriptive statistics of semantic types comprising schema-based vocabulary test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Semantic types in the whole text</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>percentage</th>
<th>number of semantic types used in the test</th>
<th>percentage</th>
<th>number of clusters</th>
<th>number of items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adjective</td>
<td>649</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adverb</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noun</td>
<td>1456</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verb</td>
<td>905</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3119</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Inspired by the Schmitt’s (1997) Global Vocabulary Test which has been accepted as a reliable test of general vocabulary world-widely, schema-based vocabulary test of the study included 25 clusters each containing 3 items of a particular genera.

General grammar test

Since the focus of Grammar Translation Method (GTM) is on students’ grammar learning (Richards & Rodgers, 2001), a set of 75 general English grammar test (selected out of validated grammar items bank of Mac Milan publications) were offered to participants of both groups to perform along with the aforementioned tests at the end of the semester. The comparison of participants’ performances on this test revealed the precision of GTM’s claim. The composition
of general grammar items was determined on the basis of the ratio of the syntactic schemata and their subdivisions taught throughout the course of the study. Table 5 depicts the number of each genera items in general grammar test.

Table 5
Descriptive statistics of syntactic types comprising general grammar test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Syntactic types in the whole text</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Number of items</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conjunctions</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Determiners</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepositions</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pronouns</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syntactic verbs</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>730</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>99%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.3.3. Unseen Reading Comprehension Test
For constructing the unseen reading comprehension test (URCT), five theology texts whose authors were the same as those of the course books were chosen from Abul Quasem (1983), Ahmad (1978), Al-Ghazzali (1980), Arberry (1980), and Hamidullah (1959). These texts were checked to contain no schema types other than those comprising the texts employed in the instructional process. Neither did the selected texts contain any grammatical structures not covered during the course of the study. Table 6 presents the schematic composure of the 5 texts used for the URCT.

Table 6
Descriptive statistics of schema types comprising the unseen reading comprehension test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of text's compromising types</th>
<th>No. of familiar types</th>
<th>No. of unfamiliar types</th>
<th>% of familiar types</th>
<th>% of unfamiliar types</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Text 1</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0.936</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text 2</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0.924</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text 3</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>0.901</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text 4</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0.941</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text 5</td>
<td>258</td>
<td>237</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>0.918</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The items comprising the URCT were factual, referential and inferential in nature. While factual items require test takers to look for specific facts given in the text, they must match the choices of a referential item with the schemata constituting the text’s paragraphs in order to find
out which intended schemata they refer to. As the most challenging type of reading ability, however, inferential items call for the test takers’ reasoning ability.

3.4. Procedure
During the first pilot study learners underwent the translation-based instruction (TBI) of the course book and took a schema-based cloze multiple choice item test (MCIT) at the end. For designing the schema-based cloze MICT, the instructional materials were broken down into semantic, syntactic and parasyntactic schema domains and their genera, species and types were specified with the aid of this categorization, 80–item schema-based cloze MCIT was developed. Learners of two groups took this achievement test as the final course-leaving examination.

The item analysis performed on the schema-based cloze MCIT administered in the pilot study showed that seven items out of 80 had inappropriate item difficulty indices, i.e., there were either lower than .25 or higher than .85. These items were replaced with other new schema-based items. The revised schema-based cloze MCIT was administered at the beginning of the main study as a pretest to achieve two purposes; first, to find out whether the students of both groups were familiar with the teaching material before the commencement of the treatment, and secondly, to ensure that the learners of TBI and TBI groups did not significantly differ from each other in terms of their reading comprehension ability. At the end of the course, the schema-based cloze MCIT which was previously used as the pre-test was administered again in addition to the schema-based vocabulary test, the general grammar test and the unseen reading comprehension test. The comparison of the participants’ performances on these four tests made it possible to find out whether the general English learners in the SBI performed significantly higher than their peers in the TBI group as a result of schema-based instruction.

4. Results and discussion
A schema-based cloze multiple choice item test (MCIT) was administered twice, once as the pre-test at the very beginning of the semester and once as the post-test accompanied by a schema-based vocabulary test, a general grammar test and an unseen reading comprehension test at the termination of the semester. Table 7 shows the descriptive statistics of the applied tests during the study.
Table 7

Descriptive statistics for the schema-based multiple choice item test used as the study’s pre-test and post-test, the schema-based vocabulary test, the general grammar test and the unseen reading comprehension test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TEST</th>
<th>No. of items</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Mean p-value</th>
<th>Mean rpbi</th>
<th>α</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Schema Pretest</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>19.95</td>
<td>11.648</td>
<td>.25</td>
<td>.34</td>
<td>.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schema Posttest</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>53.38</td>
<td>12.565</td>
<td>.66</td>
<td>.36</td>
<td>.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schema vocabulary test</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>40.2</td>
<td>15.747</td>
<td>.53</td>
<td>.44</td>
<td>.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General grammar test</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>32.6</td>
<td>7.993</td>
<td>.44</td>
<td>.35</td>
<td>.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unseen Reading Test</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>12.59</td>
<td>3.931</td>
<td>.36</td>
<td>.25</td>
<td>.64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In terms of difficulty, as judged by mean p-value, the schema-based cloze MCIT used as the pre-test (.25) was the most difficult. While the schema post-test, schema-based vocabulary and general grammar tests enjoyed acceptable levels of difficulty. As can be seen in Table 7, both the schema pre-test ($\alpha = .90$) and the schema post-test test are highly reliable ($\alpha = .91$). Among the tests administered in the study, the URCT had the lowest reliability coefficient ($\alpha = .64$). This degree of moderate reliability was, nonetheless, acceptable because its length was much shorter than other study’s tests. The experimental enquiry started with gaining certitude about the fact that the participants of two study’s groups had not been significantly different in terms of general English proficiency before the application of the study’s treatment. Table 8 shows the mean obtained by the two groups on the schema-based cloze MCIT administered as a pre-test.

Table 8

Means comparison of schema-based cloze multiple choice item test a administered as a pre-test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>t-test for Equality of Means</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Difference</th>
<th>Std. Error Difference</th>
<th>Sig.(2-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Schema pre-test</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances assumed</td>
<td>-1.483</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>-3.685</td>
<td>2.484</td>
<td>.142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances not assumed</td>
<td>-1.457</td>
<td>72.393</td>
<td>-3.685</td>
<td>2.529</td>
<td>.149</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As can be seen, there was not a significant difference between the participants of the two groups in terms of their general English language proficiency before the application of the SBI
This implies that any significant difference on the part of SBI participants on the final MCIT, SVT and GGT results would be the consequence of applying schema-based instruction. As Table 9 shows, comparing the means of TBI and SBI English learners on the second administration of schema-based cloze MCIT revealed that those participants who had undergone schema-based instruction (SBI) for the course book outperformed remarkably in comparison with their peers who had experienced translation-based instruction (TBI) \( t = -2.247, p < 0.05 \). This finding answers the first research question.

Table 9

Means comparison of schema-based multiple choice item test (MCIT) used as the study’s post-test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>t-test for Equality of Means</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Difference</th>
<th>Std. Error Difference</th>
<th>Sig.(2-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Schema post-test</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances assumed</td>
<td>-2.247</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>-5.925</td>
<td>2.637</td>
<td>.027</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances not assumed</td>
<td>-2.257</td>
<td>84.899</td>
<td>-5.925</td>
<td>2.625</td>
<td>.027</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10 shows the comparison of mean scores obtained by the SBI and TBI participants on the final schema-based vocabulary test administered at study’s termination. As can be seen, the SBI English learners were also statistically superior to TBI learners in schema-based vocabulary test \( t = -3.578, p < 0.05 \). Hence, the second research question was answered.

Table 10

Means comparison of the schema-based vocabulary test (SVT)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>t-test for Equality of Means</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Difference</th>
<th>Std. Error Difference</th>
<th>Sig.(2-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Schema-based vocabulary test</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances assumed</td>
<td>-3.578</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>-11.358</td>
<td>3.174</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances not assumed</td>
<td>-3.558</td>
<td>81.375</td>
<td>-11.358</td>
<td>3.192</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As Table 11 presents, comparing the means of TBI and SBI English learners on the general grammar test revealed that those participants who had undergone the SBI for the course book
had a statistically significant outperformance in comparison with their peers who had experienced the TBI ($t = -2.568, p < 0.05$). This finding answers the third research question.

**Table 11**

*Means comparison of the general grammar test (GGT)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General grammar test</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Difference</th>
<th>Std. Error Difference</th>
<th>Sig.(2-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances assumed</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>-4.272</td>
<td>1.663</td>
<td>.012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances not assumed</td>
<td>83.025</td>
<td>-4.272</td>
<td>1.667</td>
<td>.012</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 12 shows the comparison of mean scores obtained by the SBI and TBI participants at the study’s termination. As can be seen, the ($P = 0.00 < 0.05$) SBI English learners were also statistically superior to TBI learners in comprehending unseen related texts ($t = -2.247, p < 0.05$).

**Table 12**

*Means comparison of the unseen reading comprehension test (URCT)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unseen reading Comprehension test</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Difference</th>
<th>Std. Error Difference</th>
<th>Sig.(2-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances assumed</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>-4.058</td>
<td>.726</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances not assumed</td>
<td>72.657</td>
<td>-4.058</td>
<td>.739</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On the basis of the results obtained, it is revealed that in addition to remarkable outperformance of all participants on the post-test compared with the pre-test on the same test items, the degree of this betterment is significantly higher for SBI participants who have undergone the SBI for their general English course. The SBI superiority over TBI is also confirmed by the mean comparison on the participants’ performances on the schema-based vocabulary test (SVT) and general grammar test (GGT) and the unseen reading comprehension test (URCT), respectively. The SBI helped English learners understand the implicit meaning and the syntactic application of each learnt schema even in unseen texts.
Anderson (1977), an educational psychologist, played an important role in introducing Schema Theory to the educational community. He pointed out convincingly that, schemata provided a form of representation for complex knowledge and that the construct, for the first time, provided a principled account of how old knowledge might influence the acquisition of new knowledge. Schema Theory was consequently applied to understanding and explaining the reading process, where it served as an important counterweight to purely bottom-up and top-down approaches to reading comprehension ability. It is based on the assumption that the ability depends not only on understanding each and every schema in and out of itself, i.e., bottom-up, but also on finding its semantic, syntactic and discoursal relationships with the other schemata comprising the text, i.e., top down. The present researchers have tried to embody Schema Theory’s theoretical principles in a new language instruction approach and explore its efficacy in an academic context.

Considering the fact that speaker/writer's schemata are highly personalized, a perfect comprehension, which is the essence of any educational program, is very remote if not impossible on the part of the readers/listeners. However, Schema Theory does postulate the possibility of achieving perfect comprehension by employing common semantic features constituting the produced schemata and their mutual sharing by interlocutors provided that they establish the same semantic, syntactic and discoursal relationships among the schemata (Khodadady, 2003). Global word knowledge is crucial to reading comprehension and determines how well students will be able to comprehend the texts they read, however, research findings do show that the knowledge of the words used in the texts are significantly better predictors of reading comprehension ability than the global words (Khodadady 2000). The present study extends the contextual vocabulary knowledge to the semantic, syntactic and discoursal relationships they hold with each other to bring about the comprehension of English texts dealing with theology on a theoretically sound basis.

5. Conclusion
This study was an attempt to carry out a systematic inquiry on the efficacy of a new instructional approach in an Iranian academic context. Schema-based instruction (SBI) is based on the premise that general English learners should become aware of the existing internal and dynamic relationships among the words constituting a given authentic text. This awareness helps them
understand the fact that synonymous and semantically related words have different and unique applications within texts in spite of their common semantic features. Any slight modification in the lexical network of a text may result in a huge distortion in comprehension. The SBI does possess the potential for becoming a new teaching and learning paradigm and thus “revolutionize” the outcomes of foreign language teaching activities.

According to Liu, Zhu & Nian (2010), macrostructural application of Schema Theory do not always result in improvements in comprehension, particularly where they result in insufficient attention to textual detail, or where there is an increase in schema-interference by, for example, the activation of dominant or negative schemata. Also, there is some evidence that the contextual and background information provided may not always even be utilized by the learners. They continued,

Familiarity with language schema, content schema and form schema are all very important to develop students’ reading comprehension ability. When emphasizing imparting language knowledge, teachers are suggested to activate content schema in students’ mind and help them to establish English form schema to improve students’ reading ability, and lay a solid foundation for writing ability. (p.62)

Although some advantages of translation-based instruction (TBI) proposed by Chastain (1971) were previously mentioned (section 2-2), this study validated the superiority of the SBI by highlighting the fact that,

- The TBI gives pupils the misguided idea of what language is and of the relationship it assumes to exist among words in general. Not only is it assumed that language is a collection of words which are isolated and independent from each other but also it hypothesizes a direct correspondence between foreign words and their equivalents in the native tongue. The SBI is, however, based on the premise that the readers of a given text will understand it best if they are familiar with the contextual meaning of each and all words, i.e., schemata, employed by the writer of the text.

- The Schema-based instructor, instead of leaving the learners to themselves to grapple with the contextual meaning of the schemata and how they relate to each other, discusses the texts in terms of its constituting schemata and focuses on their relationships in all possible contexts and modes so that the learner’s comprehension of the schemata would approach to that of the writer.

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The TBI is a particular analysis of the written target language, especially its grammar and vocabulary that are learned from bilingual word lists which might be boring as a main task. In addition, students’ mother tongue is used as the medium of instruction and thus deprives the learners from any form of listening and speaking activities other than single word pronunciations and reading aloud.

As noted by Richards and Rogers (2001), the TBI "does virtually nothing to enhance a student's communicative ability in the language." On the other hand, the SBI employs target language from the beginning to the end of instruction and attempts to help the learners improve their schemata by exposing them to the context in which they are used in the texts under comprehension and discuss them interactively to enhance their speaking ability.

The findings of the present study offer the SBI as an alternative approach in the field of applied linguistics and highlight the success of teaching English as a general course at academic centers. As a linguistic and cognitive process, reading comprehension ability depends not only on the schemata comprising the texts but also on establishing meaningful relationships among them. The emphasis on these relationships helps learners acquire syntactic, semantic and discoursal competences as inherent components of reading comprehension ability and thus dispenses with the artificiality of teaching grammar and vocabulary in isolation as the TBI does.

References


Title

The Analysis of the Effect of Degree of Identifiability of the Mental Referents on Morphological Coding in Narrative Texts

Author

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Biodata

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Abstract

The information structure of a sentence is concerned with the formal expression of the referents and propositions in a given discourse. The formal expression of a referent is affected, among others, by factors such as the degree of mental identifiability/activation of the referents, the pragmatic relation of referents in a proposition, etc. Based on the identifiability parameter proposed by Lambrecht (1994), the present study is intended to analyze the different morphological codings of the mental referents affected by the degree of identifiability of the referents in English and Persian. To do so, the first chapter of George Orwell's Animal Farm together with its Persian translation by Amir Amirshahi was analyzed based on the concepts of information structure theory. The findings of the study revealed that the morphological coding in both English and Persian is affected by the degree of identifiability of the mental referents; in particular, identifiable referents were found to be represented by weak morphological forms such as (zero) pronouns and unidentifiable referents by strong morphological forms such as indefinite NPs. The employed X² test showed the relation between the two variables as statistically significant. In addition, English and Persian preferred morphological forms to express different mental referents were
found to be different. The employed Z test showed that in most cases this difference was significant.

**Key words:** Linguistic Coding, (Un)identifiability, Information Structure, Activation

1- **Introduction**

Lambrecht (1994, 77) following Prince (1981) and Chafe (1976) has made a distinction between identifiable and unidentifiable referents. According to Lambrecht (1994) an identifiable referent is one for which a shared representation already exists in the speaker's and listener's mind at the time of the utterance, while an unidentifiable referent is one for which a representation exists only in the speaker's mind. (Lambrecht, 1994, 77-78).

The grammatical correlate of the above distinction is the formal distinction made in many languages between definite and indefinite noun phrases. In many languages, the cognitive distinction between identifiable and unidentifiable referents is morphologically expressed by definite and indefinite articles and other determiners such as *this, his*, etc. It should be noted, however, this distinction between identifiable and unidentifiable referents may have different implications in different languages as far as linguistic coding is concerned. In this study, in particular it is claimed that morphological coding of mental referents affected by identifiability parameter may not be the same in different languages. Certain languages may have no grammatical category to code linguistically identifiability. As we will see (part 3) for some referents, Persian language has no overt formal marker to show identifiability, that is why in this study a distinction is made between "(in)definite NPs/ with or without marker".

According to what we have said so far regarding identifiability, it is misleadingly implied that referents are either identifiable or unidentifiable. However, Lambrecht (1994) believes that identifiability is continual in nature. Therefore, based on the degree of identifiability, he classified the mental referents into four major groups: active, semi-active, inactive, and new. The first three groups are considered to be identifiable and the fourth (new referents) is unidentifiable. Following Chafe (1987), Lambrecht emphasizes that "our minds contain very large amounts of knowledge or information, and that only a very small amount of this information can be active at any one time" (Lambrecht, 1994,
Lambrecht argues that a particular concept may be in any one of "activation states". Accordingly, Lambrecht following Chafe (1987) defines different activation states in the following terms:

… an "active referents" is one that is currently lit up, a concept in a person's focus of attention at a particular moment. "a semi-active referent" is one that is in a person's peripheral consciousness, a concept of which a person has a background awareness, but one that is not being directly focused on. "an inactive (unused) referent" is one that is currently in a person's long-term memory, neither focally nor peripherally active. Finally, "a new referent" is one for which the listener has no mental picture at all. (Lambrecht, 1994, 94)

Based on the degree of accessibility, Lambrecht (1994, 100) divides the semi-active referent into three minor groups which are "textually semi-active", "inferentially semi-active" and "situationally semi-active". Furthermore, he made another distinction between "anchored new referents" and unanchored new referents". Because of the reasons to be explained later, we are not dealing with these minor groups. In this study, the four main groups are dealt with. In this connection the following research questions are posed:

Question 1: Does "the degree of activation of the mental referents" affect "the morphological coding" in the two languages contrasted?

Question 2: (If the answer of the first question is YES) Is the effect of "the degree of activation of the mental referents" the same or different in the two languages involved?

2- Method

2-1 data

In this study, a corpus of English data together with its Persian translation was analyzed in order to investigate the effect of the degree of identifiability/activation of mental referents on linguistic coding. Another goal to be followed here is to investigate whether the identifiability parameter has the same or different effect in English and Persian. To achieve these goals, the first chapter of George Orwell's Animal farm together with its Persian translation by Amir Amirshahi was analyzed contrastively. This corpus includes more than 290 clauses and 665 noun phrases in English. The Persian translation includes almost the same amount of data. The analysis of the data is based on Lambrecht's information structure theory (1994).
2-2 procedures
The following steps were taken to analyze the data according to the criteria and concepts introduced by Lambrech (1994):
1- The source text (English) and target text (Persian) were juxtaposed and contrasted sentence by sentence and phrase by phrase.
2- Based on the functional considerations introduced by Lambrech (1994), each phrase was assigned a referent.
3- Based on functional and contextual considerations, the mental referents are classified into groups and subgroups. Following Lambrech (1994), in this study the referents are divided into four main groups which are active, semi-active, inactive and new. The semi-active referents themselves fall into three subgroups which are inferential, textual and situational. Furthermore, the new referents are of two types: anchored and unanchored.
4- Each type of mental referents has a unique mode of morphological expression. In this study, a formal mode of morphological expression is identified for each type of referent. Accordingly, the following types of morphological expression were identified: definite NP, pronoun, zero pronoun, indefinite NP, and wh-words. Definite and indefinite NPs may be used with or without formal markers such as the, this, his and etc. So, totally seven mode of morphological forms were identified to code the mental referents linguistically.
5- In this step, an attempt was made to make a connection between different types of referents (step 3) and their mode of morphological coding (step 4). To investigate the relationship between "the degree of the activation of referents" and "their morphological coding", $X^2$ test is employed to show the significance of this relation and to investigate the effect of the degree of activation on morphological coding, Z test was used to see whether the effect is the same or different in the two languages contrasted.

3- Results
As it was stated in (2-2), the mental referents were classified into four groups. In addition, seven modes of morphological expression were also identified. Table (1) shows the statistics of the two variables involved, that is; the degree of identifiability/ activation and different modes of morphological coding.
### Table (1) The frequency and percent of the phrases based on "the degree of the activation of the referents" and "morphological coding" in English

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Morphological coding Degree of act.</th>
<th>definite NP/ marker</th>
<th>definite NP/ no marker</th>
<th>definite NP/ pronoun</th>
<th>definite NP/ zero pronoun</th>
<th>indefinite NP/ marker</th>
<th>indefinite NP/ no marker</th>
<th>indefinite NP/ wh-words</th>
<th>total</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Active</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>305</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>semi-active</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inactive</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>216</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>213</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>664</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

X² = 9.763,  p = 0.000

### Table (2) The frequency and percent of the phrases based on "the degree of the activation of the referents" and "morphological coding" in English

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Morphological coding Degree of act.</th>
<th>definite NP/ marker</th>
<th>definite NP/ no marker</th>
<th>definite NP/ pronoun</th>
<th>definite NP/ zero pronoun</th>
<th>indefinite NP/ marker</th>
<th>indefinite NP/ no marker</th>
<th>indefinite NP/ wh-words</th>
<th>total</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Active</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>299</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>semi-active</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inactive</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>655</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

X² = 9.506,  p = 0.000

Table (2) shows the same statistics in Persian.
Active referents

As indicated in table (1), the phrases with active referents are mainly coded as pronoun in English. Out of the total number of 305 phrases which are assigned active referents, %66/9 are coded as pronoun, %18/7 as zero pronoun and %8/9 as "definite NP/ with marker". This table shows none of the phrases with active referents are coded as indefinite NP. Table (2) shows the relationship between the degree of identifiability and different modes of morphological coding in Persian. Out of the total number of 299 phrases which are assigned active referents, %53/2 are coded by using zero pronoun. In %30/1 of these kind of phrases, pronoun is used to show the degree of identifiability. Definite NPs (with and without marker) are also used in smaller scales to express active referents. In total, %16 of active referents are linguistically represented by definite NPs.

As shown in Tables (1) and (2), X² test proved the presence of a significant relationship between the two variables (P=0/000). Therefore, the first question of the research is positively proved. There is a significant relation between the degree of activation of the referents and morphological coding as far as active referents are concerned.

To answer the second question, Z test was employed to show whether "the degree of activation" has the same effect on "the morphological coding" in the two languages or not. The relevant statistics were put on the following formula (the details are not discussed here):

\[ Z = \frac{\sqrt{P_1-P_2}}{\sqrt{P(1-P)} \left(\frac{1}{n_1} + \frac{1}{n_2}\right)} \]

In connection with the effect of the identifiability in the two languages, English pronouns used to represent active referents were compared with Persian pronouns. From the total number of 305 phrases assigned active referents in English, %66/9 are coded by pronoun and from the total number of 299 phrases assigned active referent in Persian, %30/1 are coded by pronouns. The calculated Z (Z= 9/1) shows that the obtained Z is more than 1/96, so the attested difference between English and Persian is statistically significant (P < 0/05). In other words, English and Persian speakers differ in their use of "pronouns" to express the active referents.
Semi-active referents
Table (1) indicates out of the total number of 171 phrases which are identified to have semi-active referents, %70/2 are expressed by "definite NP/ with marker" in English. These referents are rarely expressed by pronouns and indefinite NPs. On the other hand, table (2) shows that out of the total number of 169 phrases which are supposed to have semi-active referents in Persian, %68 are expressed by "definite NP/ no marker", %25/4 by "definite NP/ with marker" and about %3/6 by indefinite NP. Totally, %93/4 of such referents are represented by "definite NP" in narrative texts. X² test shows that the relation between the degree of activation and morphological coding to be significant in both languages (P=0/000) as far as semi-active referents are concerned.

As for semi-active referents, P₁= %70/2 and P₂= 25/4. The statistics of the calculated Z test showed that the difference between English and Persian in connection with the use of "definite NP/ marker" is statistically significant (P < %05). Accordingly, to express semi-active referents by using "definite NPs/ with marker" in narrative texts, English speakers are different from Persian speakers. This difference is statistically significant. Again, to answer the second question: English mode of morphological coding is different from Persian as far as semi-active referents are concerned.

Inactive referents
As represented in table (1), from the total number of 105 phrases which are assigned inactive (unused) referents in English, %61 are coded by using "definite NP/ with marker", %28/6 by "definite NP/ without marker", and %9/6 by indefinite NP. In total, %89/6 are represented by definite NPs. Table (2) shows that in Persian, from the total number of 104 phrases which are identified to have inactive (unused) referents, %75 are expressed by using "definite NP/ without marker", %13/5 by "definite NP/ with marker", and %9/6 by indefinite NP. In total, %88/5 of such referents are represented by definite NPs. To address the first question, X² test proves the relation as to be significant in both languages (P= 0/000).

In connection with the second question for inactive referents, as represented in the above tables, P₁= %61 and P₂= %13/5. The calculated Z test showed that the difference
between English and Persian in connection with the use of "definite NP/ marker" to express inactive referents is statistically significant (P < 0.05). Accordingly, to express inactive referents by using "definite NPs/ with marker" in narrative texts, English speakers are different from Persian speakers. To answer the second question: the effect of the degree of activation on morphological coding has different repercussions in English and Persian as far as inactive referents are concerned.

New referents
Table (1) indicates that out of the total number of 83 phrases with new referents in English, %72/3 are coded morphologically by "indefinite NP/ with marker", %13/3 by wh-words, %6 by "indefinite NP/ without marker". "definite NP" is only used in %6 to express new referents. Totally, %91/6 of the new referents in English are expressed by "indefinite NP". On the other hand, table (2) shows that out of the total number of 83 phrases assigned new referents in Persian, %66/3 are represented in the language by "indefinite NP/ with marker", %13/3 by wh-words, %15/7 by "indefinite NP/ without marker". "definite NP" is rarely used to express new referents in Persian. Only, in %4/8 of the new referents, "definite NP" was employed to express them. Totally, %95/2 of the new referents in Persian are expressed by "indefinite NP". As the above referents, $X^2$ test proves the relation between the two variables as to be significant.

To address the second question in connection with the new referents, English "indefinite NPs/ with marker" used to represent new referents were compared with Persian "indefinite NPs/ with marker". From the total number of 83 phrases assigned new referents both in English and Persian, %72/3 are coded by "indefinite NPs/ with marker". In Persian this percent is %66/3. The calculated $Z = %74$. The obtained $Z$ is lower than 1/96, so the attested difference between English and Persian is not statistically significant (P > 0.05). To answer the second question: the identifiability effect has led English and Persian speakers to use "indefinite NPs/ with marker" almost in the same way to express new referents in narrative texts.
4- Discussion

According to the descriptive statistics presented above, pronoun and zero pronoun respectively in English and Persian are preferred morphological modes of expression to represent active referents. Another finding of the analysis of the data is the fact that morphological coding is affected by the degree of activation, in particular; active referents, in this case, are coded by using (zero) pronoun in both languages. $X^2$ test proved the relation to be significant. In addition, the results show that the effect of the degree of activation of the referents has led the English and Persian speakers to use different modes of morphological expression; as stated before, pronoun in English and zero pronoun in Persian were identified to express active referents. The reasons for this difference in English and Persian are beyond the scope of this study, so this is not dealt with here.

To express semi-active referents in narrative texts, English speakers tend to use "definite NPs/ with marker". In other words, "definite NPs/ with marker" are preferred morphological forms to express such referents. Based on the patterns emerged in the data both in English and Persian, rarely are semi-active referents coded by pronoun or indefinite NP. Any exception must have some pragmatic and functional reasons. On the other hand, definite NPs are preferred morphological forms to represent semi-active referents in Persian translation. However, there is a minor difference in this connection. As it was stated, in English definite NPs are mainly accompanied with formal morphological markers such as the, this, his, etc., but in Persian, definite NPs are usually coded without such formal markers.

Almost the same pattern that emerged in the morphological coding of semi-active referents in both languages is also seen in the morphological coding of inactive referents. In both languages, "definite NP" is the morphological preferred form to express inactive referents. Like semi-active referents, there is a difference in this connection between the two languages, that is; while in English definite NPs to represent inactive referents are accompanied with formal markers of definiteness such as the, this, his, etc., in Persian the use of such markers with NPs is not the dominant tendency. Accordingly, it can be claimed that there is a difference in the morphological expression of inactive referents between English and Persian; formal markers of definiteness to express semi-active
referents are more frequent in English than Persian. However, it can not be denied that in both languages, inactive referents are coded morphologically by using "definite NP".

In the discussion of active referents, it was concluded that these referents are mainly coded by weak morphological forms such as pronouns. Now, it is suggested that new referents are coded by strong morphological forms. Indefinite NPs which are the preferred forms to express new referents are morphologically considered to be strong based on iconicity principle. In contrast to pronouns, NPs contain more linguistic material, hence strong.

It was concluded above that there was a strong correlation between active referents and the use of morphological weak forms such as (zero) pronouns on the one hand and between new referents and the use of morphological forms such as indefinite NPs on the other hand. Now, a point worth-mentioning here is related to morphological coding of semi-active and inactive referents. Table (1) shows that in total, %93/6 of the semi-active referents and %89/6 of inactive referents in English are coded by "definite NP/ with or without marker". Table (2) shows almost the same pattern in Persian. Therefore, it is proved both in English and Persian "definite NP" is the preferred morphological form. However, a question which is logically raised here is "why are both semi-active and inactive referents expressed by the same morphological form?" This question is a challenge for a theory which claims that every kind of referent with a certain degree of identifiability has a unique mode of expression. On the other hand, this apparent problem challenges the authenticity of the classification proposed by Lambrecht(1994), Chafe (1976), and Prince (1981). If this classification of the mental and cognitive referents is psychologically real, then it must be reflected in language. However, the researcher has a solution for this apparent problem. It must be noted that in this study, we have investigated the effect of the degree of identifiability of the referents on morphological coding. In order to solve the above problem, it is needed to investigate the effect of the degree of identifiability on other areas of language such as phonology and syntax. Accordingly, it must be emphasized that a native speaker has various tools such as morphology, syntax and phonology to express his mental assumptions. In the above problem, it was stated that English and Persian speakers used the same tool to express semi-active and inactive referents. However, it must be noted that this ambiguity at
morphological level is eliminated by different patterns of accentuation at phonological level. It is true that both semi-active and inactive referents are coded morphologically by the same mode of expression, but careful analysis of the data shows that the "definite NPs" which are used to code inactive referents have higher chance of receiving accent in contrast with "definite NPs" which are used to express semi-active referents. Table (3) shows the patterns of accent assignment in English and Persian contrastively.

Table (3) the frequency and percent of the phrases based on "accent status" and "the degree of activation" in English and Persian

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree of activation</th>
<th>Accent status</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Persian</th>
<th>Accent status</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active</td>
<td>268</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>305</td>
<td>263</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>*87.9%</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>88.3%</td>
<td>11.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semi-active</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>45.6%</td>
<td>*54.4%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>44.4%</td>
<td>*55.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inactive</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>32.4%</td>
<td>*67.6%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>31.1%</td>
<td>*68.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>8.4%</td>
<td>*91.6%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
<td>*92.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>387</td>
<td>277</td>
<td>664</td>
<td>376</td>
<td>276</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>58.3%</td>
<td>41.7%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>57.7%</td>
<td>42.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

English \(X^2=23.79\), df=3, \(P=0.000\)  
Persian \(X^2=24.14\), df=3, \(P=0.000\)

As shown in the table, the phrases with more unidentifiable referents have the higher chance of receiving accent. Accordingly, a larger number of phrases with semi-active referents are accented than phrases with active referents and in the same vein a larger number of phrases with inactive referents are accented than phrases with semi-active referents. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is an interaction between different components of language to code mental referents. Based on what we have said so far, the researcher suggests the following principle:

The Principle of Interaction between Components of Language (PICL)
If there is an ambiguity regarding the linguistic coding of mental referents in one component of language, we can eliminate this problem by referring to other areas of language.

5. Conclusion

Based on the above discussion, it can be claimed that the morphological coding in both English and Persian is affected by the degree of identifiability of the mental referents; in particular, identifiable referents were found to be represented by weak forms and unidentifiable referents by strong forms. In addition, the effect of identifiability of the referents on morphological coding has not been always the same in the languages contrasted, e.g. phrases with active referents are coded morphologically by pronoun in English and zero pronoun in Persian or phrases which are assigned semi-active referents are expressed mainly by "definite NP/ with marker" in English and "definite NP/ without marker" in Persian. Finally, PICL which is suggested for the first time by the present author implied that to code linguistically the mental states of the referents, all the components of language are involved simultaneously.

References


Title

Inflating and Persuading in the Discussion Sections of NSs’ vs. PSs’ Academic Research Articles

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Abstract

Through analyzing the employment of hedges and intensifiers in research articles (RAs) written by Persian and English writers, this study makes an attempt to find out whether Persian native writers take on the identity and norms of the discourse community in writing in the second language or preserve the cultural identity and norms of their native language. It, therefore, analyzes the types and frequencies of hedges and intensifiers employed in NS and NNS discussion sections of 20 Persian and 20 English academic RAs published between 2005 and 2010. To this aim, it compares the NS and PS frequencies of various types of hedging devices and intensifiers in written academic prose: epistemic, lexical, and possibility hedges, downtoners, assertive pronouns, and adverbs of frequency. In addition, intensifiers such as universal and negative pronouns, amplifiers and emphatics were also examined. A detailed examination of median frequency rates of hedges and intensifiers in NS and PS academic papers revealed that PS writers employ a
more limited range of hedging devices largely associated with conversational discourse and casual spoken interactions. There were also a prevalence of intensifiers and overstatements that are ubiquitous in informal speech but are rare in formal academic prose. Closer analysis revealed that although there were differences between NSs and PSs with regard to the use of hedges and intensifiers, none of these differences were statistically significant.

Key words: Hedges, Intensifiers, Inflating, Persuading, Formal academic prose, Informal register, Research articles, Discussion sections.

1. Introduction

English language has assumed a crucial role in the international world of scholarship and this imposes the requirement of possessing proficient skills in writing academic texts in English on researchers, scholars and university students. Therefore, teaching and learning how to write linguistically and rhetorically appropriate academic discourse which is also adjusted to the writing norms and conventions of the target community is a compulsory component of higher education curricula for university students.

As a matter of fact, nowadays, in the highly competitive world of science, a fast and suitable presentation of scientific findings to other members of the discourse community is essential for the dissemination of scientific knowledge. To this aim, research articles (henceforth, RAs) have been regarded as the most important academic genre commonly used as the means of dissemination of this scientific knowledge.

Over the last three decades, a large number of studies on academic writing have been devoted to RAs, in particular, their structure, social construction, and historical evolution (Samraj, 2002). Some of these studies have concerned themselves with the overall organization of various parts of RAs, such as the introduction (e.g., Swales, 1990; Swales & Najjar, 1987), the results sections (Brett, 1994; Thompson, 1993), discussions (Hopkins & Dudley-Evans, 1988), and even the abstracts that accompany them (Melander, Swales & Fredrickson, 1998; Salager-Meyer, 1990, 1992). Various lexico-grammatical features of RAs have also been explored, ranging from tense choice to citation practices (e.g., Shooshtari & Jalilifar, 2010). Beyond the textual structure of this genre, research has also focused on the historical development of RAs (Bazerman, 1988;
One aspect of RAs that has been perhaps most studied is the introduction section. Swales’ (1990) seminal work on the move structure of RA introductions triggered considerable interest in applying the proposed model to other sets of texts (e.g., Crookes, 1986, Jacoby, 1987). There has been less research, however, on the textual structure of the discussion sections of RAs. Shooshtari and Jalilifar (2010, p. 47) maintain that, “discussions, a crucial genre in RAs, can play an effective role in writing research as they enrich the article blueprints”. And according to Martinez (2003), in discussions, writers evaluate and interpret the data obtained in relation to the problem presented and attempt to persuade the readers of the relevance of the findings in relation to other findings, leading to the construction of knowledge. He adds that the discussion section is perhaps the most argumentative and abstract part of the article.

Additionally, to the best of the researchers’ knowledge, there has been a dearth of research on variations in the use of hedges and intensifiers across native speakers’ versus nonnative speakers’ discussion sections of RAs. Hinkel (2005) introduces hedging devices as mitigation and softening devices while intensifiers or boosters have functions that are converse to those of hedges; that is, they allow the writer to make a point without being precise. As stated above, RA writers try to persuade the readers of the relevance of their findings in relation to the findings of previous research in the discussion section of the article and hedges and intensifiers can be of great significance in this regard.

A further motivation for the present study is that sometimes non–native writers of RAs do not follow native speakers’ conventions and this makes the content of their articles different from that of native writers. This difference may arise from cross-cultural influences which can be considered as an area of conflict between native and non-native English writers. Therefore, this study aims to describe this conflict and to point to the probable reason for why non–native writers might not get space for publication in international journals.
2. Review of the related literature

The terms hedges and hedging generally refer to a large class of lexical and syntactic features of text that have the goal of modifying and mitigating a proposition (Leech, 1983; Levinson, 1983). In the 1990s, research on hedging accounted for the meanings, uses, and functions of politeness, vagueness, and mitigation in academic writing and other types of discourse (Hinkel, 2005). In written text, hedging refers to the employment of lexical and syntactic means of decreasing the writer’s responsibility for the extent and the truth-value of propositions and claims, displaying hesitation, uncertainty, indirectness, and/or politeness to reduce the imposition on the reader (Hinkel, 1997; Swales, 1990).

In Anglo-American written academic prose, hedges are considered to be requisite with the general purpose of projecting “honesty, modesty, proper caution,” and diplomacy (Swales, 1990, p. 174). Myers (1989) maintained that the use of hedging is highly conventionalized in academic writing and appear to be particularly necessary in texts that include claim-making and/or expressing personal positions or points of view. In line with this argument, Swales (1990) adds that the appropriateness of various types of hedges in specific contexts crucially depends on the norms of a particular discourse community.

On the other hand, intensifiers have been identified in research as prevalent features of spoken and conversational discourse that have the function of heightening or lowering the effect of sentence elements or entire propositions (Leech, 1983). In discourse, intensifiers have the function of exaggerating the actual state of affairs, reinforcing the truth value of the proposition, or emphasizing a part of or the entirety of a claim (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Levinson, 1983).

Some studies have shown that intensifiers are largely associated with the informal register and can be relatively rare in written academic text (Hinkel, 2005). According to Channel (1994), in English, the main discourse function of intensifiers is to play the role of exaggeratives and create hyperbole to avoid referring to the actual truth, except to highlight the fact that the described object or number is large or important in the perception of the speaker.
In their corpus-based study of L2 text, Hyland and Milton (1997, p. 183) have noted that for the L2 writers of academic essays in English, being able to “convey statements with an appropriate degree of doubt and certainty” represents a major problem. They add that many L2 writers employ assertions and claims significantly more frequently than speakers of British English of similar age and educational level. Hinkel (2002, 2003a) has come to a similar conclusion that L2 writers often produce formal written prose that appears to be overstated with many exaggerated claims due to the comparative prevalence of intensifiers and exaggeratives in contexts where hedging devices would seem to be more appropriate. Jordan (1997) points out that intensifiers need to be used sparingly or avoided altogether because in academic contexts, writers need to be cautious in their claims or statements.

As mentioned above, intensifiers are one of the marked features of L2 writing. Lorenz (1998), for example, studied NS and NNS formal writing and came to the point that the comparative over-use of intensifiers in L2 student writing can be attributed to cross-cultural differences in the functions of hyperboles in written argumentation, as well as what he calls “over-zealousness”. According to the author, many L2 writers “anxious to make an impression and conscious of the limitations of their linguistic repertoire … might feel a greater need than native speakers to stress the importance” (p. 59) of what they have to say. However, hyperbolic and inflated style can be damaging to L2 writers in terms of evaluations of their writing because it usually creates an impression of “unnatural” communication. Lorenz (1998) concludes that judicious uses of rhetorical emphases must be taught to avoid intensification that can be “semantically incompatible [and] communicatively unnecessary” in the contexts of academic argumentation.

Hedging propositions and claims to decrease one’s responsibility for their truth-value and to project politeness, hesitation, and uncertainty is a characteristic of many rhetorical traditions. Among these traditions, Chinese, Japanese, and Korean are the most studied ones in comparison to English (e.g., Biq, 1990; Maynard, 1997; McGloin, 1996; Park, 1990; all cited in Hinkel, 2005). Hinkel (2005) maintained that although exaggerations and overstatements are considered to be inappropriate in formal Anglo-American writing, they are considered acceptable in persuasive writing in Confucian and Koranic rhetorical traditions.
Persian is a language whose rhetorical tradition has rarely been compared to that of other languages especially English. Some studies have been conducted comparing Persian writing tradition with that of English but the main focus of these studies has been on the use of metadiscourse markers of which hedges and intensifiers are a part. For example, Abdi (2009), through analyzing metadiscourse strategies employment in Persian and English (as the lingua franca of academic discourse community) RAs, made an attempt to find out whether Persian native writers take on the identity and norms of the discourse community in writing in their own language or preserve the cultural identity and norms of their native language. A comparison of 36 Persian and 36 English RAs showed that, on the whole, the norms of Persian language in the use of metadiscourse were different from that of the academic discourse community. Closer analysis revealed more similarities in the employment of interactive metadiscourse used to guide the readers, and significant differences in the use of interactional metadiscourse that could represent the specific cultural identity of the Persian writers.

In another study, Faghih and Rahimpour (2009) examined a corpus of ninety discussion sections of applied linguistics RAs, with the goal of analyzing different aspects of academic written discourse. Three types of texts were considered: English texts written by native speakers of English, English texts written by Iranians (as non-natives of English), and Persian texts written by Iranians. In order to understand the cultural differences between Persian and English-speaking researchers, the metadiscourse sub-types adapted from Hyland’s (2004) model were examined. After the detailed analysis of the metadiscourse types, Chi-square tests were carried out to clarify the probable differences. The analysis revealed how academic writings of these groups differed in their rhetorical strategies using metadiscourse type because of their respective mother tongues. However, the different groups were found to use all sub-types of metadiscourse. Yet, some subcategories were used differently by the writers of these two languages. In addition, interactive metadiscoursal factors were used significantly more than interactional metadiscoursal factors by both groups.

To the best of the researchers’ knowledge, no study investigated the variations in the use of hedges and intensifiers in the discussion sections of English RAs written by native speakers in comparison to those of Persian speakers. As stated above, in
discussions, the writers evaluate and interpret the data obtained in relation to the problem presented and try to persuade the readers of the relevance of their findings in relation to other findings (Martinez, 2003). Hedges and intensifiers can play a crucial role in how to express the findings of the studies and how to persuade the readers of the importance of the results. Therefore, this study tries to fill this lacuna by examining the variations in the use of hedges and intensifiers in the discussion sections of Applied Linguistics RAs written by English native speakers as opposed to those of Persian speakers.

This study aims to investigate the way native speakers (NSs) and Persian speakers (PSs) employ hedges and intensifiers in the discussion sections of their scholarly articles in order to persuade the readers of the findings of their studies. To this end, it seeks answers to the following research questions:

1. Do PSs employ hedges in the discussion sections of their articles in the same manner as NSs or differently?
2. Is there any significant difference between NSs’ and PSs’ use of intensifiers in the discussion sections of their articles?

3. Method

3.1. Instruments

This study reviewed 40 recent RAs published in international academic journals (appearing in between 2005 to 2010) from the discipline of Applied Linguistics written by native English speakers as judged by the names and affiliations of the authors and Persian speakers. As the title of this paper suggests, while studies like this can investigate various genres of communication from different discourse communities, this study only sought to examine the genre of RAs for the following reasons. First, RAs are an outstanding and widely used genre of communication among academia. Second, a large number of rejections of non-native writers’ articles in international scholarly journals are said to be due to language problems. Finally, non-native writers have recently shown a stronger tendency to join their relevant disciplinary communities, mostly through writing RAs (Abdi, Tavangar Rizi, & Tavakoli, 2010). Such a trend might be due to the fact that publication is more considerably appreciated in hiring, promotion and continued employment in recent regulations throughout the world (Belcher, 2007).
3.1.1. **Common hedging devices**

The types of hedges discussed in this study rely on the system outlined in Hinkel (2005, pp. 37-40). She identified the following hedging devices:

**Epistemic hedges**: according to (+noun), actually, apparent(-ly), approximate(-ly), broad(-ly), clear(-ly), comparative(-ly), essential(-ly), indeed, likely, most (+adjective), normal(-ly), potential(-ly), probable(-ly), rare(-ly), somehow, somewhat, theoretically, the/possessive pronoun very (+superlative adjective + noun, e.g., the/his/their very best/last minute/moment/dollar/penny/chance), unlikely.

**Lexical hedges**: (at) about, (a) few, in a way, kind of, (a) little + noun, maybe, like, many, more or less, more, most, several, something, like, sort of.

**Possibility hedges**: by (some/any) chance, hopefully, perhaps, possible, possibly, in (the) case (of), if you/we know/understand (what [pronoun] mean(s)), if you catch/get/understand my meaning/drift, if you know what I mean (to say).

In English, epistemic and lexical hedges represent the largest classes of mitigation and softening devices. According to Levinson (1983), epistemic modification refers to the limitations of the speaker’s/writer’s knowledge that the listener/reader can infer from text or context. Epistemic adjectives and adverbs are among the most common hedging devices in published academic texts (Hyland, 1998, 1999 both cited in Hinkel, 2005), and among these, adverbs are more numerous than adjectives. Unlike epistemic hedges that can modify entire propositions, lexical hedges modify and delimit the meanings of nouns, adjectives, and adverbs (Quirk et al., 1985; Greenbaum & Quirk, 1990).

**Downtoners**: at all, a bit, all but, a good/great deal, almost, as good/well as, at least, barely, basically, dead (+adjective), enough, fairly, (a) few, hardly, in the least/slightest, just, (a) little (+adjective), merely, mildly, nearly, not a (+ countable noun, e.g., thing/person), only, partly, partially, practically, pretty (+adjective), quite (+adjective), rather, relatively, scarcely, simply, slightly, somewhat, sufficiently, truly, virtually.

The function of downtoners is to soothe down the intensity of verbs and adjectives in text (Quirk et al., 1985). The purpose of downtoners in formal academic writing is to restrict the meanings and reduce the qualitative and emotive implications of verbs, adjectives, and abstract nouns (Hyland, 1998, 1999 both cited in Hinkel, 2005).
**Assertive pronouns:** any-words (anybody, anyone, anything), any, some-pronominals (somebody, someone, something), some.

Assertive pronouns modify nouns and noun phrases (Greenbaum & Quirk, 1990; Quirk et al., 1985), and assertive forms with some- or any- can have positive or negative presuppositions, respectively. According to Channel (1994) and Huebler (1983), the meanings and functions of assertives are similar to those of hedges.

**Adverbs of frequency:** e.g., annually, daily, frequently, monthly, per day/hour/year occasionally, often, oftentimes, seldom, sometimes, sporadically, regularly, usually, weekly.

“Adverbs of frequency ubiquitously function as hedges in spoken and written text” (Hinkel, 2005, p. 39). Channel (1994) maintains that the meanings of frequency adverbs are inherently vague and they are used in similar contexts as other indefinite quantifiers, vague partitives, and lexical hedges.

**3.1.2. Common Intensifiers**

According to Hinkel (2005), the textual function of intensifiers is the converse of that of hedges. And Leech (1983) claims that hyperboles and exaggeratives can be particularly inappropriate in formal prose because their usage distorts the truth and thus damages text’s credibility.

**Universal and negative pronouns:** all, each, every-pronominals (everybody, everyone, everything), every, none, no one, nothing.

**Amplifiers:** absolutely, a lot (+comparative adjective), altogether, always, amazingly, awfully, badly, by all means, completely, definitely, deeply, downright, forever, enormously, entirely, even (+adjective/noun), ever, extremely, far (+comparative adjective), far from it, fully, greatly, highly, hugely, in all/every respects/ways, much (+adjectives), never, not half bad, positively, perfectly, severely, so (+adjective/adverb), sharply, strongly, too (+adjective), terribly, totally, unbelievably, very, very much, well.

**Emphatics:** a lot (+noun/adjective), certain(-ly), clear(-ly), complete, definite, exact(-ly), extreme, for sure, great, indeed, no way, outright, pure(-ly), real(-ly), such a (+noun), strong, sure(-ly), total.
Hinkel (2005) maintains that both amplifiers and emphatics have the function of reinforcing the truth-value of the proposition or claim or the strength of the writer’s conviction.

3.2. Data analysis procedures

The hedges and intensifiers of each type in NSs’ and PSs’ articles were counted separately to obtain median frequency rates of use in the papers for each group of speakers. To determine whether NS and PS authors similarly employed hedging devices and intensifiers, the occurrences of epistemic, lexical, and possibility hedges, assertive pronouns, frequency adverbs, downtoners, universal pronouns, amplifiers, and emphatics in the texts were tagged and counted by hand. Then the number of words in each discussion section of the article was counted, and computations were performed to calculate the percentage rate of each feature use. For example, the discussion section of the first article written by a PS consisted of 5058 words and included 23 epistemic hedges \((23/5058 \times 100 = .45\%)\) and 46 lexical hedges \((46/5058 \times 100 = .90\%)\). The calculations were performed separately for each feature and in each paper. The Mann–Whitney U test was selected as a conservative measure of differences between the NS and PS data. The Mann–Whitney U test compares two sets of data based on their ranks below and above the median.

4. Results and discussion

Tables 1 and 2 present the descriptive statistics of epistemic, lexical, and possibility hedges, downtoners, assertive pronouns, adverbs of frequency, universal and negative pronouns, amplifiers and emphatics in the discussion sections of applied linguistics RAs written by NSs and PSs, respectively.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Epistemic hedges</td>
<td>.89</td>
<td>.42</td>
<td>.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lexical hedges</td>
<td>1.85</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possibility hedges</td>
<td>.36</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Downtoners</td>
<td>.91</td>
<td>.49</td>
<td>.24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As it is evident in the above tables, lexical hedges are the most frequently used types of hedges in both NS and PS articles (Mean = 1.07 and 1.20, respectively) and adverbs of frequency are the least frequent hedges in both of them (Mean = .11 and .07 for NSs and PSs, respectively). In the case of intensifiers, too, emphatics are the most frequently used ones for both groups of speakers with means of .46 and .51 for NSs and PSs, respectively. Universal and negative pronouns are the least frequently used intensifiers in both NSs and PSs articles with the mean of .25 and .30, respectively. Figure 1 on page 14, too, presents the same results showing a better picture of the differences between NSs’ and PSs’ use of hedges and intensifiers.

As figure 1 shows, in the case of hedges, PSs employed epistemic hedges, lexical hedges, assertive pronouns and adverbs of frequency less frequently than NSs did. That is, on the whole, they employed these specific kinds of hedging devices less frequently than NSs while with respect to intensifiers, PSs utilized all three types of

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics of Hedges and Intensifiers of PSs’ RAs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Range</th>
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<th>SD</th>
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<tr>
<td>Epistemic hedges</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td>.37</td>
<td>.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lexical hedges</td>
<td>2.66</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possibility hedges</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>.24</td>
<td>.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Downtoners</td>
<td>.96</td>
<td>.52</td>
<td>.22</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assertive pronouns</td>
<td>.63</td>
<td>.24</td>
<td>.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adverbs of frequency</td>
<td>.36</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universal and negative pronouns</td>
<td>.72</td>
<td>.30</td>
<td>.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amplifiers</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>.40</td>
<td>.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emphatics</td>
<td>.91</td>
<td>.51</td>
<td>.25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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intensifiers, i.e., universal and negative pronouns, amplifiers, and emphatics more frequently than did NSs. These findings are in line with those of previous researchers. For example, Lorenz (1998, p. 59) maintains that many L2 writers “anxious to make an impression and conscious of the limitations of their linguistic repertoire … might feel a greater need than native speakers to stress the importance” of what they have to say. However, such hyperbolic and inflated style can be damaging to L2 writers with respect to the evaluations of their writing because it can create an impression of “unnatural” communication particularly in the case of beginning writers. Hinkel (2002, 2003a) has come to a similar conclusion that L2 writers often produce formal written prose that appears to be overstated with many exaggerated claims due to the comparative prevalence of intensifiers and exaggeratives in contexts where hedging devices would seem to be more appropriate.

It seems that PS writers’ use of hedges and intensifiers is similar to the way Arab speakers utilize these devices. Classical Arabic prose does not place a high value on hedges and understatements; rather, amplification and exaggeration are considered to be an appropriate means of persuasion (Hinkel, 2005). For example, Connor (1996) and Sa’adeddin (1989) cite a number of studies that describe Arabic rhetorical expression as amplified and overassertive. Hinkel (2005), too, states that although the use of exaggerations and overstatements is not appropriate in formal Anglo-American writing, they are considered acceptable in persuasive writing in Koranic rhetorical tradition. Taking into consideration the fact that Iranian writers are Muslim and influenced by the same rhetorical tradition, one can come to the point that PSs’ written academic prose which is influenced by Koranic rhetorical tradition is characterized by an overuse of intensifiers and a more limited range of hedges. However, this way of writing is not acceptable in Anglo-American writing tradition. As Jordan (1997) cautions intensifiers need to be used sparingly or avoided altogether because in academic contexts, writers need to be cautious in their claims or statements.

The findings of the present study confirms those of previous research which found that in classical Chinese rhetoric, exaggerations and overstatements may be seen as a device of added persuasion and indirectness (Hinds, 1984). In many languages including Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese and Arabic, amplification is seen as a
valid and eloquent rhetorical device to convey the writer’s power of conviction and/or desirability (Connor, 1996; Sa’adeddin, 1989). This study indicates that Persian writers like other NNS writers employ intensifiers more frequently than do NSs while they utilize hedging devices less frequently than them.

These results point to the fact that, in this specific corpus of RAs, NSs appeared to be more cautious than PSs by relying more on hedges to soften their claims and propositions. On the contrary, PSs utilized intensifiers more frequently than NSs indicating their desire to stress the importance of what they want to say. So, PSs utilized intensifiers in an unacceptable way because these linguistic devices are associated with the informal register and their use must be limited in written formal academic texts. In order to be cautious enough when expressing the findings of their studies, academic writers need to make use of hedges rather than intensifiers. However, this divergent use of hedges and intensifiers can be attributed to cross-cultural differences between NSs and NNSs.

Figure 1
Differences between the Means of NSs’ and PSs’ Use of Hedges and Intensifiers
In order to see whether these differences are statistically significant or not, nine Mann Whitney U-tests were run. To correct for multiple comparisons, the significance level was corrected through the *Bonferroni test*. It was primarily set at 0.05 in this study and as nine comparisons were supposed to be made, this significance level was divided by the number of possible comparisons resulting in the new significance level which was 0.005 (0.05/9). Therefore, in this section, the significance level was set at 0.005 and differences smaller than this level were considered to be significant. Table 3 presents the results of Mann Whitney U-tests for hedging devices in NS and PS discussion sections.

**Table 3**

*Mann Whitney U-tests Results for Hedging Devices*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Epistemic hedges</th>
<th>Lexical hedges</th>
<th>Possibility hedges</th>
<th>Downtoners</th>
<th>Assertive pronouns</th>
<th>Adverbs of frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mann-Whitney U</td>
<td>168.0</td>
<td>178.0</td>
<td>148.5</td>
<td>183.5</td>
<td>191.5</td>
<td>143.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilcoxon W</td>
<td>378.0</td>
<td>388.0</td>
<td>358.5</td>
<td>393.5</td>
<td>401.5</td>
<td>353.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Z</td>
<td>-.86</td>
<td>-.59</td>
<td>-1.39</td>
<td>-.44</td>
<td>-.23</td>
<td>-1.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.38</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>.65</td>
<td>.81</td>
<td>.11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As table 3 indicates, there were no statistically significant differences between NSs’ and PSs’ use of hedging devices in the discussion sections of their RAs; that is, NSs and PSs have utilized these specific devices approximately in the same manner. Now, the first research question which asked whether PSs employ hedges in the discussion sections of their articles in the same manner as NSs can be answered. Results indicated that there were variations in the use of hedges in the discussion sections of RAs between NSs’ and PSs’ but these differences were not statistically significant. Regarding the use of intensifiers, too, results indicated that there were no statistically significant differences between these two groups of writers. These findings are presented in table 4.

**Table 4**

*Mann Whitney U-tests Results for Intensifiers*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Universal and negative pronouns</th>
<th>Amplifiers</th>
<th>Emphatics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mann-Whitney U</td>
<td>174.0</td>
<td>193.0</td>
<td>170.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilcoxon W</td>
<td>384.0</td>
<td>403.0</td>
<td>380.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Z</td>
<td>-.70</td>
<td>-.18</td>
<td>-.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.48</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td>.42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
With regard to the second research question which asked whether there are any significant differences between NSs’ and PSs’ use of intensifiers in the discussion sections of their articles, one can come to the point that the use of intensifiers was divergent between NSs and PSs but these differences were not statistically significant. The above tables indicate that none of the differences are statistically significant even at the more conservative level of significance; that is, .05. As mentioned above, there were differences between PSs’ and NSs’ use of these devices but these differences were not statistically significant. One likely justification for this finding can be the level of proficiency of the PS writers. The corpus selected for this study consisted of articles published in international scholarly journals. These RAs were written by advanced PSs who were mostly university professors. So, they seem to be aware of NSs’ norms and preferences in writing especially with regard to the use of hedges and intensifiers although some variations were observed with regard to the way these two groups utilized these devices.

5. Conclusion

In general terms, an examination of median frequency rates of hedges and intensifiers in PS and NS academic RA discussion sections points to the fact that Persian writers employ a more limited range of hedging devices, “largely associated with conversational discourse and casual spoken interactions” (Hinkel, 2005, p. 47). The findings also revealed that there was a prevalence use of conversational intensifiers and overstatements in the L2 writing of Persian speakers that are ubiquitous in informal speech but are rare in formal Anglo-American written prose. Although none of these differences were statistically significant, they confirmed the results of previous studies with respect to the use of hedges and intensifiers in NNSs’ formal academic writing.

The divergent use of hedges and intensifiers in NSs’ and PSs’ written prose can be attributed to cross-cultural differences. Believing in Islam and being influenced by Koranic rhetorical tradition, Iranian writers try to persuade the readers of their findings by making use of intensifiers rather than hedging devices. Instead of being cautious while presenting their findings by utilizing hedges, they resort to intensification which can be semantically inappropriate in the context of academic writing. So, it can be concluded that inflating while presenting the results of studies is a characteristic of NNS writers rather than that of NSs.

So, a need is felt for instruction in the uses and functions of hedges and intensifiers to Persian learners of English because numerous studies have pointed to the fact that a lack of
necessary skills in constructing formal academic text places NNS university degree-bound students at a great disadvantage when they compete for grades and academic achievement in the same courses and in competition with NS students (e.g., Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998; Hinkel, 1997, 2002, 2003a, 2003b; Holmes, 1984, 1988; Johns, 1997; Jordan, 1997).

Hinkel (2005, p. 48) emphasizes that teachers who are responsible for teaching the importance of hedging in L2 academic writing need to be persistent and consistent in their instruction “because the need to hedge propositions and claims to show an appropriate amount of hesitation and uncertainty in writing is a textual feature more specific to the Anglo-American rhetorical tradition than to others”. Additionally, L2 writing teachers need to focus on the key differences between those semantic and syntactic features that differentiate formal written and informal conversational registers (Jordan, 1997). So, L2 writers need to become proficient enough by expanding and developing the range of their vocabulary and grammatical structures to be able to express the results and findings of their studies without relying too much on intensifiers. They need to be made aware of the fact that they can make their academic writings more natural and normal with respect to native speakers’ norms and preferences in writing by editing their writings through omitting or replacing some of the lexical features that taken together can present an overstated and exaggerated picture of their written prose.

Some people may argue against this conclusion believing that it is not necessary to conform to NSs’ norms and preferences in writing so far as any writer is influenced by his/her own cultural values and background identity. However, it is worth noting here that as far as NNSs’ RAs are evaluated and judged by NS editors, it seems necessary for NNS writers to adjust their writings to NSs’ norms and preferences in academic writing because sometimes their RAs are rejected solely due to language problems. One of these problems is the divergent use of hedges and intensifiers which make NNSs’ prose seem different from that of NSs and this difference present an unnatural and abnormal picture of their academic writing which may lead to the rejection and lack of publication of their RAs. If so, NNSs will not be able to present the findings of their studies to other members of the discourse community. This fact points to the importance of conforming to NSs’ writing norms and preferences.
References


Title

The Type and Frequency of Language Learning Strategies (LLSs) Employed by Iranian EFL Learners

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Biodata

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Abstract

This research aimed at discovering the type and frequency of Language Learning Strategies (LLSs) that Iranian advanced EFL learners use in learning a language. To this end, 60 EFL learners including IELTS candidates as well as university students learning English as a foreign language were selected. The data required for the present study was gathered through Oxford's SILL questionnaire. The results showed that the most frequently LLSs employed by learners was metacognitive strategy and the least frequently used ones were memory and affective strategies. The findings include pedagogical implications for language teachers, learners, and material designers.

Keywords: Language Learning Strategies (LLSs), Frequency, Iranian advanced EFL learners, Language learning

1. Introduction

Many scholars and linguists believe that if the students are taught and encouraged to learn and use the language strategies, language learning will be facilitated (Wanden & Rubin, 1987; Rigney, 1978), learners' language competence will be developed (Tarone, 1983; Faerch & Kasper, 1983) and language learners will be more self-directed and successful (O'malley
& Chamot 1990; Cohen, 1998; Oxford, 1990 a&b; Thompson & Rubin, 1993). This belief reminds us an old Chinese proverb mentioned in Wenden's article in 1985 which states that instead of giving a man a fish to eat for a day, it is better to teach him how to fish so that he can eat for a life time.

Many researchers have focused on the language learning strategies and their correlation with the learners' success or failure and also learners' proficiency in language learning and the learners' proficiency (Oxford, 1990 b; Sheorey, 1999; Nisbet, Tinidall, & Arroyo, 2005; Oxford & Nyikos, 1993; Oxford & Nyikos, 1989:291). Others have discerned that LLSs employed by learners are different based on their intrinsic or extrinsic motivation, belief, gender, age, etc. (Bremner, 1999; Goh & Kwah, 1997; Green & Oxford, 1995; Oxford, 1996). However, plentiful research has not been done in this subject considering the importance of LLSs. As a result, doing such a result seems to be of crucial importance.

More specifically, the present study seeks answers to the following questions
1. What Language Learning Strategies (LLSs) do Iranian advanced EFL learners use in learning English?
2. What are the most frequently used LLSs?
3. Do all Iranian EFL advanced learners use the same LLSs?

2. Review of literature
Numerous practical researches have been done on the LLSs and their relationship with the factors that are significant in foreign or second language learning. For instance:
Kamarul Shukri Mat Teh et al (2009) attempted to have a closer look and gender and Arabic language learning strategies use. The purpose of their study was to investigate whether or not there were differences between male and female Arabic students regarding the LLSs that were used by them. They surveyed 457 students at 13 secondary schools in Terengganu, Malaysia and used Oxfords' SILL questionnaire. They found out that a significant gender difference exists in the use of LLSs in general and that female students use LLSs more frequently than males. They also realized that female students outnumber the male students in the use of affective and metaphysic strategies.
Haifa Al-Buainain (2010) did a research on language learning strategies employed by English majors at Qatar University. The participants were 120 Arab students enrolled in the Foreign Languages Department at Qatar University. The research used Strategies Inventory of Language Learning (SILL) questionnaire. According to the findings of her study, students
tended to use metacognitive strategies more frequently than the other LLSs and the least frequently used LLSs were affective strategies. The results also revealed that based on students' level and proficiency, they used different LLSs.

Norman Fewell (2010) studied the language learning strategies utilized by Japanese college EFL students using a Japanese translated version of SILL questionnaire, a computerized English proficiency test in addition to a brief background questionnaire. The results of his study indicated that LLSs selected by students may have a significant effect on their success or failure in foreign language learning.

Yuang Fang Yu and Bing Wang (2009) conducted a study to investigate the LLSs employed by Chinese secondary school EFL students in north east China from the perspective of socio-cultural theory. They used both quantitative and qualitative method to achieve their goal. They concluded that the most frequently used LLSs by Chinese secondary school EFL learners were memory and cognitive strategies they also found out that based on the learning context, classroom practice and evaluation method, Chinese EFL learners utilized different LLSs.

Kyungsim Hong (2006) compared monolingual Korean and bilingual Korean – Chinese university students' beliefs about language learning and language learning strategy use. In order to collect data, Strategy Inventory Language Learning (SILL), the Beliefs about Language Learning Inventory (BALLI) and Individual Background Questionnaire (IBQ) were used. He discovered that monolinguals used compensation strategies most frequently. While the most frequently used strategies by bilinguals were cognitive strategies. However, both groups' use of social and memory strategies were less than the other strategies. Although both groups were strongly motivated to learn English, that is they had strong instrumental motivation to do so, the bilingual group had stronger beliefs about the significance of language learning and was not afraid of communicating and speaking with English native speakers.

Oxford's SILL questionnaire, which is one of the most frequently used manuals of learner strategy assessment tool currently available was applied to determine the frequency of use of language learning strategies.

It is worthy of mentioning that the version of SILL used in this study is a fifty-item instrument that is grouped into two main groups, direct strategies which are classified into memory, cognitive and compensation strategies and indirect strategies which are divided into metacognitive, affective and social strategies.
Subjects were required to answer the questions on their strategy use on a five-point Likert scale which were:
1- Never or almost never true of me.
2- Usually not true of me
3- Some what true of me
4- Usually true of me
5- Always or almost always true of me.
The higher numbers chosen indicated a more frequent use of the strategy concerned.

Meanwhile, in order to minimize the effects of students’ stress and maximize their concentration on the test, they were asked to answer the questions in a silent class and there was no time limit. They were also told that the results of their test would not affect their course results.

The participants of the study were sixty B.A students studying English at Shiraz Azad University and also sixty IELTS students studying at Bahar Language Institute. Subjects ranged in age from eighteen to forty years and consisted of both males and females. A sample of sixty students was selected out of one hundred students studying at Shiraz Azad University and also Bahar Language Institute. Azad University and IELTS students had different goals and motivation. IELTS students held different educational degrees and jobs. They were selected from six classes at Shiraz Azad University and seven classes at Bahar Language institute. More than two third of the subjects were female and the rest of them were male. When they were taking the test, both the researcher and their teacher were present and helped them when they faced a problem in comprehending or answering.

The instrument was administrated during one session of students' class time. The purpose of the study and its procedure was explained in advance. The participants were given the instruction how to fill in the LLSs questionnaire. The participants were allowed to ask questions about strategies and more explanation for each item.

3. Results and data analysis
The frequency of the use of strategies was calculated to spot the mostly preferred strategies employed by each advanced group of learners, i.e. IELTS and Azad University group.
3.1. All advanced students’ performance on LLSs questionnaire

Descriptive statistics showed that LLSs mean score of the whole participants was 169.8 out of 250. Furthermore, the maximum LLSs score was 225 and the minimum was 96. (Table 1)

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of All Advanced Students’ LLS Performance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statistic</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>169.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. Deviation</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum</td>
<td>225</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.1.1. IELTS students’ performance on LLSs questionnaire

The mean score of IELTS students on LLSs questionnaire was 175. Also, their maximum and minimum scores were 225 and 144 respectively. (Table 2)

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of IELTS Students’ LLSs Performance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statistic</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. Deviation</td>
<td>16.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum</td>
<td>225</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.1.2. Azad University students’ performance on LLSs questionnaire

As shown in Table 3 the mean score of Azad University students was 164.7. Furthermore, their maximum score on LLSs questionnaire was 218 while their minimum score was 96.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of Azad University Students’ LLSs Performance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statistic</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>164.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. Deviation</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum</td>
<td>218</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.2. Azad University students’ use of direct LLSs category

Descriptive statistics showed that mean scores of Azad University students in memory strategies, cognitive strategies and compensation strategies were 26.4, 45.9 and 19 respectively.
Table 4. Mean Scores of Azad University Students in Memory, Cognitive, and Compensation Strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statistic</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>26.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. Deviation</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5. Descriptive Statistics of Cognitive Marks of Azad University Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statistic</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>45.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. Deviation</td>
<td>8.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6. Descriptive Statistics of Compensation Marks of Azad University Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statistic</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. Deviation</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Statistics also revealed that the mean scores of Azad University students in metacognitive, affective and social strategies were 33.7, 18.9 and 20.6 respectively.

3.3. Azad University students’ use of indirect LLSs category

Table 7. Descriptive Statistics of Meta-cognitive Marks of Azad University Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statistic</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>33.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. Deviation</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8. Descriptive Statistics of Affective Marks of Azad University Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statistic</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>18.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. Deviation</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9. Descriptive Statistics of Social Marks of Azad University Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statistic</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>20.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. Deviation</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.4. IELTS students’ use of direct LLSs category

Descriptive statistics of direct language learning strategy category in IELTS group are presented. (Tables 10 – 15)

Descriptive statistics showed that IELTS students mean scores in direct strategies i.e. memory, cognitive and compensation strategies were 29.1, 48.1 and 23 respectively.

*Table 10. Descriptive Statistics of Memory Marks of IELTS Students*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statistic</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>29.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. Deviation</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 11. Descriptive Statistics of Cognitive Marks of IELTS Students*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statistic</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>48.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. Deviation</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 12. Descriptive Statistics of Compensation Marks of IELTS Students*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statistic</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. Deviation</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Statistics also revealed that IELTS students' mean scores in indirect strategies i.e. metacognitive, affective and social strategies were 36.4, 18.9 and 19.4 respectively.

*Table 13. Descriptive Statistics of Meta-cognitive Marks of IELTS Students*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statistic</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>36.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. Deviation</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 14. Descriptive Statistics of Affective Marks of IELTS Students*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statistic</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>18.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. Deviation</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 15. Descriptive Statistics of Social Marks of IELTS Students*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statistic</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>19.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. Deviation</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.5. Comparing the LLSs performance of the two groups

As shown in the Table 16, the results of T-test analysis reports that the mean differences between the two groups is -10.27 and IELTS students performed better than Azad University students.

Table 16. Independent Sample t-test Between LLS Marks of Two Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>groups</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Azad</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>164.7</td>
<td>25.2</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IELTS</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>16.9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The average of IELTS students is significantly higher (P<0.01)

The following table shows the Iranian advanced EFL learners' LLSs use frequencies.

Table 17. LLSs Groups’ Frequencies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std.Deviation</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>memory</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>3.088</td>
<td>.53991</td>
<td>1.78</td>
<td>4.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cognitive</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>3.359</td>
<td>.54157</td>
<td>1.93</td>
<td>4.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>compensation</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>3.504</td>
<td>.62565</td>
<td>1.67</td>
<td>4.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>metacognitive</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>3.895</td>
<td>.57099</td>
<td>1.89</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>affective</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>3.159</td>
<td>.69827</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>4.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>social</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>3.334</td>
<td>.81721</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. Conclusion

According to data analysis, some sorts of strategies were used more and some, less frequently than others. Memory strategies were the least frequently employed by all the advanced learners while metacognitive strategies were the most frequently used strategies by them.

Moreover, the results of analysis revealed that the most frequently employed strategies by both IELTS and Azad University group were metacognitive strategies. Also, the least frequently used strategies by Azad University group were memory and affective and compensation strategies respectively, while the least frequently used strategies by IELTS group were affective strategies. Furthermore, the secondly least used strategies by IELTS group were memory and social strategies equally.

It was also found out that there was a significant difference between Azad University students and IELTS students regarding memory, compensation and metacognitive strategies. That is, IELTS students outperformed Azad University students in the mentioned strategies.

The pedagogical implication of the present study is based on Oxford's and Nykios' (1989) view on language learning strategies. According to them effectiveness of language learning strategies is strongly related to language learners and their choice of strategies. On the other
hand, as quoted by Marcer (2006) certain strategies are not intrinsically good, but even recognized useful ones need to be practiced to be used.

Practically speaking, all teachers and material designers and even language learners can benefit from the findings of this research. The identification of the most frequently used and the most effective strategies would be a great help for both the teachers and learners. Learners would be informed of these strategies and use them while learning English or any other foreign languages and teachers would be able to improve students’ learning.

The present study was carried out in one of Iran universities and one of language learning institutes. As a result it can have limited generalizability. Similar study can be conducted in a larger scope. Further studies can be done to compare the effect of LLSs on elementary language learner's lexical and grammatical performance with the effect of LLSs on advanced and intermediate language learner's lexical and grammatical performance.

The sample in this study was chosen from among advanced language learners. Further research may address elementary or intermediate language learners.

References


Appendix

Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL)

This form of the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) is for students of English of English as a second or foreign language. You will find statements about learning English. Please read each one and write the response (1, 2, 3, 4 or 5) that tells HOW TRUE OF YOU THE STATEMENT IS in the space next to the statement.

1. Never or almost never true of me.
2. Usually not true of me.
3. Somewhat true of me.
4. Usually true of me.
5. Always or almost always true of me.

Part A

1. I think of relationships between what I already know and new things I learn in English.
2. I use new English words in a sentence so I can remember them.
3. I connect the sound of a new English word and an image or picture of the word to help me remember the word.
4. I remember a new English word by making a mental picture of a situation in which the word might be used.
5. I use rhymes to remember new English words.
6. I use flashcards to remember new English words.
7. I physically act out new English words.
8. I review English lessons often.
9. I remember new English words or phrases by remembering their location on the page, on the board, or on a street sign.

Part B

10. I say or write new English words several times.
11. I try to talk like native English speakers.
12. I practice the sounds of English.
13. I use the English words I know in different ways.
15. I watch English language TV shows spoken in English or go to movies spoken in English.
16. I read for pleasure in English.
17. I write notes, messages, letters or reports in English.
18. I first skim an English passage (read over the passage quickly) then go back and read carefully.
19. I look for words in my own language that are similar to new words in English.
20. I try to find patterns in English.
21. I find the meaning of an English word by dividing it into parts that I understand.
22. I try not to translate word-for-word.
23. I make summaries of information that I hear or read in English.

Part C
24. To understand unfamiliar English words I make guesses.
25. When I can’t think of a word during a conversation in English, I use gestures.
26. I make up new words if I do not know the right ones in English.
27. I read English without looking up every new word.
28. I try to guess what the other person will say next in English.
29. If I can’t think of an English word, I use a word or phrase that means the same thing.

Part D
30. I try to find as many ways as I can to use my English.
31. I notice my English mistakes and use that information to help me do better.
32. I pay attention when someone is speaking.
33. I try to find out how to be a better learner of English.
34. I plan my schedule so I will have enough time to study English.
35. I look for people I can talk to in English.
36. I look for opportunities to read as much as possible in English.
37. I have clear goals for improving my English skills.
38. I think about my progress in learning English.

Part E
39. I try to relax whenever I feel afraid of using English.
40. I encourage myself to speak English even when I am afraid of making a mistake.
41. I give myself a reward or treat when I do well in English.
42. I notice if I am tense or nervous when I am studying or using English.
43. I write down my feelings in a language learning diary.
44. I talk to someone else about how I feel when I am learning English.

Part F
45. If I do not understand something in English, I ask the other person to slow down or say it again.
46. I ask English speakers to correct me when I talk.
47. I practice English with other students.
48. I ask for help from English speakers.
49. I ask questions in English.
50. I try to learn about the culture of English speakers.

Strategy Questionnaire (Oxford and Nyikos, 1989)
Title

On the Possible Relationship between Receptive and Productive Knowledge of Collocational Patterns among Iranian TEFL University Students

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate the relationship between students’ knowledge of receptive and productive collocation. The study involved 60 junior TEFL university students registered in a four-year B.A. program at Islamic Azad University, Khorramabad, Iran. They were the students of four intact classes available to the researcher. So the study used availability sampling. To measure students’ knowledge of both productive and receptive collocation, a 70-item test of collocation was constructed, validated and used. Pearson-Product Correlation was applied to measure the relationship between the specified variables. The results showed that university students majoring in TEFL have insufficient knowledge of collocational patterns. It was also shown that there is a significant relationship between students’ knowledge of receptive and productive collocation. The implications of the findings for teachers, learners, and textbook writers, are discussed.

Keywords: Receptive Collocation, Productive Collocation, Collocational Patterns.

1. Introduction

For the last three decades, language pedagogy has witnessed a great deal of practice devoted to the breadth of vocabulary. It means that learning vocabulary was traditionally considered as learning meaning within the individual words, not the environment in which they occurred.
Thus, little attention given to the depth of vocabulary in the past confirms Almela’s (2007) contention that research on “lexical restriction was considered as de Cinderela” (p. 22). Recently, this approach has been changed. That is, vocabulary depth has increasingly attracted the attention of scholars, and is currently the subject of numerous research projects (Almela, 2007, p. 22).

In this regard, researchers, teachers, and even learners have recognized that full power for meaning is only displayed in discourse, that is, in the company of other words. For example, from the mere selection of the single word *strong* we cannot predict whether it describes a physical or a psychological quality (compare *strong* coffee with *strong* personality). Knowledge of these word restrictions is considered as knowledge of collocational patterns. (Almela, 2007, p.23, Widdowson 2007, p.79). Thus, this study attempts to see to what extent students’ performance on receptive and productive measures of collocational behavior is related to each other. To this end, the following study was designed and carried out

### 2. Review of the related literature

Generally, a dichotomy has traditionally been established in the field of vocabulary testing with respect to the nature of lexical competence: the distinction between breadth and depth of vocabulary knowledge (Anderson & Freebody, 1981). The former tries to cover the number of words the students know, i.e. the size of their lexicon (Jaen, 2007), while the latter refers to the degree to which students know words whether they possess a multidimensional qualitative knowledge including pronunciation, spelling, meaning, register, frequency, and grammatical and collocational patterns (Qian & Schedl, 2004).

Since from a practical point of view, it is easier to test lexical size, measures of vocabulary size are further developed than those of depth (Read, 2000). To investigate categories of lexical depth, measures of collocations have been developed. Collocational measures seem to fall into two categories: the ones which attempt to test productive knowledge and those assessing receptive knowledge. The former was the only aspect investigated during the decade of the nineties, when Bahns and Eldaw (1993), Biskup (1992) and Farghal and Obiedat (1995) designed the first tests of collocations (Jaen, 2007). In the current decade, however, most of the researchers’ attention has been focused on the design of the receptive category of the collocation measures (Barfield, 2003; Bonk, 2001; Keshavarz & Salimi, 2007; Mochizuki, 2002). In the present study, collocation can be looked at as lexical depth.
Research into analysis of collocations is not new, though during the last three decades the most promising results have been shown in the field of collocation. Kennedy (1998, p.108) argues that identifying the repeated co-occurrence of certain words in the Bible by Cruden goes to 250 years ago. In the 1930s, the British linguist, H.E. Palmer, went through a corpus-based research on repeated combination of English words (Kennedy, 1998, p.108). On the other hand, McEnery and Xiao (2006, p.82) argue that collocation has been studied for 50 years. They further pinpoint that collocation, as a technical term, was first used by Firth (1957) when he argued "I propose to bring forward as a technical term, meaning by collocation, and apply the test of collocability" (see McEnery & Xiao, 2006, p.82).

However, for the definition of collocation, different researchers and linguists have different ideas. There is no absolute, unanimous consensus over the definition and classification of collocation. Based on the literature, different researchers have set their own criterion to continue their collocation studies. Martynska (2004, p.5) argues that although collocation, only recently, has attracted linguistics study, there is no exhaustive and uniform definition or categorization of collocation and it seems to be one of the most problematic and error-generating areas of vocabulary, especially for second language learning.

Firth (1968 in Walsh, 2005, p.2) defines collocation as "statements of the habitual or customary places of the word". Sinclair (1991) defines collocations as two or more words in a text within a short space of each other. For Halliday, collocations are examples of "word combinations" (Halliday, 1966 in Walsh, 2005, p.3). Stubbs (1995, p. 24) defines collocation as "a relationship of habitual co-occurrence between words". It should be mentioned that Sinclair (1991) and Stubbs (1995) are Firth's followers in their view on collocation. However, the most commonly shared definition of collocation is: "the tendency of one word to co-occur with one or more other words in a specific field" (Hsu, 2007, p.2). This common definition is not still comprehensive in that it does not tell us whether these words are habitual or how far these words are from each other to be considered as a collocation. If collocations are in a "habitual company" (coined by Firth, 1957), how about discontinuous collocations like: the distinction I have made between these items (in Kennedy, 1998, p.112)

On the other hand, Kjelmer (1982, in Kennedy, 1998, p. 112) noted that one of the features of collocations was that they were combinations which co-occur more often than the frequencies in the corpus of the constituents of the combination would lead us to expect. Kennedy (1998, p. 112), further, states that this criterion would select not only combinations such as another one or last week but also non-grammatical combinations such as although he or and he. Considering this criterion as problematic, Kennedy (1998, p. 112), however,
argues that in some corpora some sequences which occur only once (and therefore do not count as collocations) are nevertheless immediately recognizable as recurring in the language. Kennedy's (1998) idea of collocation as "lexicalized" (p.118) has been criticized by Almela (2007: 26) for the lack of empirical adequacy.

McEnery and Xiao (2006, p. 106), further, criticize Greenbaum's (1974, p.82) definition of collocation "a frequent co-occurrence of two lexical items in the language" –as a notion which only refers to statistically significant collocation. They further pinpoint that Greenbaum's definition does not tell us how frequent the co-occurrence of two lexical items should be to be considered as a collocation (McEnery and Xiao, 2006).

However, one of the most inclusive approaches to the notion of collocation, taken by corpus linguists, is that of Renouf and Sinclair (1991, in Kennedy, 1998:119), who have suggested that collocational patterning can be usefully described in terms of a framework which consist of two function words with an intervening lexical word.

Followed from the above, it can be inferred that though too many studies have been devoted to the investigation of collocations and their role in language pedagogy, little has been done to investigate the relationship between receptive and productive knowledge of collocational behavior and the importance of this relationship in language teaching. Thus, the study presented here is hoped to be in the same line with this need. Hence, to fill the gap, the following research question was constructed: Is there any significant relationship between receptive and productive knowledge of collocational patterns among Iranian TEFL university students?

3. Method
3.1 Participants
The study involved 60 junior students majoring in TEFL. They were registered in a four-year B.A. program at Islamic Azad University, Khorramabad, Iran. They were the students of four intact classes available to the researcher. Their age ranged from 18 to 24. All of them were female students.

3.2 Instrumentation
The materials which were used for the present study included a Collocational Behavior Test (CBT) consisting of two sub-tests of receptive and productive collocation and a Validated Criterion Collocation Test (CCT) developed by Chen (2008) for the purpose of measuring the English collocation competence of college students in Taiwan. However, in this study, it was used as a criterion measure against which the concurrent validity of the collocation test was
3.3. Procedures

3.3.1 Test construction and validation

One of the most important functions of a language test is to help decision-making during the trial or piloting of that test (Baker, 1989; Backman, 1990; Backman & Palmer, 1996; McNamara, 2000). This usually involves administering the test to a known population so that the analysis will throw light on the behavior of the test. Accordingly, in the present study, different steps were taken to collect information about the usefulness of the test. The first step was item analysis. After a set of items for each sub-test was written, reviewed by experts, and revised on the basis of their suggestions, the CBT was ready for experimentation tryout on a sample group (30 EFL learners). A thorough item analysis was conducted in order to obtain the index of item difficulty and item discrimination. The scores collected from this administration were analyzed using Brown's (2004) cut-off score.

The next step in the process of pilot study was to establish reliability. To establish the desired reliability of the collocation test (CBT), Kuder-Richardson formula (KR-21) was used. This is generally assumed as the best technique to find out inter-item consistency of any test (Brown, 2004; Best & Kahn, 2006). The reliability estimate for the whole test was .8496, and for receptive and productive sub-tests were estimated to be .82 and .61, respectively.

The third phase of test standardization through pilot study was establishing the validity of the test. For this purpose, more than one evidence was applied to support the validity of the collocation test, namely Internal consistency and Concurrent validity. For the former, the scores of the sub-tests (receptive and productive) were correlated with each other and also with the total test. It was believed that if the newly developed test is a valid measure of collocation, it will significantly correlate with the outside criterion measure of the same language ability (Chen, 2008). To achieve this objective and to establish concurrent validity, the researchers first administered the test to a group of 30 subjects. Then, within two weeks interval, the Criterion Collocation Test (CCT) was administered to the same group. The results showed that the test fulfills the criterion of concurrent validity.

The items selected for the intended test of CBT were extracted from Collins Cobuild English Dictionary (2006). The items selected were based on different collocational behaviors of near synonyms. For example, the collocational behavior of the word substantial is meal while the collocational behavior of the word big is food (see the examples below). Once the items were constructed, they were presented to two professors of Arak University,
Iran for their expert opinion and advice. They were requested to analyze each item on the basis of their perceptual complexity and face validity.

To that end, a 70-item test was designed, divided into two sub-tests of Receptive collocation Test (hereafter, RCT) and the productive one (PCT). The basic reason for including two sub-tests was to make it possible so as to measure both passive and active knowledge of semantic prosody. The multiple-choice format and the matching items were used for receptive tasks. For this task, students were presented with the definitions of the concepts expressed by the target collocations as provided by the Collins Cobuild English Dictionary (2006). An example of an item for multiple-choice receptive tasks is presented below.

(ex.1) I have always enjoyed eating a substantial........................ in a northern restaurant
   a. food        b. meal         c. cake          d. banana

For the assessment of candidates’ productive knowledge of Collocation, filling-in and translation tasks were used. In this case, this item-response format was closed-ended, and students were asked to complete a definition of the concept expressed by the intended collocations. When these items prompted more than one correct answer, they were all accepted. This was, for example, the case in the following item from the productive SPT, where both “unintelligible” and “abstruse” were accepted:

(ex.2) A /An …………TALK is the one you find difficult to understand.

For translation task, however, some incomplete English statements (with their base nouns left out) were presented with their complete Persian translations. The base nouns in Persian language were underlined and the subjects were required to fill in the blanks with appropriate English equivalents for the underlined base nouns in Persian.

3.3.2 Data collection and analysis

After fulfilling the requirements of the test construction mentioned above, the need was felt to launch the main study. During the administration phase of this study, some careful steps were taken. First, to make the situation as stress-free as possible, the candidates were seated in a relaxed atmosphere. However, for enhancing the motivation of the subjects so that they could answer the questions honestly and meticulously, the researchers informed them of tuition discount for the (first three) best grades toward the final examination. They were assured of the confidentiality of the results. They were also encouraged to ask questions, if any, regarding instructions and unclear choices. In terms of administration and timing, students were allowed 70 minutes to complete the tests, although most of the subjects were
able to finish them before the allocated time, indicating that the measures were correctly designed or chosen from a practical point of view.

Taking into account the above conditions, the researcher administered the CBT to the participants with the aim of determining the relationship between students’ performance on two sub-tests of RCT and PCT. A matched t-test was run for the analysis of mean differences between RCT and PCT sub-tests. Moreover, Pearson-Product correlation was applied to determine the relationship between the scores on receptive and productive collocation. Finally, for test scoring, since items were designed (even for fill-in and translation tasks) in objective formats, there was no problem of inter-rater reliability. Correct answers scored one point and incorrect answers scored zero.

4. Results and discussion

As mentioned before, concerning the validity of the CBT, the coefficient correlation between CBT and its sub-tests was highly significant (P < 0.05) (see Table 1). However, an inspection of the results of coefficient of internal consistency showed that CBT demonstrates lower correlation to PCT than to RCT. This may be due to difficult nature of productive items evidenced in Jaen’s (2007) study in which he concluded that learners have more problems with producing collocations than receiving them. Furthermore, the validity coefficient between CBT and the CCT was also significant (see Table 2). This shows the concurrent validity of the test and demonstrates CBT as a valid measure of collocational patterns.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>CBT</th>
<th>RCT</th>
<th>PCT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson correlation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.923(**)</td>
<td>0.740(**)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>CBT</th>
<th>RCT</th>
<th>PCT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson correlation</td>
<td>0.923(**)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.454(**)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>CBT</th>
<th>RCT</th>
<th>PCT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson correlation</td>
<td>0.740(**)</td>
<td>0.454(**)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. ** Correlation is significant at 0.05 level (2-tailed).
Table 2

*Correlation between CBT and CCT*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>CBT</th>
<th>CCT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CBT</td>
<td>Pearson correlation: 1</td>
<td>0.289(∗)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed): 0.000</td>
<td>0.093(∗)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N: 60</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCT</td>
<td>Pearson correlation: 0.289(∗)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed): 0.093</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N: 60</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note:* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

These findings are in line with what Bachman (1990) purported. According to Bachman (1990), some correlations, if moderately high, can be cited as evidence that the new test measures almost the same general area of behavior as other tests designed by the same name as the new test. This idea can also be supported by what Oller, (1979:56 in Miao, 2006:9) stated that "a low correlation may result from the fact that one of the tests may be too easy or too difficult".

According to Oller (1979, cited in Miao, 2006:9), low correlations between different tests or measures are sometimes too simply taken to mean that they are measuring different skills. Other possible reasons for low correlation may be found in Oller’s explanation: ... It may mean that one of the tests is unreliable. Or that both of them are unreliable or a low correlation may result from the fact that one or both tests do not measure what they are supposed to measure (i.e., are not valid), or merely that one of them (or both) has (or have) a low degree of validity (Oller, 1979, p.56 in Miao, 2006, p. 9).

Not contrary to the above justifications, Hatch & Farhady (1982) pinpoint that in interpreting a variable we should depend more on logical reasoning rather than on figures. "A correlation coefficient may be very high but meaningless, or it may be fairly low and still meaningful" (Hatch & Farhady, 1982, p.208). It is important to note here that any interpretation depends on what variables are being compared and what kind of decisions must be made on the basis of the discovered relation.

These results are also in accordance with the theoretical assumption of Murphy and Shofer (1998, as cited in Miao, 2006), that is, theoretically, a correlation could range in absolute value from 0.0 to 1.0, whereas in practice, most validity coefficients tend to be fairly small. A well, carefully chosen test is not likely to show a correlation greater than 0.50 with an important criterion and, in fact, validity coefficients greater than .30 are not all common in applied settings.
As mentioned, the research question, addressed in this study, asks whether there is any significant difference among learners’ scores on the receptive and productive collocation tests. The results of the comparison between the two sub-tests (see Table 3), show a clear difference between the mean scores in the RCT (21.91) and the PCT (10.28) sub-tests. Furthermore, based on the information on Table 3, the mean for the total scores on CBT is shown to be 16.10, which is very low compared to that of RCT, but is better than the mean scores of the PCT.

Table 3

Descriptives for RCT and PCT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Std. deviation</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Tests</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>7.04</td>
<td>21.91</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>RSP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>5.02</td>
<td>10.28</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>PSP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>5.16</td>
<td>16.10</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>SPT</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Equally interesting is the information relating to SD in both sub-tests. Oddly enough, subjects’ scores were more uniform in the PCT (5.02) than in the RCT (7.04) sub-tests. One possible explanation for this could be that the RCT discriminates between high and low scores of candidates, while the PCT produced such low scores for most students that no variance is observable: all candidates show the same lack of knowledge. This is also supported by the range which amounts to 30% in the RCT as compared to 17% in the PCT.

As shown in Table 4 below, a t-test of the two means (t = 13.70) of RCT and PCT confirmed that the difference between these two was highly significant (p = 0.000). In other words, the difference between the scores on receptive and productive semantic prosody is not due to chance, hence rejecting the null hypothesis of no significant difference between the specified variables.

Table 4

T-test for Comparing Means of RCT and PCT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paired differences</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. deviation</th>
<th>Std. error of mean</th>
<th>95% confidence interval</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig. (2 tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td></td>
<td>Std. error of mean</td>
<td>Lower Bound</td>
<td>Upper Bound</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair 1</td>
<td>11.62778</td>
<td>6.57138</td>
<td>0.84836</td>
<td>9.93021</td>
<td>13.32534</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. * The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.
However, to examine the relationship between specified variables (RCT & PCT), the researcher used the statistical analysis of Pearson-product correlation. As it is shown in Table 5, the correlation between RCT and PCT scores is .448 which is significant at 0.05 probability level. Therefore, it can be argued that receptive knowledge of semantic prosody is moderately related to the productive knowledge.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RSP</th>
<th>PSP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson correlation sig.(2-tailed)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

In the present study, knowledge of collocational patterns is considered to be undermined in receptive, and to a great extent, in productive modes by most of EFL learners, the subjects. These poor achievements of learners on measures of collocation verify Nesselhauf’s (2003) contentions that collocations have been largely neglected by researchers, course designers and EFL practitioners. Furthermore, the results of the present study confirm the findings of some other researchers (Zughoul & Hussein, 2001; Keshavarz & Salimi, 2007) who found that EFL learners have insufficient knowledge of English collocations.

In the light of these results, we can conclude that knowledge of collocational patterns proves to be more difficult at the productive levels than at the receptive levels, a finding which empirically confirms the generally held hypothesis that this type of combination is particularly problematic for students in their linguistic production (Jaen, 2007). Thus, the findings of this study can motivate teachers to put much emphasis on teaching productive vocabulary in their classroom settings.

5. Conclusion

The results of data analysis presented above lead to fairly good conclusions. Based on the findings of this study, we can conclude that learning individual words and their meaning does not suffice to achieve great fluency in a second language. Knowing the way words combine into chunks of the language seems to be necessary for university students. Consequently, if learners’ sensitivity to various relations and conditions existing between words is not heightened enough or words are not learned in chunks, learners are not bound
to approach the native-like level of proficiency.

The findings of this study can have some implications for language pedagogy too. First, using the findings of the present study, teachers can realize the problems students may have in the development of language proficiency, which is supposed to be attributed to lack of collocation knowledge of words in ESL/EFL learning (Hoey, 2000; Nesselhauf, 2003; Partington, 1998; McEnery & Xiao, 2006). Second, to compensate for the miss of collocation knowledge realized in the learners’ receptive and/or productive use of collocation, teachers should integrate practice on collocational patterns into ESL/EFL vocabulary teaching to help language learners develop their vocabulary knowledge.

In teaching L2 vocabulary, students must first and foremost be made conscious of the lexical relationship between words. Foreign language students of today may be tomorrow’s translators, teachers and copy writers; they may constantly run the risk of presenting wrong connotations in the foreign language texts they produce. Thus, being aware of collocations of any type (productive/receptive) are of great importance to language learners; one of the things that distinguishes an advanced learner’s language from that of a native speaker is that advanced learners often manifest “grammatical correctness but collocational inappropriateness” (Hoey, 2003, p. 8) in their language performance. It means that advanced learners may not be able to apply and use the appropriate rules of collocation restrictions which are greatly related to the context of language use and even to cultural issues.

Furthermore, by considering the findings of this study, ESL/EFL textbook writers should be careful and meticulous in their choice of vocabulary for classroom instructions and educational purposes. Their textbook glossaries might also present appropriate exercises on collocational behavior.

References


Title

From Psychology of Intelligence to the Pedagogy of Multiple-Intelligences: Impact of Spatial Intelligence-Based Instruction on the Vocabulary Performance of EFL Learners

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Abstract

This article queries the impact of pictorial intelligence on the lexical enrichment of EFL learners. The study investigates the data of the participants divided into three groups of learners associated with pictorial instruction and non-pictorial instruction of vocabulary, taking the specification and dominance of spatial intelligence profiles, i.e. strong, moderate and weak ones, into consideration. The results revealed that the non-pictorially-instructed learners with low spatial intelligence had low performance; by contrast, the learners associated with picture-based instruction and with high and moderate spatial intelligence had high performance. The implications of the study dictate that integration of picture-based instruction into EFL vocabulary learning and teaching settings can be conducive to high performance.

Keywords: Intelligence, Intelligences, Spatial Intelligence, Picture-based instruction.

1. Introduction

Since Gardner (1983) drew on a vast range of interdisciplinary sciences such as genetics, psychology, neurology, history, philosophy and anthropology as well as cultural implications into the definition of intelligence, there has been, in my personal interpretation, a movement
from psychological views of intelligence, in singular and static form, to the sociological and pedagogical views of intelligences, in plural and dynamic form. In retrospect, intelligence was measured in connection with IQ tests so that the scores of learners typified their intelligence. These traditional and mono-dimensional views of intelligence included a narrow range of abilities and were associated with genetics (Gardner, 1991, 2006; Christison & Kennedy, 1999; Veenema & Gardner, 1996; Rahimian, 2005; Armstrong, 2003, 2000, 2006; Armitage et al., 2003; Christison, 1998; Alvis et al., 2004), as a result of which intelligences with pedagogical connotation came to be viewed. This revolutionary finding was called multiple-intelligences theory (MI) which appears below:

1. Interpersonal intelligence: This intelligence is concerned with the capacity to understand the intentions, motivations and desires of the people (Richards & Rogers, 2002; Armstrong, 2000, 2003).

2. Spatial Intelligence: The ability to sense form, space, color, line, and shape. It includes the ability to graphically represent some visual or spatial ideas (Christison, 1998; Armstrong, 2000, 2003).

3. Logical-mathematical intelligence: Christison (1998) believes that this is the intelligence including the use of numbers and reasoning power.

4. Verbal/linguistic intelligence: According to Armstrong (2000), by this intelligence we can use language in speaking or writing and through which we can manipulate syntax, semantics, and pragmatics of the language.

5. Bodily-kinesthetic intelligence: Christison (1998) postulates that this intelligence is connected to the ability to use the body for solving problems.

6. Intrapersonal intelligence: the ability to understand our own strengths, weaknesses, moods and intentions (Christison, 1998).

7. Musical Intelligence: This indicates the ability to sense rhythm, pitch and melody and is found in people with good ears for music and in singers (Christison, 1998).

8. Naturalist Intelligence: Alvis et al. (2004, p.6) held the view that “this intelligence focuses on the individual’s ability to recognize and discriminate among flora and fauna, and others in the world like clouds and rocks”. Along the same line, Gardner (1991) has conducted a great deal of discussion as to the inclusion of other intelligences such as spiritual intelligence and existential intelligence, but they have not been proved pedagogically of rich evidence.

Finally, since the present study does not consider MI in vacuum, but investigates its impact on lexical enrichment of the learners, hence, what follows is an in-brief introduction into vocabulary learning and teaching position.
2. A revised look at vocabulary teaching

In the literature of English language teaching and learning (ELTL), one major event, formerly, has been neglect of vocabulary due to its being given little priority in second language programs. However, there has recently been a renewed interest in the role of vocabulary in ELTL (Richards & Renandya, 2002; Nunan, 2003; Harmer, 2001; Johnson & Johnson, 1999).

Owing to the context-bound nature of learning vocabulary and renewed attention to teaching it, the present study ultimately tackles learning vocabulary in the context of spatial intelligence in connection with pictorial instruction.

The present investigation touches hence on the problems rephrased below:

1. Does pictorial intelligence-based instruction exert impact on vocabulary performance of EFL learners in EFL settings?
2. Is there any relationship between spatial intelligence and learning vocabulary?

3. Methodology

3.1. Participants

The participants mainly included three groups of learners (N=120) and some teachers who promised full confidentiality of the instruction and research. The research context of the study was Iranian Foreign languages Educational Department in Ardebil, Iran. The candidates, of varying age groups with different university education, ranged in ability from elementary to pre-intermediate, i.e., one elementary group and two pre-intermediate-level groups, and were enrolled in extensive English language courses designed to prepare them for communicative fluency.

3.2. Instrumentation

The instrument used in this study consists of a spatial intelligence questionnaire developed by Christison, (1998). The questionnaire included 12 statements totaling to 24 marks. On the other hand, two different pre-tests each including 20 questions, pictorial and non-pictorial-associated materials and the post-tests each containing 20 questions, were also employed. In addition, the specification of the participants’ spatial intelligence included twelve statements. The learners marked 2 if they strongly agreed, 1 if they partially agreed, and 0 if they strongly disagreed. Deserved also to be inserted, the reliability of pre-test and post-test run through Cranbach Alpha was also estimated at 0.81 and 0.87, respectively.
3.3. Design and Procedure

The design context of the present study was experimental. So as to materialize the design, at the outset, a pilot test was administered in pencil-and-paper format to a sample of mixed-group (young and adult) foreign language learners in order to remove aside some of the shortcomings related to the design of the research and the questions or questionnaire. Then, the participants were divided randomly into three groups with each group filling out a common spatial-intelligence questionnaire, followed by which the elementary group was administered a separate pre-test compared to the two pre-intermediate groups who took one overlapping pre-test so as to get informed of the homogeneity of the learners. Given the length of treatment, 17 sessions and each session including 90 minutes and also two sessions per week, the elementary group (with strong spatial intelligence) and the first (A) pre-intermediate group (with moderate spatial intelligence) received pictorial instruction on vocabulary in contrast to the second (B) pre-intermediate group (with weak spatial intelligence) who received non-pictorial treatment. Furthermore, the materials of pictorial instruction have been gleaned from connect Books and Pictorial Dictionary.

In connection also with variables, it is worth arguing that some of the variables of interest to the researcher were unwillingly eliminated to the consideration of experimental validity. For instance, the present study used only male subjects as an attribute variable and eliminated 4 female learners’ data out of the intended participants. Of course, doing this may reduce the generalization from the study to only males (Best & Kahan, 2006). Along the same line, spatial intelligence as an organismic variable possible to affect the study was built into the study as an independent variable through being incorporated into treatment. That is to say, it was re-worded as a spatial intelligence-based treatment of vocabulary (picture-embedded instruction). Some other confounding variables such as intervening variables including fatigue, boredom, etc. were not ignored, but to some extent controlled. Namely, through using an appropriate design and explaining the pedagogical innovations of MI model, the subjects were motivated to observe the result of the research. To follow the effect of independent variables, the dependent variable (outcome measure) tested during the study was also the vocabulary learning and performance of EFL learners.

4. Results

To achieve the results, first descriptive statistics of the findings are elaborated on below.

Table 1: Descriptive analysis of pre-test and post-test of the participants
As it is clear from Table 1, there is a visible difference between the entry behaviors of the three groups of EFL learners and their performance after either picture-embedded instruction or non-pictorial treatment. The face validity of the table, ultimately, indicates the fact that the learners, in particular, pre-intermediate (A) and (B) are homogeneous.

Table 2: ANOVA indicating the extent of the subjects’ spatial-Intelligence dominance (SID)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Tests</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-intermediate group (A)</td>
<td>Pre-test</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>5.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post-test</td>
<td></td>
<td>16.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-intermediate group (B)</td>
<td>Pre-test</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>4.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post-test</td>
<td></td>
<td>10.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary group</td>
<td>Pre-test</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>4.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post-test</td>
<td></td>
<td>17.55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As it is clear from Table 1, there is a visible difference between the entry behaviors of the three groups of EFL learners and their performance after either picture-embedded instruction or non-pictorial treatment. The face validity of the table, ultimately, indicates the fact that the learners, in particular, pre-intermediate (A) and (B) are homogeneous.

Table 2: ANOVA indicating the extent of the subjects’ spatial-Intelligence dominance (SID)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subjects’ SID</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>22.02</td>
<td>680.717</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-intermediate(A)</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>15.62</td>
<td>117</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-intermediate(B)</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>5.87</td>
<td>119</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As Table 2 above indicates, the statistical data resulted from a run ANOVA on the intelligence profiles of the three groups of EFL learners reached at extremely significant differences (\( F = 680.717; \ P = 0.000 \)), typifying that they have varying kinds of spatial intelligence profiles in as dominance terms as possible. Put in MEAM scores way, the spatial-intelligence profiles of elementary, pre-intermediate (A) and pre-intermediate (B), calculated out of 24, stood at 22.02, 15.62 and 5.87, respectively. Finally, for the ease of consideration, they have been named as strong, moderate and weak profiles. So as to explore the problem stated and the extent of the effect exerted by spatial intelligence-based instruction on the three groups with varying spatial intelligence-dominant EFL learners, the following Table is more illustrative.
Table 3: ANOVA indicating the performance of the three groups instructed either with Pictorial-based materials (PB) or Non-pictorial-based materials (NPB)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vocabulary performance</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elementary (PB)</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>17.55</td>
<td>115.204</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-intermediate Group A (PB)</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>16.05</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-intermediate Group B (NPB)</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>10.32</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As Table 3 reveals, the run ANOVA on the vocabulary performance (Appendix 2 and 3) of the EFL learners with varying spatial intelligence Profiles in terms of dominance stood at a significant difference ($F = 115.204; P=0.0001$), indicating the fact that the groups with non-pictorial intelligence-based instruction and pictorial intelligence-based instruction performed differently on learning vocabulary. Established on the MEAM scores, the performances of elementary learners (instructed pictorially), pre-intermediate Group A (instructed pictorially) and pre-intermediate group B (instructed non-pictorially) stood at 17.55, 16.05 and 10.32, respectively. The findings of the present investigation, in the end, support the effect of spatial intelligence-based instruction on vocabulary performance.

Table 4: Pearson correlation indicating the relationship between the vocabulary performance of the EFL learners and their spatial intelligence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pearson Correlation</th>
<th>Sig. (2 tailed)</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0.795</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To touch on the second research question, Table 4 above indicates the fact that there is a significant relationship between spatial intelligence dominance and learning vocabulary. Put another way, taking the findings of Table 3 and 4 into account, the higher the spatial intelligence profile, the higher the vocabulary performance; on the contrary, the lower the spatial intelligence, the lower the vocabulary performance will be.

5. Discussion and conclusion

The current study was named *From psychology of intelligence to the pedagogy of multiple intelligences*. More probably, it will be questioned and debated why I have selected this title and how we can move from psychology to pedagogy and what sense it carries. The
implication immersed in the title of the present research is more likely isolated from the potential image flashing across your mind. Nevertheless, to establish a solid background for convincing justification and lucid perception, it is necessitated to be perceived that there are a wide range of multiple-intelligences-led schools and institutes in some countries that move along the line of learners’ capacities, interests, preferences, styles, needs, and aims (Armstrong, 2003). To put this implication into practice, we have no choice except to accept the fact that intelligence in its psychologically fixed sense can not meet the academic and educational connotations associated with needs of the learners, their preferences, styles and strategies. On the contrary, applied in psychological sense, it will admittedly under-represent and restrict the talent of the learners. So, once located in a pedagogical context, confidence is put in the fact that we can develop, nurture and educate the minds of learners, mind in plural form rather than in singular form. The points cited all together are typical of the logic behind choosing the title. Referring to the current research, the obtained results, therefore, lend firm support to the claim made and state that in the case of developing and nurturing the intended intelligence profiles of the learners, we can, irrespective of the capacity of the learners, bless the learners with the required intelligence profile, a persuasive explanation about which can be supplied from illustration of Table 4 and 3. The Tables reveal that the higher the spatial intelligence profile, the higher the vocabulary performance; conversely, the lower the spatial intelligence, the lower the vocabulary performance will be. Does this mean that those having lower spatial intelligence can not perform well on vocabulary? To clearly, but cogently, answer the question, some researchers (Gardner, 1991, 2006; Christison & Kennedy, 1999; Armstrong, 2003, 2000, 2006) maintain that it does not by any means count how dominant one’s intelligence profile is, rather it pedagogically matters how we can in the sociology of instructional context assist the learners to develop their spatial intelligence in order for them to well-perform on vocabulary. The points cited all together are typical of the logic behind choosing the title.

The bottom line is that the instructors can raise the awareness of the learners to multiple-intelligences-based evaluation, instruction and learning with use of multiple-intelligences-relevant curriculum and educational materials.

References


Christison, M., (1998). Applying Multiple-Intelligences Theory in pre-service and In-service TEFL Education programs. *English Language teaching forum. 36*(2), 1-6


Cambridge university presses.

Appendix (1): Spatial Intelligence Questionnaire

Name .................. Gender ............... Level ............... 

Rank each statement 0, 1, or 2. Write 0 if you disagree with the statement and write 2 if you strongly agree. Write 1 if you are somewhere in between. Then calculate your score for each intelligence type.

Spatial intelligence

I often see clear visual images when I close my eyes.
I can read maps easily.
I’m sensitive to color.
I frequently use a camera to record what I see around me.
I enjoy doing visual puzzles.
I have vivid dreams at night.
I can find my way around unfamiliar places.
Geometry was easier for me than algebra in school.
If I look the things from above I can imagine how they appear.
I can draw well.
I enjoy art activities.
I learn new information with the help of Videos.

Total out of 24:------------------

Appendix (2): Spatial intelligence-based post-test for the elementary learners

1. What does he do in the picture?

A. He introduces himself  B. He says good-by  C. He starts shaking hands  D. He wears a green coat

2. How is the weather in the picture?

A. It is windy  B. It is foggy  C. It is smoggy  D. Humid

3. What do they do in the picture?

A. one is a seller and the other is a teacher  B. One is a seller and the other is a doctor
   C. One is selling and the other is buying  D. one is a buying and the other is paying

4. Which word describes the man in the picture?

A. He is attractive  B. He is short  C. He is thin  D. He is blind
5. Which of the following words does the picture show?
A. Entertainment and hypnotism  B. Language and hypnotism  C. School and entertainment  D. Power and language

6. Which word can the picture teach you?
A. Expensive  B. Traveling  C. Reporter  D. School

7. Which word can we learn from the picture?
A. Rich  B. Delicious  C. Awful  D. Awesome

8. What does the man in the picture do?
A. He is getting up  B. He is exercising  C. He is watching  D. He is relaxing

9. Which phrase does the picture teach you?
A. Falling in love  B. Getting married  C. Going to college  D. Starting work

10. Which phrase does the picture teach you?
A. Watching TV  B. Cooking dinner  C. Having dinner  D. Doing homework

11. Which phrase does the picture refer to?
A. Cutting hair  B. Setting hair  C. Setting hair  D. Coloring hair

12. Which word do you learn from the picture?
A. Thin  B. Fat  C. Pregnant  D. Attractive

13. Which phrases do the pictures teach you?
A. Fast driver and a happy man  B. Sad man and happy man  C. Sad man and a slow driver  D. Fast driver and a slow driver

14. Which words can you learn from the pictures?
A. Bad and good  B. Noisy and good  C. Quiet and bad  D. All choices

15. Which words can you learn from the pictures?
A. Clever and lazy  B. Active and passive  C. Depressed and cheerful  D. Heavy and light

16. Which words can you learn from the pictures?
A. Beautiful and ugly  B. Thick and fat  C. Cheap and expensive  D. Full and empty
17. Which words can you learn from the pictures? A. easy and difficult B. expensive and cheap C. neat and messy D. little and big

18. Which word does the picture indicate? A. Erase B. write C. raise D. rise

19. Which word does the picture refer to? A. Clock B. Map C. Computer D. Globe

20. Which word does the picture refer to? A. Spiral notebook B. Notebook paper C. Picture dictionary D. Textbook

Appendix (3): Spatial intelligence-based post-test for the pre-intermediate (A) learners

1. Which word is implied from the picture? A. poison B. hazardous materials C. radioactive D. safety vest

2. Which word does the following picture remind you of? A. back support B. respirator C. fire extinguisher D. biohazard

3, 4, and 5. Which words do the numbers 10, 11, and 12 in the picture refer to, respectively? A. zoo, painting, screen B. the movies, seat, screen C. carnival, rides, screen D. roller coaster, puppet show

6, 7 and 8. Which words do the numbers 22, 23 and 24 in the picture refer to, respectively? A. merchandise, stadium, announcer B. flea market, booth, merchandise C. swapmeet, booth, game D. set, first place, country fair

9. Which word does the picture indicate? A. horror story B. action story C. mystery D. tragedy

10. Which word does the picture indicate? A. concert B. ballet C. opera D. play

11. Which word does the picture indicate? A. nature program B. talk show C. comedy D. news

12, 13. Which word does the picture refer to?
A. card and flag  B. heart and mask  C. fireworks and heart  D. heart and card

14. Which word does the picture refer to?
A. doll making kit  B. wood making kit  C. stamp kit  D. model kit

15. Which word does the picture refer to?
A. glue  B. checkers  C. chess  D. check  D. cartridge

16. Which word does the writing in the picture refer to?
A. politics B. education C. economy D. anthropology

17. Which word or words does the picture refer to?
A. industrial arts  B. theatre arts  C. martial arts  D. fine arts

18, 19, 20. Which words do the numbers 5, 6, and 7 in the picture refer to?
A. The senate, president, chief justice  B. The White House, President, Vice-president
C. The House of Representatives vice-President, President  D. Congress, president, vice-president

Appendix (4): Pre-test for Elementary-Level learners
1. They………their vacation.
   A. enjoyed  B. went  C. practiced  D. come
2. I love my new job because it is very……
   A. exciting  B. bad  C. boring  D. shocking
3. Nice to meet you.
   A. Also nice to meet you  B. Nice also to meet you
   C. Nice to meet too you  D. Nice to meet you, too
4. A chef works in a……
   A. hotel  B. hospital  C. factory  D. restaurant
5. She is a famous teacher. “Famous” means:
   A. Popular  B. Interesting  C. Clever  D. Nice
6. They live in a foreign country. “Foreign” means:
   A. good  B. rich  C. clean  D. strange
7. I can’t stand cranberries. “Can’t stand” means:
   A. I do not like  B. I like  C. I eat  D. I enjoy
8. I am a real …..of English language.
   A. umbrella  B. fan  C. refrigerator  D. plate
9. John told that the film sounds great. “Sounds” means:
   A. noise  B. voice  C. Seems  D. look like
10. She mixes rock music with the music of the Bahia region.” Mix” means”
    A. loves  B. hates  C. combine  D. play
11. In America, most couples stay together. Couples means:
    A. parents and children B. friends and enemies
    C. wives and husbands D. brothers and sisters
12. I often go to the gym and ……..aerobics.
    A. play  B. have  C. do  D. practice
13. She is a couch potato. Couch potato means:
    A. A person who eats too much potato B. A person who buys too much potato B. A person who loves watching TV
    C. A person who hates watching TV
14. The fitness freak is interested in keeping in shape. Freak means:
    A. Fan  B. Fanatic  C. Follower  D. All choices are correct.
15. She is looking for a job in a theatre company. Look for means:
A. look at  B. take after   C. look after   D. come after
16. Research suggests that exercise helps you learn new things. Suggests means:
A. shows    B. bring C. has  D. plays
17. Judy is working again as a hospital administrator. Administrator means:
A. teller B. worker C. manager D. accountant
18. Steve has to assist her mother with the housework. Assist means:
A. solve B. give C. talk   D. help
19. Nearly all people work. Nearly means:
A. closely B. almost   C. perfectly   D. few
20. If marriage is opposite of divorce, ………… …………
A. awful is opposite of bad   B. Nice is opposite of good C. bad is opposite of terrible   D. good is opposite of bad

Appendix (5): Pre-test for Pre-Intermediate learners
1. John is professional at his job. Professional means:
A. skillful B. lazy   C. awful D. clumsy
2. Many immigrants are not able to find job abroad. Immigrant means:
A. A person who travels abroad B. A person who lives abroad C. A person who does business abroad   D. A person who studies abroad
3. She can provide her children with money. Provide is closest in meaning to:
A. take B. give   C. supply   D. bring
4. She was separated from her husband. Separated from means:
A. got married with B. took divorce from C. took money from   D. got engaged to
5. The police identified the criminals. Identify means:
A. kill B. shoot C. arrest D. discover
6. He is a poor man and lives in tenancy. Tenancy means:
A. paying for the university B. paying for the rich C. paying for the pour   D. paying for the rent
7. Patrick put on his coat because the weather was cold. Put on means:
A. take on B. take off   C. get off   D. get on
8. I got impressed by her speech. Impressed means:
A. infected B. affected C. reflected D. neglected
9. Who was your English language instructor? Instructor means:
A. friend B. trainer C. monitor   D. supervisor
10. I calculated my average score and it reached 18. Calculation is related to:
A. statistics B. game C. happiness D. sadness
11. He was protected by his government during was. Protected means:
A. attacked B. bombarded C. supported   D. affected
12. The students are resolved to solve their problem. Resolved means:
A. lazy B. clever C. decisive   D. passive
13. His friend is a technophile. Technophile means:
A. A person who loves technology   B. A person who hates technology C. A person who steals technology       D. A person who destroys technology
14. She believes that fame is a fleeting moment. Fleeting means:
A. long-lasting  B. an enjoyable  C. a problematic  D. transient
15. He played a lead role in the film. Lead means:
A. important  B. unimportant  C. directing  D. misdirecting
16. Some of the inventions of the world are famous. Inventions means:
A. disasters  B. criminals  C. innovations  D. scientists
17. Some people love listening to gossip. Gossip means:
A. good news  B. story  C. rumor  D. radio
18. People often put things off because they seem overwhelming. Overwhelming means:
A. reasonable  B. disgusting  C. expensive  D. difficult
19. If you drink too much, you may become anxious and irritable. Irritable means:
A. relaxed  B. tired  C. annoyed  D. happy
20. My father criticized my appearance. Criticize means:
A. praise  B. love  C. hate  D. complain

Appendix (6): Spatial intelligence-based post-test for the pre-intermediate (B) learners
1. Which of the following words are associated with fire?
A. respirator  B. extinguisher  C. safety vest  D. poison
2. Which of the following words or phrases are related to danger?
A. hazard  B. support  C. safety  D. assist
3. Which words are related to film?
A. screen  B. waiter  C. painting  D. market
4. Which word is related to second-hand clothes?
A. merchandise  B. flea-market  C. country fair  D. booth
5. What is the meaning of secret?
A. tragedy  B. mystery  C. horror  D. terror
6. Which of the following refers to group work more than others?
A. concert  B. ballet  C. opera  D. play
7. Which of the following do people usually listen on radio?
A. news  B. talk show  C. comedy  D. film
8. Love is usually associated with which of the words below?
A. card  B. Christmas  C. heart  D. blood
9. Which of the following words refer to mental activity?
A. chess  B. football  C. volleyball  D. construction building
10. Which of the following word is closely related to money?
A. economy  B. politics  C. anthropology  D. fine arts
11. In some countries the …….holds his/her position for a period of 4 or 8 years.
A. vice-president  B. president  C. manager  D. administrator
12. Some thieves wear……when they break into a bank.
A. hat  B. gloves  C. mask  D. coat
13. All countries have their own……..as a national symbol.
A. gag  B. flag  C. tag  D. neg
14. Which candidate did you give your……..
A. idea  B. theory  C. vote  D. comment

15. This book in available on the ............
   A. business  B. market  C. job  D. trade

16. Which of the following is kind of dance?
   A. ballet  B. opera  C. comedy  D. play

17. Which of the following words refer to sadness?
   A. tragedy  B. doll  C. puppet  D. justice

18. Which of the following words is associated with breath?
   A. inspiration  B. desperation  C. Respiration  D. perspiration

19. Which of the following words refer to a celebration?
   A. carnival  B. funeral  C. cartridge  D. anthropology

20. Which of the following words is associated with stick?
   A. blue  B. glue  C. flu  D. crew
Title
An Analysis of Grammatical Errors in Iranian Students' English Writings

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Abstract
This research describes and analyzes Persian English learners' grammatical errors in writing that mostly originate from the mother tongue. Data are gathered from compositions and exam papers of about 100 Persian learners of English. This research investigates Output or the corpus of the utterances that learners actually produce in writing. Also it shows that the language of second language (L2) learners is systematic and that learner errors are not random mistakes but evidence of rule governed behavior. These learners attend Elementary Course English classes at English Institutes in Koohdasht, Iran. This study shows that a great number of persistent errors made by these learners at elementary levels can be traced to the influence of the mother tongue. The results of studies like this can be used by language teachers, translators, textbook writers, test writers and the learners. When the teacher corrects students’ papers and points out their errors, he/she enhances their attention to correct language forms either explicitly or implicitly, hence increasing their grammar consciousness raising.

Keywords: Writing errors, Error correction, Grammatical errors, Error analysis, Interlingual errors, Intralingual errors, Interference.

1. Introduction
In foreign language learning, error correction has become one of the important teaching processes. But actually, few teachers know a lot about error analysis and some related
they often take so negative attitudes toward errors that they could not tolerate any errors and tend to correct them as soon as they could find any. As a result, although they think they have been working hard enough and spend much time and energy working on error correction, their effort is not effective and the students do not believe they have benefited a lot. On the contrary, the students often feel upset, for they have found that there is a great gap between themselves and their teachers in dealing with errors and understanding of error correction. So we find it necessary to have a theoretical foundation about error analysis. In the next section, the development of the theory- error analysis would be briefly reviewed.

2. Historical Overview

2.1. Contrastive analysis hypothesis

The study of contrasts between the native language and the target language is contrastive analysis. In a contrastive analysis of two languages the points of structural difference are identified, and these are then studied as areas of potential difficulty in foreign language learning. The claim that these differences are the source of difficulty in foreign language learning, and thus govern the progress of the learner, is known as contrastive analysis hypothesis (Crystal, 2003). Broadly defined, CA has been used as a tool in historical linguistics to establish language genealogies, in comparative linguistics to create language taxonomies and translation theory to investigate problems of equivalence. In language teaching it has been influential through the Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis which claims that difficulties in language learning derive from the differences between the new language and the learner’s first language, that errors in these areas of difference derive from first language interference and that these errors can be predicted and remedied by the use of CA. (Johnson & Johnson, 1999).

CAH which was deeply rooted in the behavioristic and structuralist approaches claimed that the principal barrier to second language acquisition is the interference of the first language system with the second language system and a scientific, structural analysis of the two languages in question would yield a taxonomy of linguistic contrasts between them which in turn would enable the linguist to predict the difficulties a learner would encounter (Brown, 2000).

2.2. Versions of CAH

2.2.1 Strong version
The last two decades of enthusiasm for contrastive analysis in foreign language teaching can be traced to Charles Fries (1945). He wrote: “The most effective materials are those that are based upon a scientific description of the language to be learned, carefully compared with a parallel description of the native language of the learner.” (Dulay & Burt in Jack C. Richards, 1971).

Robert Lado (1957) claims that we can predict and describe the patterns that will cause difficulty by comparing systematically the language and the culture to be learned with the native language and culture of the student. He claims that the most important barrier in learning an L2 is the interference of L1 with the L2. Interference is arisen because the L1 items are different from the L2 items. The more different the L1 items and L2 items are, the more difficult they are for the learner to learn. According to Lado (1957) if this barrier (interference) is removed learners will have no problems in learning a second language. He believes that we can remove this barrier by comparing and contrasting the two languages. We can predict the problematic areas by finding the differences between the two languages. Interference is subconscious but getting help from L1 is consciously done. Interference is of two types:

*Negative transfer:* when the effect of past knowledge is harmful in the learning of the new knowledge.

*Positive transfer:* when the effect of past knowledge is helpful in the learning of the new knowledge.

### 2.2.2 Weak version

Ronald Wardhough (1970) first coined this theory. He believed that Robert Lado's (1957) theory seemed to be impractical, unrealistic and too strong. He refuted the role of interference. He believed that when the learner wants to produce a sentence but he doesn't know the correct rule, he has just one alternative; the learner’s choice is referring back to his mother tongue and getting help from his first language.

The weak version does not imply the *a priori* prediction of certain degrees of difficulty. It recognizes the significance of interference across languages, the fact that such interference does exist and can explain difficulties, but it also recognizes that linguistic difficulties can be more profitably explained *a posteriori* - after the fact. As learners are learning the language and errors appear, teachers can utilize their knowledge of the target and native language to understand sources of errors.(Brown, 2000).
Ronald Wardhough (1970) also refuted the idea that states the degree of difficulty depends upon the degree of differences. Wardhough (1970) asserts that any item in the second language that the learner doesn't already know is difficult for him to learn.

### 2.2.3 Moderate version

Oller and Ziahosseiny (1970) believed that Wardhough (1970) may be right when he said Robert Lado (1957) seems to be unrealistic, impractical and too strong. But his own theory was also very weak. They based their theory on one experiment:

The subjects in this experiment were Arab and German students. The English alphabet was taught to both groups. Oller and Ziahosseiny figured out that unlike Lado's belief, Arab students learned the English alphabet much better than German students. They concluded that when two items in L1 and L2 are the same or completely different interference of L1 with the L2 never happened. According to Oller and Ziahosseiny interference arises because of similarity. In most cases it is not necessarily true that the more different the two items are, the more difficult they are. They stated that the degree of difficulty depends on the degree of similarities. The more similar the two items in L1 and L2 are, the more difficult they are.

Arising from shortcomings of the CAH to adequately account for second-language learners’ errors, researchers began to look for an alternative approach for the study of errors; an approach which would be theoretically justifiable and pedagogically practicable. This new approach, which is based on theories of first and second language learning and possible similarities between them, is called Error Analysis (Keshavarz, 1994).

### 2.3 Error analysis

The study of the effect of native language on target language is cross-linguistic influence. And the study of the errors that learners make in their speech and writing, when learning the target language, is error analysis. The most obvious approach to analyzing interlanguage is to study the speech and writing of learners, or what has come to be called learner language (Brown, 2000).

It was S.Pit. Corder who first advocated in ELT/applied linguistics community the importance of errors in language learning process. In Corder (1967), he mentions the paradigm shift in linguistics from a behavioristic view of language to a more rationalistic view and claims that in language teaching one noticeable effect is to shift the emphasis away from teaching towards a study of learning. He emphasizes great potential for applying new hypotheses about how languages are learned in L1 to the learning of a second language. He says "Within this context the study of errors takes on a new importance and will I believe contribute to a verification or rejection of the new hypothesis." (cited in Richards, 1974)
Corder goes on to say that in L1 acquisition we interpret child's 'incorrect' utterances as being evidence that he is in the process of acquiring language and that for those who attempt to describe his knowledge of the language at any point in its development, it is the 'errors' which provide the important evidence. In second language acquisition, Corder proposed as a working hypothesis that some of the strategies adopted by the learner of a second language are substantially the same as those by which a first language is acquired. By classifying the errors that learners made, researchers could learn a great deal about the SLA process by inferring the strategies that second language learners were adopting. It is in this Corder's seminal paper that he adds to our thinking by discussing the function of errors for the learners themselves. For learners themselves, errors are 'indispensable,' since the making of errors can be regarded as a device the learner uses in order to learn. (Selinker, 1992)

Selinker (1992) pointed out the two highly significant contributions that Corder made: "that the errors of a learner, whether adult or child, are (a) not random, but are in fact systematic, and are (b) not 'negative' or 'interfering' in any way with learning a target language but are, on the contrary, a necessary positive factor, indicative of testing hypotheses". Such contribution in Corder (1967) began to provide a framework for the study of adult learner language. Along with the influence of studies in L1 acquisition and concepts provided by Contrastive Analysis (especially language transfer) and by the interlanguage hypothesis (e.g. fossilization, backsliding, language transfer, communication and learning strategies), this paper provided the impetus for many SLA empirical studies.

2.4. Contrastive rhetoric

Despite criticisms leveled against contrastive analysis it survived to be used in new fields of language learning and teaching like composition writing. Contrastive rhetoric is the study of how a person's first language and culture influence his or her writing in a second language.

According to Rod Ellis (2005) contrastive Analysis is applicable to writing errors. He writes: CA also lived on in the form of contrastive rhetoric, defined by Conner(1996) 'as an area of research in second language acquisition that identifies problems in composition encountered by second language writers, and by referring to the rhetorical strategies of the first language, attempts to explain them'. Contrastive rhetoric and contrastive analysis are both fields of study in applied linguistics, which have contributed to the knowledge about the role of transfer from the native language to the target language.

Contrastive rhetoric developed as a theory and research approach used to examine different discourse and rhetorics. The primary focus of this research involves differences across cultures; the primary audience using this research has been English as a second
language writing teachers. Contrastive rhetoric has provided insights into student problems with adjusting to English rhetoric by supplying information about the rhetorics used by other cultures, that is, non-English cultures. Using the findings from contrastive rhetoric analyses, researchers have suggested ways in which second language writers need to adjust to write in English.

People who write in English as a second or foreign language often find it difficult to write clear, coherent, idiomatic English. Contrastive rhetoric studies the structure of language beyond the sentence (discourse), as well as the influence of culture on writing. Findings from contrastive research should be incorporated into writing instruction and teacher training to give nonnative speakers of English more help in writing for the world of work (McDaniel, 1994).

3. Importance of the subject

Written samples are relatively permanent and, for this reason, easier to collect. In recent years there have been large-scale projects of learner language based on written samples and motivated by the availability of the computer-based concordancing tools for analyzing the samples (Rod Ellis, 2005). The study of the speech and writing of learners is largely the study of the errors of learners. Correct production yields little information about the actual linguistic system of learners. (Brown 2000:216). According to Corder (1981), learners' errors are significant in three ways. First to the teacher, in that they tell him, if he undertakes a systematic analysis, how far towards the goal the learner has progressed and, consequently what remains for him to learn. Second, they provide to the researcher evidence of how language is learned or acquired, what strategies or procedures the learner is employing in his discovery of the language. Thirdly, they are indispensable to the learner himself, because we can regard the making of errors as a device the learner uses in order to learn.

Valuable insights from research in second language acquisition and writing development can assist in developing instructional techniques linking the two processes: acquiring a second language and developing writing skills. However, if students have not developed learning strategies to monitor their writing errors, and if they do not receive enough conceptual feedback at the discourse level, then the positive effects of the instruction may backfire.

There is a need for students to recognize the significance of errors which occur in their writing, to fully grasp and understand the nature of the errors made. This requires English
language teachers to be better equipped, more sensitive and aware of the difficulties students face with regard to grammar.

Errors are indispensable to learners since the making of errors can be regarded as 'a device the learner uses in order to learn' (Selinker 1992). Research has provided empirical evidence pointing to emphasis on learners' errors as an effective means of improving grammatical accuracy (White et al, 1991; Carroll and Swain, 1993; Trahey and White, 1993).

4. Method

4.1. Participants
The participants are learners of English as a Foreign language (EFL). They are almost 100 learners who attend Elementary English conversation classes at English Institutes in Koohdasht, Iran. "Interchange" series written by Jack C. Richards are used as their text books.

4.2. Materials
Data are gathered from learners' written compositions and exam papers. During two 17-session semesters they were given 8 tasks to write about. These students were provided with the topics such as: Writing Post Cards, Writing Invitation Cards, Advantages and Disadvantages for Students to Work etc.

4.3. Procedures
Learners were given necessary directions on how to write compositions. They wrote compositions individually at home. These written samples were untimed and the learners were allowed to have access to reference tools such as dictionaries and grammars while they wrote. Next session the teacher collected the papers. After student's papers were corrected, erroneous sentences were extracted (decontextualized) from the compositions for later analysis.

5. Hierarchy of difficulty
Some linguists like Stockwell, Bowen, and Martin (1965) have established what might be called a kind of linguistic logic of the hierarchy of difficulties. Basing their assumption upon the concept of transfer (negative transfer, positive transfer and zero transfer), they try to tackle the problem of difficulty by focusing their attention on the kind of choices that exist in any given point of a language.
Clifford Prator (1967) captured the essence of grammatical hierarchy in six categories of difficulty. This hierarchy includes the following levels:

0 level: When one item in L1 is very similar to, or the same as the item in L2 the level is called 0 or transfer. The learner can simply transfer a sound, structure, or lexical item from the native language to the target language. For example the sounds /p/ and /b/ and words like telephone (تلفن/telefon/) and radio (رادیو/radyu/) in English and Persian are very similar thus can be transferred into English.

1. Coalescence: Two items in the native language become coalesced into essentially one item in the target language. In other words when there are two or more items in L1 but there is just one item in L2 we are at this level.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>L1(Persian)</th>
<th>L2(English)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>/to-shoma/</td>
<td>You</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Underdifferentiation: An item exists in L1 but doesn't exist or absent in L2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>L1(Persian)</th>
<th>L2(English)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>/hastam/</td>
<td>Ø</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/be/</td>
<td>Ø</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*I am agree with you.  
*I usually go running to the home.

3. Reinterpretation: When two items in L1 and L2 languages are similar but they are not exactly the same we call it reinterpretation. The learner gives a new shape to the item in his mother tongue in order to arrive at the L2 item. The sounds /t/ and /d/ are dental in Persian but alveolar in English.

4. Overdifferentiation: A new item entirely must be learned. It is the opposite of underdifferentiation, that is, one item is absent in L1 language but present in the second language.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>L1(Persian)</th>
<th>L2(English)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ø</td>
<td>The</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ø</td>
<td>There</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ø</td>
<td>It</td>
</tr>
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</table>

*I went to Ø park.  
*I usually go to Ø gym.
4. **Split**: One item in the native language becomes two or more in the target language, requiring the learner to make a new distinction.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>L1 (Persian)</th>
<th>L2 (English)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>*/?in/</td>
<td>this-these</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*/?u:/</td>
<td>she-he</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*/yek/</td>
<td>a-an</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*This cities*  
*Our country has a old history*

6. **Analysis of the errors**: observation, description and interpretation

It is important to analyze the errors because by learning the errors there are many advantages such as (a) a device which the learner uses in order to learn (b) to fully grasp and understand the nature of errors, and (c) instead of just being able to recognize errors, the learners are now able to explain the rules and correct the errors (Cupep, 2009).

The types of errors committed by the learners in this study are described and interpreted as follows.

6.1. **Interlingual errors**

6.1.1 **Errors in the use of third person singular** - s/es

English'- s' inflection is a concept that is totally redundant to a Persian learner of English. If it is used to carry the number of the subject in the third person singular, the idea is already indicated by the subject itself. Although the learner perceives the occurrence of this inflection frequently, the lack of its occurrence in his mother tongue is likely to prevent its acceptance into his permanent memory store. Besides this, its deceptive simplicity may lead to underemphasis in the classroom. As a result, the learner may leave out this inflection wherever possible.

*Somebody work ø.*  
*When a person go ø to market*.

*Everybody go ø to barbershop.*  
*When no one go ø to shopping.*  
*When new year begin ø.*  
*Every one wear ø.*  
*Every one spendø their money when go out.*

6.1.2 **Errors in the use of plural s/es**
Both Persian and English have plural morphemes but they have similarities and differences. They are similar in meaning and distribution. These morphemes show plurality and are used at the end of nouns. In English *s* and *es* are suffixed both to animate and inanimate nouns but in Persian (پ) is added to inanimate nouns but (ان) to animate ones. Moreover, these morphemes have different forms in the two languages. In Persian, nouns do not agree in number with qualifiers therefore, Persian learners of English frequently avoid using -s and -es and yield erroneous forms.

*I have a lot of doll ø.*

*There are two bedroom ø.*

*One of the Iranian holiday ø.*

*I came to Mashad 6 month ø ago.*

*We stayed in Masooleh3 hour ø.*

6.1.3 Errors in the use of articles

a. Omission of the article *the*

According to level (4) of difficulty hierarchy, as this article is absent in Persian the learner has difficulty in learning and using it and produces erroneous sentences.

*But in ø United States.*

*At the end of ø term.*

*ø birthday is on Sunday.*

*I go to ø gym.*

*I went to Ø Park.*

*I went to ø north of Iran.*

*In Tehran ø weather is very raining.*

b. Omission and incorrect use of *a/an*

According to level (5) of hierarchy of difficulty the category of article in Persian is unmatched with that of English hence resulting in errors as follows.

*you're ø very clever and good student.*

*our country has ø old history.*

6.1.4 Errors in the use of correct prepositions

*I'm in grade two on guidance school.*

*Three days ø each week.*

*The longest of night ø year.*

*We went ø volleyball.*

*On ø afternoon we went to my cousin party ø birthday.*
6.1.5 Errors in the use of expletives (there and it) and demonstratives

'There' and 'It' are called expletives or dummy subjects in English. They occupy the position of the subject in the sentence and do not have any real meanings. As Persian does not have such elements, Persian learners of English avoid using them. And according to level (4) of the hierarchy they become sources of errors.

*This cities.

But in my neighborhood Ø is not any restaurant and theaters.

In my bedroom Ø is a pretty cool but in the winter Ø is a hot.

I like my neighborhood because in this Ø are good restaurants.

6.1.6 Errors caused by Borrowing and Loan translation

Borrowing is the taking over of words from other languages. A special type of borrowing is described as loan translation or calque, In this process, there is a direct translation of the elements of a word into the borrowing language(George Yule, 2006). Einar Haugen in his book: The Norwegian Language in America (1953) documents the phenomenon of interference as linguistic borrowing. The following are examples of calque which have led to incorrect word orders and hence errors.

And for ate lunch we went to the restaurant.

But in 4 months ago I didn't exercise.

When I had seven years old.

It was really fantastic and your place were empty.

I was beside the sea.

We're going to go beside them.

I go to English class for fill the free time.

I spend my day with listen to the music.

They can spend money for have a easy life.

Watch films TV.

We wash clothes dirty.

Our old friend school.

I during summer days go ....

my cousin party birthday

I and my little brother went rollerblading.

We in new year's day visited relatives.

I and my sister.

Do volleyball sport.
On afternoon we went to my cousin party birthday.

6.2. Intralingual Errors

Intralingual errors result from faulty or partial learning of the target language, rather than language transfer. They may be caused by one language item upon another.

6.2.1. Overgeneralization

Overgeneralization is a process common in both first and second language learning in which a learner extends the use of a grammatical rule of a linguistic item beyond its expected uses, generally by making words or structures that follow a more regular pattern. In the following examples learners have overextended the use of article 'the'.

In the Iran....
I want to see the football.
I seldom go to the home.
I went to the kermansha.
They earn experience.
Anything are more cheap in my country.
Per Iran it's cheap as compared with US.
Per Elizabeth's birthday.
I usually go running to the home.

The learner is familiar with the formation of wh-question in English, but does not know that the rule does not apply to an embedded sentence.

If you want to know what did I do ....

7. Results

In this research it was pointed out, at least at elementary level, that a large number of the errors committed by Persian learners of English are the result of the influence of mother tongue. Looking at the erroneous utterances produced by the learners, it can be concluded that they make use of what they have at their disposal to communicate. The strategies they use reveal some aspects of the learning process and learner language system; that is, interlanguage.

The results of studies like this can be applied by language teachers, translators, textbook writers and the learners. When the teacher corrects students' papers and points out their errors he enhances their attention to correct language forms either explicitly or implicitly.
According to Carl James (1980) CA has applications in predicting and diagnosing a proportion of the L2 errors committed by learners with a common L1 and, in the design of testing instruments for such learners.

The main goal of doing contrastive analysis and error analysis is to facilitate the process of target language learning by studying the phenomenon of ‘errors’ within a scientific framework that is consistent with both linguistic theory and learning theory. Error analysis, it is claimed, is significant for the insights it provides into the strategies employed in second language acquisition and in turn into the process of language learning as general (S.N. Sridhar, in Fisiak, 1981).

The applied pedagogical value of CA has been discussed and supported by many scholars and contrastive linguists. Di pietro (1971) has considered CA a pedagogical basis for language instruction. In an introduction to his book, Language Structures in Contrast, he states that contrastive analysis was born of classroom experience. (Fallahi, 1991).

Undoubtedly, the problem of difficulty plays a very important role in connection with language teaching and language learning. It is important for the procedure of language material because in his ordering of linguistic facts the latter must know something about the problem of difficulty from the learners’ point of view. His staging and sequencing of the material will depend upon his idea of what linguistic difficulty is. Knowledge of linguistic difficulty is also of basic importance to the evaluator of tests, his evaluations being partly determined by his idea of linguistic difficulties. Language tests as well as error analysis will have to be taken into account if they are to be objective and just. (Nickel, 1971).

The criticisms leveled at EA fall into three main categories: (1) weaknesses in methodological procedures, (2) theoretical problems, and (3) limitations in scope (Ellis, 2008). According to some SLA researchers, EA is theoretically flawed in that it takes some target language variety as it's reference point. Bley V Roman (1983) claims that EA is guilty of comparative fallacy. Bley Vroman (1983) warned that "work on the linguistic description of learners’ languages can be seriously hindered or sidetracked by a concern with the target language, and argued that the learner's system is worthy of study in its own right not just as a degenerate form of the target system (Doughty and Long, 2003).

All characteristics of the students cannot be controlled. These learners are not the same ages. They have different first languages (Persian, Lakhi and Lori) with different family backgrounds and socioeconomic status. Another problem was that some of the learners avoided writing compositions, so the researcher had to collect data over a longer period of time.
We should be aware that different types of written material may produce a different distribution of error or a different set of error types. The recognition of error depends crucially upon the analyst making a correct interpretation of the learner’s intended meaning of the context. It has already been noted that learners often appear inconsistent in their production of errors (Corder, 1974).

We need to keep all these facts in mind when conducting an error analysis and reaching conclusions on which we would base all our teaching. Besides, this study was conducted on a small number of students, and also on a very limited number of essays. Therefore, the conclusions reached are far from being decisive.

We consider this study a preliminary one that just gives an idea of those Iranian students’ sources of errors in writing English compositions. It should set the pace for other studies which would be much more comprehensive, covering a larger number of students and a wider range of materials; we hope to be able to conduct one in the near future.

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http://iteslj.org/Techniques/Ho_Grammar_Errors.html
Title
Mediation in Second Language Acquisition

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Abstract
Different constructs of Sociocultural Theory (SCT) are so interwoven that providing a separate account of them does not seem to be easy. However, the approach of separating its constructs has been adopted in literature during the previous years (Ellis, 2008). The researchers in this paper try to follow the same approach, and to provide a more or less comprehensive account of the key construct of mediation, different types of mediation and their implication in second language acquisition.

Keywords: Private speech, Symbolic mediation, Technology mediation, Tool mediation.

1. Introduction
SCT acknowledges that human beings possess a biological inheritance which provides the basis for subsequent development. But it differs from theories of acquisition based on universal grammar in that it does not see this inheritance as determining the growth of language but rather as allowing only for relatively simple lower mental functions; like the same natural abilities in higher primates, to be performed (Ellis, 2008). Lantolf & Thorne (2006) argued that higher order mental functioning (for example, memory, attention, rational thinking) develops through the interaction of our cultural and biological inheritances (as cited in Ellis, 2008, p. 523).
As Lantolf (2005) argued, through social activity, the genetically endowed capacities are modified and reorganized into higher order forms (as cited in Ellis, 2008). In this sense SCT rejects the idea that the mind and the world constitute distinct entities and insists that ‘the person and the world are necessarily connected in a dialectic and inseparable relationship’.

According to Ellis (2008, p. 524) the learner is not autonomous and the learning is not something that takes place exclusively inside the head of the learner but also in the world s/he lives. SCT integrates the social and psychological dimensions through the notion of mediation.

2. Characteristics of a general cultural psychology
Cole (1996) identifies the main characteristics of a general cultural psychology which according to serves as a useful point of departure in the discussion of the Vygotskian legacy (as cited in Daniels, 2001, P. 13). It identifies most of the main characteristics of contemporary approaches to psychology which associate to a post-Vygotskian position. He provided the following points regarding general cultural psychology:

- It emphasizes mediated action in a context;
- It insists on the importance of the ‘genetic method’ understood broadly to include historical, ontogenetic, and microgenetic levels of analysis;
- It seeks to ground its analysis in everyday life events;
- It assumes that mind emerges in the joint mediated activity of people. Mind, then is in an important sense, ‘co-constructed and distributed’;
- It assumes that individuals are active agents in their own development but do not act in settings entirely of their own choosing;
- It rejects cause-effect, stimulus-response, explanatory science in favor of a science that emphasizes the emergent nature of mind in activity and that acknowledges a central role for interpretation in its explanatory framework;
- It draws upon methodologies from the humanities as well as from the social and biological sciences.

The most important of these key concepts is that of ‘mediation’ which opens the way for the development of a non-deterministic account in which mediators serve as the means by which the individual acts upon and is acted upon by social, cultural and historical factors (Daniels, 2001, p. 14).
The term mediation has a long history in the behavioral sciences, frequently being used to describe "a situation where one entity plays an intermediary causal role in the relation between two other entities" (Fernyhough, 2008, p. 9).

In the more limited context of sociocultural theories of development, mediation can refer to the process whereby individuals’ understanding is redirected through the experience of others (Chesnokova, 2004, as cited in Fernyhough, 2008). In its stricter Vygotskian sense, mediation involves the use of culturally-derived psychological tools, such as utterances, in spoken or sign language, in transforming the relations between psychological inputs and outputs. As Fernyhough (2008) argued later, the use of semiotic mediation in representing and reasoning about the mental states of others can crucially counteract some of the cognitive challenges of these processes.

Vygotsky's (1987) socio-cultural approach to development suggests that new forms of cognitive activity first emerge through interaction in social context and are then internalized as individual cognitive processes (Davilla, 2006). This process can reveal the stages through which a learner passes to achieving self-regulation. Vygotsky's (1987) concept of mediation is a key to understanding this process of internalization. In Vygotsky's view, physical tools (a hammer, a stick, a TV remote control) and psychological signs (words, mathematical formulas, and theoretical concepts) mediate human action and human thought.

Atkinson (2002) in his article developed the notion of a sociocognitive perspective on second language acquisition (SLA), proposed as an alternative to the cognitivism which was widespread in the field of SLA. By sociocognitive, he meant a view of language and language acquisition as simultaneously occurring and interactively constructed both “in the head” and “in the world.”

The use of language to help learners move into and through their ZPD is of great significance to sociocultural theory (Turuk, 2008). Kozulin (2002) categorizes mediators into two categories: human and symbolic (as cited in Turuk, 2008). According to him, human mediation usually answers the question that ‘what kind of involvement on the part of the adult is effective in enhancing the child’s performance’, while symbolic mediation deals with changes in the child’s performance that can be made by familiarizing the child with symbolic tools-mediators.

2.1. Tool-Mediated action

All human learning and thinking is related to establishing experiential human – world relationships. Thinking and learning cannot be studied independently (Bernhard, 2007). Human experiences of our life are shaped by the mediation of physical and symbolic tools.
Bernhard (2007) provided the following diagram for explaining the concept of mediation and mediating tools:

$$\text{Human} \leftrightarrow \text{Mediating tools} \leftrightarrow \text{World}$$

According to him, the use of tools is a ‘dual process’: humans both affect the world (including human culture) and are affected by the use of tools. This means that humans are part of their world (and cannot step in isolation and view the world from the “outside”).

Vygotsky’s (1978) model of mediated learning is in the form of a triangle (you can see it in the following figure). This basic mediational triangle suggests that humans are not only directly related to subject matter but also indirectly related via an artefact/tool. Davila (2006) provided the example of channel surfing, in which, the goal of the action is to change channels. The TV remote is the physical tool that stands between the individual’s intention to change the environment and the change that actually occurs. Mediation is essential because certain complex actions (lying on the sofa while changing channels) are not possible without the mediation of a tool.

Vygotsky’s model of mediated action

(Adapted from Vygotsky, 1978, as cited in Bernhard, 2007)

In the case of language learning the subject is the L2 learner and the object of her/his activity is for example, to read and understand a text in L2. If the subject cannot mediate her/his action on the object by her/his own, the learner will need to use an artefact (for example, a dictionary) to provide support. This results in ‘mediated tool action’ (Ellis, 2008, p. 524).

2.2. Mediation through technology

Many researchers have noted the speed of technological development and the subsequent ephemerality of internet-based communicative practices. As second-generation internet
communication tools make their way into foreign language classrooms, researchers will need to become increasingly aware of the ways in which new technologies may provide new kinds of language play (Goodwin-Jones, as cited in Belz & Reinhardt, 2004), and most importantly, they will need to vary the ways in which one might take advantage of these in foreign language learning.

Li (2006) in his study of the technology mediated writing investigated the influence of word processing on the writing of students of English as a second language (ESL) and on writing assessment as well. He used twenty-one adult Mandarin–Chinese speakers with advanced English proficiency, who were living in Toronto. Each participant wrote two comparable writing tasks under exam-type conditions; one on a Macintosh computer that traced and recorded their writing and revision processes and the other written with pen. Think-aloud protocols were also recorded. It was found that participants paid more attention to higher order thinking activities while evaluating their written texts in the computer session. It was also found that they revised significantly more at most levels on the computer, and that their computer-generated essays received higher scores in argumentation than the hand-written ones. Therefore, he suggested that educators should seriously consider the impact of computers on writing assessment.

In another study, Lee (2007) described a classroom project in which one-to-one desktop videoconferencing was used to enhance the development of second language (L2) oral skills. In his study eighteen university students worked collaboratively with expert speakers to complete task-based activities. The author gathered data from video-recording samples, reflections, and oral interviews to report the participants’ experiences and examine the potential of desktop videoconferencing to support speaking skills. In his conclusions he argued, while this approach is effective in supporting collaborative learning and fostering L2 oral communication, learners with less sophisticated listening skills experienced difficulties in comprehending native speakers.

Native speakers’ linguistic variations, including regionalisms and accents, also affected the degree of the interactivity (Lee, 2007). Therefore he suggested three essential ingredients to maximize the potential benefits of desktop videoconferencing for language learning: (1) use of carefully designed tasks that engage learners, (2) appropriate selection of linguistic context, and (3) inclusion of sufficient network training.

2.3. Symbolic mediation
Mediation may involve more than just physical artefacts. Lantolf & Thorne (2006) defined mediation as “the process through which humans deploy culturally constructed artefacts,
concepts, and activities to regulate the material world or their own and each other’s social and mental activity” (as cited in Ellis, 2008, p. 524). They emphasized that artifacts can be either concert or symbolic.

Lantolf (2000, p. 1) named some symbolic artifacts as; numbers and arithmetic systems, music, art, and above all language and argued that humans use symbolic artifacts to establish an indirect, or mediated, relationship between themselves and the world. According to him, physical or symbolic artifacts are generally modified during their passing from one generation to the next. Each generation modifies its cultural inheritance to meet the changing needs of its communities and individuals. The specific functions that artefacts perform depend on the specific situational context in which they are put into use. An artifact with an established cultural function may perform a different mediating function in a concrete situation (Ellis, 2008, p. 524). Wertsch (1998, as cited in Ellis, 2008, p. 524) refers to this as ‘spin off’ function.

Lantolf and Thorne (2007) explained the significance of symbolic tools in human life as follow:

"Symbolic tools serve as an auxiliary means to control and reorganize our biologically endowed psychological processes. This control is voluntary and intentional and allows humans, unlike other species, to inhibit and delay the functioning of automatic biological processes. Rather than reacting automatically and non-thoughtfully to stimuli, which could result in inappropriate and even dangerous responses, we are able to consider possible actions (i.e., plan) on an ideal plane before realizing them on the objective plane. Planning itself entails memory of previous actions, attention to relevant (and overlooking of irrelevant) aspects of the situation, rational thinking, and projected outcomes."(p. 201)

Language is the most powerful cultural artifact that humans possess to mediate their connection to the world, to each other, and to themselves (Lantolf& Thorne, 2007, p. 201). It provides humans with the possibility of not being bound to their immediate environment and enables them to talk and think about entities and events that are displaced in both time and space, and even those events and entities that do not yet exist in the real world (e.g., the building planned by the architect).

As Arievitch& Van der Veer (2004) argued from an evolutionary perspective, this is an advantage of human over other species that they are able to use symbolic means of mediation to preplan their activities and to evaluate their possible outcomes before their actual performance.

2.4. Mediation through social interaction
In the earliest stage of human life, the development of higher psychological functions appears through participation in the social context, i.e. in semiotically mediated interaction with adult caregivers or other knowledgeable members of the child’s culture (Di Camilla & Antón, 2004).

The transfer of functions from the social (or interpsychological) domain to the cognitive (or intrapsychological) level occurs within the zone of proximal development (ZPD), which is defined as ‘the difference between the child’s developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the higher level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers’ (Vygotsky 1978, as cited in Di Camilla & Antón, 2004).

It is within the ZPD that cognitive development occurs, not only during this early stage of life but throughout one’s entire life (Di Camilla & Antón, 2004). As children learn language, they also learn to regulate their activities linguistically. According to Gass&Selinker (2008, p. 284) there are three stages of development on the way to self-regulation The first stage involves the use of objects as a way of thinking (object-regulation). An example can be parents which use objects (e.g., pieces of candy) to help children with the abstract concept of counting. A second stage is known as other regulation in which, learning is regulated by others rather than objects. Finally, self-regulation, the final stage occurs when activities can be performed with little or no external support. This occurs through internalization of information (addition without the use of pieces of candy, although some external support is required in the case of more complex mathematical manipulations).

Brown (1987) argued that self-regulation skills are subpart of metacognitive skills and allow the learners to think about their own thinking and learning and to control their thinking process to achieve their goals independently (as cited in Kayashima&Inaba, 2003). In fact, self-regulation is a systematic effort to direct thought, feelings, and actions toward achieving one’s goals (Schunk, 2001).

According to Ellis (2008, p. 257) one of the ways of approaching the mediating role of social interaction is to consider the general characteristics of interaction that help the process of learning. This approach was adopted by Wood, Bruner and Ross (1976) who listed a number of general features of scaffolding (e.g. the dialogic process by which one speaker assists another in performing a function that he or she cannot perform alone) as follow (as cited in Ellis, 2003, p. 181):

1. Recruiting interest in the task
2. Simplifying the task
3. Maintaining pursuit of the goal
4. Marking critical features and discrepancies between what has been produced and the ideal solution
5. Controlling frustration during problem solving
6. Demonstrating an idealized version of the act to be performed

Scaffolding involves attending to both the cognitive demands of a task and the affective states of the person attempting the task. As we saw above, working in the ZPD means that the learner is assisted by others to be able to achieve more than he or she would be able to achieve alone. Scaffolding refers to the detailed circumstances of such work in the ZPD.

Assisting English learners’ performance in the English as a second language class or in subject matter classes taught in English can be done in many different ways. Three types of scaffolding have been identified as being especially effective for second language learners (Bradley, 2004):

1. **Simplifying the language**: The teacher can simplify the language by shortening selections, speaking in the present tense, and avoiding the use of idioms.
2. **Asking for completion, not generation**: The teacher can have students choose answers from a list or complete a partially finished outline or paragraph.
3. **Using visuals**: The teacher can present information and ask for students to respond through the use of graphic organizers, tables, charts, outlines, and graphs.

Walqui (2006) in his study proposed six main types of instructional scaffolding as especially salient: modeling, bridging, contextualization, building schema, re-presenting text and developing metacognition.

Vygotsky’s concept of ZPD and its related scaffolding metaphor serves as the theoretical basis for the study of peer collaboration in ESL writing classroom. De Guerrero and Villamil (2000) in their study adopted a microgenetic approach to analyze the interaction produced by two intermediate ESL college students as they worked collaboratively in revising a narrative text written by one of them. Although in the first half of the revision session the reader played a critical role as mediator, both reader and writer became active partners in the revision task in which guided support was moving jointly between each other. They concluded that in L2 peer revision scaffolding may be mutual rather than unidirectional.

There is no doubt that peer response in the writing classroom is a time consuming activity. However, it may not be time wasted. Rollinson (2005) believed that by giving the students practice in becoming critical readers, we are at the same time helping them towards
becoming more self-reliant writers, who are both self-critical and who have the skills to self-edit and revise their writing. This may be a more pedagogical objective than getting them to do it right first time. However, only if the class is adequately set-up and trained can the benefits of the peer feedback activity be fully realized, and even so there are considerations of age, cultural background, class size, and inter-language level which may significantly influence overall outcomes.

Several criticisms have recently been put forward at the traditional definition of scaffolding, and reconceptualizations have been offered that aim to present an extended, more dynamic definition that accounts for the contribution of factors in the learning environment other than the expert/teacher. Mascolo (2005, as cited in Knouzi, Swain, Lapkin, & Brooks, 2010) argues that the standard definition of scaffolding assumes no role for the individual learner/novice and places too much focus on the structuring role of the expert. It also fails to reflect the “dynamic, emergent and open-ended nature of development” and depicts learning/development as a fixed, predetermined process. Likewise, Granott (2005, as cited in Knouzi et. al., 2010) points out that the notions of high asymmetry in the scaffolder vs. scaffoldee knowledge and low mutuality of responsibility between them has limited the traditional definitions of scaffolding. She claimed that the focus should be shifted from individuals (scaffolders and scaffoldees) to “ensembles” defined as “the smallest group of individuals who directly interact with one another during processes of development and learning related to a specific activity context”.

The preferred terms for scaffolding now is “collaborative dialogue” which was proposed by Swain (2000, p. 97) defined as “dialogue in which speakers are engaged in problem solving and knowledge building”.

Another approach for examining how interaction assists learning is closer to the basic principles of SCT (Ellis, 2008). According to this approach, there is no single set of general, predefined characteristics that can aid learning. Rather, the important point is the successful adjustment of the interaction to the developmental level of individual learners. As Ellis (2008, p. 258) argued, ‘to be effective, mediation needs to demonstrate reciprocity and contingency’.

Vygotsky (1998, as cited in Poehner & Lantolf, 2005) insisted that responsiveness to mediation is essential for understanding cognitive ability because it provides insight into the person’s future development. That is, what the individual is able to today with mediation; he or she is able to do tomorrow alone. Importantly, he distinguished between potential development and actual development, and claimed that actual development cannot be used to
predict the potential development. Moreover potential development is not an *a priori* prediction but is derived from concrete mediated activity.

Therefore, what constitutes the facilitative interaction for one learner may not be for another, either because it is too far beyond the level of the learner, or because it cannot provide sufficient challenge for the learner. This second approach to examining the role of interaction focuses on the need for reciprocity between the learner and mediator and draws significantly on Vygotskian zone of proximal development (Ellis, 2008, p. 259).

### 3. Social mediation aspect of tasks

We cannot consider a task as something predetermined by a curriculum, a program, a plan, or a scientific experiment. Rather, tasks are accomplished in a locally contingent and socially distributed way through the actions of the participants involved and through their ongoing interpretations of the instructional setting (Mondana & Pekarek Doehler, 2004). This situated and “praxeological” dimension of tasks also means that learners themselves can be actively involved in reshaping the task at hand. Such observations draw our attention to the joint nature of both task accomplishment and the processes of social mediation, focused on by Vygotsky. It is not simply experts who help learners solve specific linguistic problems but also learners who can help experts adjust their mediation to their own needs and possibilities. In other words, the learners themselves can be mediators with regard to the experts’ tasks (PekarekDoehler, 2002).

Olmedo (2003) in his study examined the communicative strategies of a group of kindergarteners in a dual language classroom in order to understand their developing bilingualism. The results of his study showed that these children monitor the classroom environment and make judgments about the linguistic proficiency of their peers, intervene when their classmates need assistance, and use a variety of strategies to serve as mediators to facilitate comprehension and communication in the classroom. These strategies, which Olmedo (2003) have characterized with the metaphor “bilingual echo,” include translation of a message, paraphrasing of a message, code-switching or alternation between both languages, and the use of paralinguistic cues and gestures to accompany speech and thereby scaffold communication.

Therefore Olmedo (2003) concluded that placing young children in situations with opportunities for peer interaction in more than one language may endorse the communicative and cognitive skills that we want to develop through educational system.
4. Mediation through private speech

The primary way in which we use language to regulate our mental functioning is through private speech (Lantolf & Thorn, 2007, p. 201). Mitchel and Myles (2004, p. 198) clarified the difference between the concept of private speech in two theories of child development; Piagetian and Vygotskian theories. They argued that in Piagetian theory of child development, private speech is interpreted as evidence of children’s ‘egocenterism’, or inability to view the world from another point of view. However, in sociocultural theory private speech is considered as evidence of children’s developing ability to regulate their own behavior. In Vygotskian theory private speech eventually becomes inner speech, which is the use of language to regulate internal thought, without any external articulation. Therefore it is viewed as advancement over the earlier uses of language, which are social and interpersonal. Mitchel and Myles (2004, p. 198) put it this way: “The fully autonomous individual has developed inner speech as a tool of thought, and normally feels no further need to articulate external private speech”. However, they assert that when facing a new task, even skilled adults may regulate their efforts with a private monologue (p. 198).

Vygotsky (1962) explained that: Inner speech is not the interior aspect of external speech; it is a function in itself (as cited in Di Camilla & Antón, 2004). It still remains speech, i.e. thought connected with words. But while in external speech thought is represented in words, in inner speech words disappear as they bring forth thought. Inner speech is to a large extent thinking in pure meanings. Therefore, for sociocultural theory, analysis of private speech has a central role in understanding how the mind functions. Frawley (1997) argued that private speech in children is used “to focus the one’s attention on what needs to be accomplished, how to accomplish it, and when something has been accomplished, and then allows the speaker evaluate what has been accomplished” (as cited in Lantolf & Thorn, 2007, p. 202). He points out that different languages provide different linguistic options for performing these mental activities. He provided some examples of private speech of L1 English speakers such as “Oh!” (often indicating that speakers have discovered what it is they are to do or that they have recovered a particular word from memory), “Next,” “OK” (often used to direct the self to begin to do a task), “Let’s see” (an indication that the speaker needs to take time to think about what the task or problem is), or “There” (indicating that a task has been completed).

According to Di Camilla & Antón (2004) sociocultural theory makes two important claims regarding the concept of private speech. First, even though it is often social or
communicative in appearance, it is psychological in function. That is, in private speech the self is both the speaker and the listener. In the early stages of child development, private speech functions more in describing and naming certain aspects of children’s actions and their environment than with planning and directing action (Wertsch 1979, as cited in Di Camilla & Antón, 2004). As children mature, private speech is used in planning, directive, and evaluative function, and tends to precede and follow actions rather than co-occur with them.

Second, private speech is normally more reduced than social speech. According to Vygotsky (1986) the principal distinguishing feature of inner speech is the lack of ‘psychological subject’ and the presence of ‘psychological predicates’ (as cited in Di Camilla & Antón, 2004).

5. Mediation through a second language

Ohta (2001) defined private speech as “audible speech not adapted to an addressee” (as cited in Ellis, 2003, p. 178). She suggests that it can be in a number of forms; such as, imitation, “vicarious response”, i.e. ‘responses that a classroom learner produces to questions the teacher has addressed to another learner’, and mental rehearsal.

Frawley and Lantolf (1985) were the first L2 researchers that have begun to investigate the cognitive function of private speech in L2 users. Private speech is an abbreviated form of speech which as Vygotsky (1978) suggested is similar to the social speech between two people, who have a great deal of shared knowledge. It is not necessary for private speech to be fully syntactic (as cited in Lantolf & Thorn, 2007).

Lantolf (2006) posed the question that “whether individuals who learn a new language as late adolescents or adults can use this language to mediate their psychological activity?”

According to him there are controversies regarding the answer of this questions. Ushakova (1994, as cited in Lantolf 2006) based on a series of studies with Russian L1 speakers learning L2s in tutored and experimental settings, argued that although L2 speakers are able to use their L2 for social communication, they are unable to use it as a psychological artifact to mediate their thinking.

Ushakova (1994, as cited in Lantolf, 2006) argued that “second language is incorporated into the classification system already available in the first language, relies on the previously developed semantic system (L1 inner speech), and actively employs first language phonology”. However other studies like (Frawley&Lantolf, 1985; McCafferty, 1994) did not
support Ushakova’s position. These researches showed that when encountering difficulties in performing different tasks ESL learners used private speech exclusively in the L2 in order to mediate and organize their thinking.

The point is that, as Lantolf (2006) argued the important difference between Ushakova’s research and that of other above mentioned scholars is that the former was done in a foreign language context, whereas the latter was performed in an immersion L2 setting. Therefore Lantolf (2006) concluded that different factors like the language in which task is posed as well as the language of the community may influence which language a speaker accesses for self-regulation.

Guerrero’s (1999, as cited in Golandouz, 2007) study on the relationship between private speech and proficiency level indicated that advanced learners used inner speech more than lower levels, and that inner speech in L2 plays an important role for advanced learners as it becomes a rich, powerful, and effective cognitive tool used for thinking. She also concluded that, just as in L1, L2 private speech is developmental in nature. She also claimed that inner speech, or mental rehearsal of L2, increased as the learners’ level of proficiency level increased.

According to Ellis (2003, p. 179), since private speech is intended for the speaker, not the listener, it is not constrained by the same norms that affect social speech. In the case of L2 learners this can be seen in two ways: First, they may use their L1 in self-directed speech. Second, if they use the L2, they may not employ target language forms even if they have internalized this. Therefore Ellis (2003) proposed that errors can be seen as the private forms that learners use in their task performance. The notion of ‘deviance’ cannot be easily generalized to private speech. This perspective suggests that to evaluate the accuracy of learner’s productions, one should distinguish between social and private speech.

6. Implications of private speech in L2 research

Ahmed (2002) referred to a few studies in L2 research that focus on the use of private speech, and argued that the use of private speech is crucial in investigating the cognitive states of an individual in verbal communication. By referring to the point that investigation of private speech from a Vygotskian perspective in L2 research is still in its infancy compared to such other areas as children's cognitive development in L1, he provided the following implications of private speech for L2 research:
First, he believed that the view that speech communication is the sending and receiving of messages between speakers is an oversimplification. At the cognitive level, an individual's speech may have one of these two functions; inter-personal or intra-personal. Investigation of private speech helps uncover these differences and provide insights into the cognitive complexities of interpersonal verbal communication.

The second implication proposed by Ahmed (2002) concerns errors and native/non-native speaker distinction. The use of private speech in principle removes any native/non-native speaker dichotomy. In fact, errors are not seen in terms of any deviations from native-speaker norm, but different cognitive functions.

Another implication proposed by Ahmed (2002) refers to what may be called the socio-cultural dimensions of an individual's speech in verbal communication. Developmentally, one's inner speech (the silent verbal thought) comes from social interaction; in Vygotskian view, cognitive development proceeds from the social to the individual. As such, in verbal communication such as dialogs, interlocutors bring in their own perspectives, beliefs, and background knowledge from their past socio-cultural experience. Therefore one's use of private speech in a given task ultimately relates to his/her socio-cultural experience.

7. Looking at social mediation from a different angle

PekarekDoehler (2002) poses the question that “How can we conceive of mediation if we take social interaction not only as a place for the development of a specific cognitive ability but also as a task to be accomplished and, therefore, a potential object of development itself?”

His discussion starts from the two assumptions:

1. Learning in interaction depends on ways of dealing with the situation as a sociointeractional encounter and, therefore, involves learning how to deal with it interactively.

2. Learners and experts are active agents collaboratively constructing the sociocognitive conditions of their encounter through their interaction. Following this view of learning as a basically communicative activity, PekarekDoehler (2002) suggested that we should change the way we look at mediation-in-interaction and examine it as a locally contingent and culturally situated activity by which the social situation itself is interactively accomplished.
3. This means we should look at mediation not only as a means of collaboratively solving a problem and creating possibilities for learning, but also as an activity that participates in the continuing formation of the contexts, role-relations, interactional positionings, and jointly coordinated activities. It means understanding mediation as ‘constitutive of and constituted by the sociointeractive dimensions of talk’.

8. A pluralistic definition of mediation

Pekarek Doehler (2002) finally provided a pluridimensional definition of mediation, involving:

- A reciprocity-oriented notion of mediation that accounts for the fact that mediation is a mutually coordinating activity. This view fundamentally opposed to a unidirectional understanding of the relationship between expert and learner.

- A context-sensitive and context-producing notion of mediation that understands mediational processes as parts of the methods (in the ethnomethodological sense) by which interlocutors make their understandings of context reciprocally accessible and co-construct their teaching and learning environment.

- A culture-related notion of mediation that takes into account the mediational role of communicative culture and experience; which considers, as Cole (1994, as cited in Pekarek Doehler, 2002) put it, cultural schemes (school-related schemes, for instance) as mediators for development.

These elements approach a pluridimensional notion of mediation that not only relates to such things as linguistic or logical (i.e., related to logical reasoning) resources but is also contingent with what we talk about, what we do by talking, who we are for one another, and how we define the situation, which is concerned with contents, activities, contexts, roles, and cognitive resources.

9. Conclusion

Sociocultural theory brings the social and psychological into contact through the notion of mediation (Ellis, 2008). Human experiences of our life are shaped by the mediation of physical and symbolic tools (Bernhard, 2007). All human learning and thinking is related to establishing experiential human-world relationships and second language learning is not an exception.
The term mediation describes “a situation where one entity plays an intermediary causal role in the relation between two other entities” (Fernyhough, 2008). The use of language to help learners move into and through their ZPD is of great significance to sociocultural theory (Turuk, 2008). Lantolf suggested that mediation in second language learning can involve others through social interaction or the learner by him or herself through private speech.

In this paper, the attempt was made to provide a more or less comprehensive account of the concept of mediation, different types of it, and its implementation in second language acquisition (SLA). At first, the researcher explained the tool-mediated action, and then she went through the concept of symbolic-mediated action. Then the implementation of tool mediation, social interaction and private speech as different forms of mediation were discussed in SLA.

Finally, the researcher provided a pluridimensional notion of the concept of mediation, as proposed by PekarekDoehler (2002). According to this view mediation is a reciprocity oriented, context sensitive, and culture related phenomenon.

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Title

A Critical Look at the Status of FLT in the Iranian Context: Challenges and Opportunities

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Abstract

We have heard and read much about teaching in the past fifty years or so. Even during the Post–method era, there has been abundant literature on teaching methodology. This time, however, teaching has received a different type of attention. The recognition of the learner's role; the recognition of the priority of learning over teaching and the fact that teaching is subordinated to learning; the evidence coming from social–psychological studies of language; and the data on how learners perform differently in different contexts of use provided deeper insight into the workings of language learning / teaching. Accordingly, the basic premise of this article would not advocate or justify a particular language teaching method, rather via appraising the prevailing conditions in language teaching and through proposing the alternate solutions, it calls for the effective use of time and resources available in our country, Iran. It reviews the contexts, in which teaching and learning occur, including the context constituted by teachers and learners, institutional context, textbooks, instructional aids and classroom time. Also, it compares teaching English as foreign language both in state schools as well as private institutes to shed light on their success and/or failure in terms of pedagogical enterprise.

Keywords: Post–method Era, Methodology, Pedagogical enterprise, Institutional context.
1. Introduction

Entering university, every Iranian student has at least 800 hours background in English. However, a great number of them are not able to produce or comprehend a single error–free sentence in English. The dominance of such a situation is a good reason to claim that language teaching in Iran has not been able to cope with the demands. In the past twenty years, almost all the factors and elements involved in teaching English as a foreign language in the country undertook changes. New textbooks have been designed, published and revised over time, as well as there have been training programs for English teachers. A notable tendency for using teaching aids has aroused among language teachers, and new methodologies have been tried or adopted. Yet, the problem has not been overcome satisfactorily. For the same reason, the present paper attempts to investigate the factors involved in failure of the English language teaching in our country.

Most of the teachers as a quick answer to the question of failure would suggest that the problem deals with using inappropriate methodology. When these teachers try to explain this fact, grammar translation, no doubt, would be the most criticized one. In contrast to this view I argue that grammar translation may have never been employed appropriately at all. Rather, the problem may be accounted for in terms of the misapplication of the method. In fact, if grammar translation has been adopted properly, the situation might not be as miserable as it is. There is no sign of the development of skills proposed by grammar translation method. Chastain (1988) remarks that "Grammar translation teaching satisfied the desires of "mental faculties" school of thought and the traditional humanistic orientation, which placed primary emphasis on the belles’ letters of the country". She further notes that the primary purpose of the grammar translation approach was to prepare students to be able to study literature. An equally important goal was to improve students' capability of coping with difficult learning situations and materials. Larsen–Freeman's comment on GT is by far more promising. "Grammar translation is supposed to put emphasis on the ability to translate foreign texts, to develop a large range of vocabulary and to have a good ability in teaching literature (2002). However, as it was mentioned earlier it is a common experience for professors in universities to encounter too many students who are not able to read a short passage or understand its vocabulary items thoroughly, let alone the highly demanding skill of translating it into Persian.

Another group of teachers, due to their familiarity with new approaches, may criticize the program claiming that English has been thought as discrete, meaningless units through audio-lingual method. They may argue that the failure in current EFL teaching in Iran goes back to the unnoticed drawbacks of audio-lingual approach.

The same position taken with respect to the GTM, I again argue for the no adoption or better to say the misadoption of this method. Since we did not meet skills advocated by audio-lingualism either. Chastain (1988) notes that the goal of audio-lingual method was to
have students reach a point at which they could use language automatically and unconsciously as native speakers do. Likewise Rivers (1981) suggests "the stated objectives of audio-lingual method were the development of mastery, at various levels of competency, in all four language skills." Cited in Richard and Rodgers (2002), Brooks (1994) lists training in listening comprehension, accurate pronunciation and recognition of speech symbols in writing as the short – term learning objectives and language as the native speakers use it as the long-term objectives.

Finally, Richard and Rodgers (2002) admitting the fact that audio-lingual method began to fall from favors in the late sixties, considers that audio-lingualism and the materials based on audio-lingual principles continue to be widely used today. No doubt even the critics of such a method will admit that the present state is too little to be considered in comparison to the demand of this method. Thus, it should not be considered pessimistic at all if one claims that as far as the condition is concerned, even the highly promising communicative methodologies would not meet a better result. What seems urgent is a radical change or a revolution in our belief in and demands from the concept and the understanding of methodology, not its label.

Still a third group of critics may relate the unattained objectives to the textbooks adopted in guidance schools and high schools. A comparison between the original English textbooks and those adopted in schools will clarify that this arguments is also far from valid.

Quite opposite and as a proportionately satisfactory experience, I refer to the relative success of English language teaching institutes in the country. In fact, and more convincingly in large cities, people came to the agreement that taking the advantage of such classes is the only way to help their children learn English.

As a teacher who is acquainted with and has contacts to both public schools and such institutes, I should admit that the teachers and the methods are not as diversified in these two centers as they are supposed to be. As a matter of fact you may find numerous cases that certain teacher or teachers work in both of the above – mentioned centers and possibly similar methods are at work but with undoubtedly different results. A close look at the policies, programs, facilities, and the management of these centers may provide good hints. Put it in other words, by comparing schools and language centers in terms of educational settings and facilities, teachers, learners, the access to teaching aids, textbooks and the class times, the present paper tries to provide a clear picture of the status quo of language learning in these centers. What is intended is to make a serious decision and to rely on the strong points and a determined flexibility to adopt the new and promising procedures, in addition to no prejudice to refrain from the weak points.
2. Classroom climate

Nobody can ignore the important effect of a proper educational setting. The class environment, chairs, tables, blackboard, and other relevant equipment can strongly affect the teaching process. They have the property to make a teaching and the learning process smoother, easier and more pleasant. This point has also been considered notably by Celce–Murcia (2001) when she notes "obviously, the bright, clean classroom with relevant pictures on the walls, and moveable comfortable chairs with some support for writing on, is the idea to be striven for."

With almost a full agreement among those who are familiar with the schools and the institutes, I claim that in general public schools are superior in rank in terms of these factors. In fact, a great percent of the language centers are established in places not designed or equipped for educational practices. However, what makes difference is the way these learning environments are used. In public schools, English classes are held in a place where students study mathematics, physics, history and other subjects. Therefore, the climate is not and cannot be English by any means. In language centers, however, the whole setting serves as a supplementary resource, which backs up teaching and learning. There the atmosphere in its totality is used for the improvement of learning English. All teaching aids are at hand. The walls are good boards for charts, pictures, drawings and so on, and thus help to maintain peripheral learning. This point has been considered attentively by Larsen–Freeman (2002), when she notes "by putting posters containing grammatical information about target language on classroom walls, students will absorb the necessary facts effortlessly. The teacher may or may not call attention to the posters". She further tries to justify the importance of the peripheral learning through noting the idea that “we perceive much more in our environment than to which we consciously attend." In short, in language centers everything, with minimal difference in degrees, is adjusted to make the process of language learning more natural, favorable and fruitful. And this in turn affects the retrieval, retention and reinforcement of the taught materials positively.

Since in both guidance schools and high schools different places as laboratories and workshops have been excluded for courses as physics, chemistry, and other subjects, the allocation of an exclusive room to English classes in these schools does not appear ambitious.

3. Teachers: professionalism in teaching

In spite of the undeniable difference in results in the majority of cases, the instructors of the private centers are not different from the teachers of the public schools. Thus, something beyond the personality of teachers should be at work. Firstly, teaching in public schools is merely seen as the fulfillment of the requirements of the teacher's job, which continues even if the duty is not accomplished satisfactorily. No teacher loses his job due to his bad or weak performance. Secondly, schools have no role in teacher selection. They are not selected by
schools but by the departments of education. Quite contrary in language centers, teachers are usually recruited from among a group of applicants or candidates, a process which makes a good and fair selection more possible. Thirdly, teacher evaluation in schools is defective. It usually deals with his control and class administration not to his ability and skills in language teaching. In language centers, on the other hand, a specialized evaluation and supervision is at work. This policy indirectly leads to teacher's improvement since it determines the teacher's later collaboration or part with the institute. Fourthly, students in public schools have no role in deciding about teachers. Thus, they are bound to tolerate the assigned teachers. But in language centers students' judgment is a part of the process of teacher evaluation.

In order to keep abreast of changes in the field of foreign language teaching, teacher education programs should be subjected to continuous appraisal in relation to the needs of both the individuals and the society and the means of their realization. Since language teaching today is borrowing extensively from a wide range of disciplines, such as second language acquisition, psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics, pragmatics, artificial intelligence, cognition, parapsychology, to mention just a few, care must take to ensure that the programs offered provide the prospective teacher with the needed skills, knowledge and experience.

In Iran, in–service trainings suffer from content syndrome. Whilst in initial teacher training priority is usually given to theories, old, new and most practicing teachers access to new theories tends to be patchy. A major source of access is the in-service training provided by educational bodies–Ministries and Boards of Education, Teacher's Associations, Foreign Cultural Institutes etc.–in the form of seminars and conferences. Whilst this type of event is an important way of making teachers aware of new developments in methodology, I believe that the nature of many of these activities, with their concentration on practical "Show – and – tell" sessions, sometimes has the tendency to reduce methodology to a "bag of tricks"; that is to say, as they may illustrate examples of good practice and to an extent certain methodological principles connected with them, a deeper understanding of their underlying theories, which is necessary if teachers are to engage in a critical dialogue with new methods, is sometimes lacking. The "what" and the "how" of teaching needs to be supported by the critical "why" or "why not."

An ongoing dialogue between theory and practice is an important component of teacher development if teachers are to be open to new theories and, just as important, not to be intimidated by them. Moreover, this aspect is important if teachers are themselves to be formulators rather than consumers of theories and it will feed into activities such as "action research", which is likely to play an increasing role in the coming years. In some countries, special institutions exist to carry out the role of "theory and research mediation" or it is seen as the brief of university departments, but in my opinion much more to be done to support the mediation process. I believe that it is short–sighted of educational bodies not to take extensive measures to facilitate the dialogue between theory and practice and that they should
devote more resources to the dissemination and discussion of theories and research findings in way that are accessible and relevant to practitioners.

4. Class time
No doubt schools provide better times for all subjects. Since in language centers classes are held at nights or in the afternoons when the students are more likely tried and bored. However, the distribution of the class hours in language centers is a point which deserves a careful consideration. In schools, English classes are held in either three successive hours a day during the week or in two-week intervals in two sessions. Due to the teachers' occupation in different schools, these classes are usually held with short intervals, in two successive days or so. However, language centers hold classes which are distributed evenly in odd or even days in three sessions during a week. Thus, they not only compensate for the improper class times but also provide better opportunities for practice, learning and progress.

5. Students
Indeed, most learners who study language in the centers discussed are the common students of public schools. That they benefit from an extra program is by no means deniable. However, class participation in schools, no matter for English or any other subject, is to some extent unavoidable or better to say compulsory. But going to a language center is an intentional, voluntary act, which no doubt a result in a higher level of motivation, the importance of which is unquestionable. As Brown (2000) asserts "It is easy in second language learning to claim that a learner will be successful with the proper motivation since countless studies and experiments in human learning have shown that motivation is a key to learning." The same source further emphasizes the relationship between motivation and attitude, asserting that Gardner and Lambert (1972) defined motivation as a construct made up of certain attitudes. He further quotes from Oller, Hudson and Liu (1977) that positive attitudes enhance proficiency. Thus, one of the most demanding tasks on the part of the language teachers at schools seems to be the provision of the proper level of attraction and motivation for the learners. That is to specify for them how useful and helpful knowing or learning a foreign language would be.

According to Brown (2001), interactive language teachers must not underestimate the importance of getting students strategically invested in their language learning process. Perhaps the most powerful principle of learning of all kinds is the intrinsic motivation. One of the best ways of getting students intrinsically involved in their language learning is to offer them the opportunity to develop their own set of strategies for success. Having thus invested their time and effort into the learning of English, they can take responsibility for a good deal of their own learning. This, in turn, generates more motivation as they becomes autonomous learners.
6. Instructional materials

As the last but not necessarily the least factor I draw a contrast in terms of the textbooks used in the two mentioned English classes. As Celce-Murcia (2001) states "no teacher is entirely satisfied with the textbook used, yet very few manage to teach without one". In almost all language centers textbooks prepared by native speakers are used. A teacher book and a practice book usually back up the students' textbooks. These supplementary texts are to reinforce and guarantee the success of the teaching process. However, this fact ought not to be considered as a sign of the insufficiency of the Iranian textbooks used in guidance schools or high schools. As a matter of fact in the past twenty years various measures have been taken to design and prepare textbooks for students. The developed materials though lacking teacher book and resource book are good enough to be used for the attended results. The writer of this article has also evaluated the high school textbooks used in Iran; see References (Ahmadi, 2002).

Teaching aids are not uncommon or inaccessible in public schools, but not allocation of an exclusive room or class to English classes indirectly decreases the possibility of their use. However, the use and the adoption of tape players, films, charts, pictures and similar equipment are a common practice in language centers. Besides, the grouping of all equipment in the same place makes their use easier and more liable.

In recent years, the use of technological aids, especially those related to computers, has increasingly become a common feature of the classroom. There is no doubt that computer–based instruction will occupy a more central role in the second language classroom in the future. However, as we eagerly explore the potential that this new technology has to offer to language learning, we should not lose sight of the fact that it is the teacher, not the technology, who determines the quality of learning that takes place in the classroom. In adopting a new technology, be it a tape recorder, a VCR, a CD–ROM multimedia, or other network–based communication technology, we should consider the following questions:

- Does the new technology facilitate the attainment of course goals?
- Is it cost–effective? Do the benefits outweigh its cost?
- Are the teachers ready to work with the new technology? Is any training required?
- Does it serve the needs of teachers and students?
- Does it help teachers make more efficient use of class time?

There are other questions to think about, but these are some of the most important questions that need to be addressed before we decide to implement new technologies in the classroom.
7. Conclusion
It seems that to attribute all problems to language teaching methods in general and to the outdated or the criticized ones in particular is not a fair assessment. What seems lacking is a dynamic management and above all commitment to a clearly defined policy for ELT. Treating English classes analogous to all subjects signifies the ignorance of a basic truth; that as a school subject English hasn't been treated or thought of meritoriously.

Improper distribution of the class hours, which is again related to the educational management and lack of a general intention in using at least the available teaching aids, are all at work in preventing the language learning from progression. In fact, what seem more crucial to be modified are not the teaching methods rather what require changes is the dominant policy or the educational management prevailing over schools. In so doing, even the unattended effects of the methods and other factors, no matter how trivial they are, can be accounted for and comprehensive solutions are likely to be provided.

The immediate implication of this study concerns the need to use textbooks which address the needs of the students. However, it is also necessary to go ‘up’ to the level of policy-making because of the huge impact of testing on teaching in the classroom. There must be a serious re-viewing of the Iranian curriculum in English language teaching in order to broaden the skills required for students to learn in school.

References


Title

Lexical Collocations in Writing Production of EFL Learners: A Study of L2 Collocation Learning

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Biodata

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Abstract

Lexical approach encouraged the learning of vocabulary in chunks by putting more emphasis on collocations. Due to the crucial role of collocation in expanding vocabulary, this research set out to evaluate the rate of lexical collocations in Iranian EFL learners' writing production across L1 and L2. In addition, influence of L1 on L2 collocational use in the learner' writing samples was examined. To this end, 200 Persian EFL learners at BA level were selected. These participants were taking paragraph writing and essay writing courses in two successive educational years. The mid-term, final exam, and also the assignments of EFL learners were evaluated in order to examine the research questions. Due to the nominal nature of data, chi-square test was used for data analysis. Then the rate of lexical collocations was calculated. Different categories of lexical collocations were also compared with regard to their frequencies in EFL writing production. The rates of verb-noun and adjective-noun collocations appeared to be the highest ones and noun-verb collocations the lowest ones. Moreover, frequency and rate of collocations in L1 and L2 paragraphs were compared. L1 collocations were at higher frequency and rate. The results also showed that L1 had both positive and negative effect on collocations.

Keywords: Collocation, Lexical collocation, Lexical Approach, L1, L2.
1. Introduction
As an important area of language teaching, the lexical approach has received substantial attention in recent years which emphasizes on developing learners' proficiency with lexis or words and word combinations. According to this approach, an essential part of language acquisition is the ability to comprehend and produce lexical patterns and phrases as chunks and these chunks become the raw data by which learners perceive patterns of language traditionally thought of as grammar (Lewis, 1993). Certainly, this approach distinguishes between group of individual words with fixed meanings and lexis, which involves not only the single words but also the word combinations that are stored in our mental lexicon. Accordingly, the lexical approach has directed considerable attention to institutionalized utterances and expressions including collocations which is necessary to acquire native-like competence in the second language.

Collocation is the habitual association of a word in a language with other particular words in sentences. Native speakers have accepted collocations as normal part of their language without regard to words grammatical relations as members of word classes. Clearly it is difficult for non-native speakers to identify these collocations. For this reason, collocations have always been problematic parts of second language learning. One of the possible sources of errors EFL learners make in collocation seem to be cross linguistic influence. That is, there are variations among collocational patterns of languages but L2 learners ignore them and they transfer collocational structures of their mother tongue to the target language, which leads to semantically or syntactically erroneous collocations. L2 learners intend to translate L1 collocations into L2 ones assuming that there is a one – to – one correspondence between the L1 and L2 collocational patterns. Since cross linguistic influence can play a decisive role in productive skills such as writing, and significance of utilizing collocations is more noticeable in this skill, emphasis of collocational patterns on this skill assumes a considerable importance. Indeed, If L2 learners do not acquire collocational associations as part of L2 vocabulary knowledge, they will produce deviant or odd combinations in speech or writing through the process of transfer. EFL learners, lacking of this automation may make non native errors when they produce utterances. According to Tanja Deveci (2004), since EFL learners memorize sets of words in isolation, they tend to utilize these single words in their writings. For this reason when they encounter these words in combinations, they can not understand them. He also argued that learners may sometimes look for general rules for collocations that do not work for all collocations. Indeed, they
might overgeneralize rules of collocation. Furthermore, perhaps some EFL learners avoid using collocational phrases in order to prevent committing errors which may cause the rate of collocations decreases in their productive skills such as writing. Accordingly, analysis of miss-collocations may be an effective way to help EFL learners to overcome the difficulties. Recently, many scholars and language teachers have been concerned with error analysis as well as its implications for teaching strategies related to collocations for EFL learners. Richard (1971), for example, argued that error analysis can be performed to identify strategies used by learners in their language learning to discover the causes of learners' errors and to access information on general difficulties in language learning as an aid to language teaching. It is worth mentioning that both intralingual and interlingual challenges can be presented by the task of learning collocations. Based on the preceding explanations, this study focuses on exploring the relationship of collocation on the written production of L2 learners.

Besides, since error analysis in collocations serves as an essential way to improve L2 writing proficiency, this research analyzes collocational errors that constantly occur in English essays and paragraphs of EFL learners which are under the influence of L1 collocational patterns. Moreover, the researcher as a language teacher has also observed that rate of collocations in EFL writings was rather low as compared to other linguistic structures. It seems that assigning the rate of collocations in lexical dimensions contribute to ameliorate L2 learners' writings. Therefore, this study intends to scrutinize EFL learners' rate of production in writing from dimension of lexical collocations.

Furthermore, we do not know much about the order of learning lexical collocations. Studying lexical collocations and different types of them may provide some insight into the order and pattern of their development in second language learning. By doing a systematic study and analysis of lexical collocations, it can be also indicated if L1 collocations have positive effect on providing L2 collocations or it causes collocational errors in L2. Accordingly, the aim of this study is to investigate the effect of L1 collocations on L2 collocations. This may lead to positive and negative effects on learning collocations. To this end, the current study addressed the following questions:

1. What is the rate of lexical collocations in the writing production of EFL learners?
2. Is there any cross linguistic influence of L1 collocation on L2 lexical collocation in the writing production of EFL learners?
3. Is there any difference between the rate of lexical collocation across L1 and L2 writing tasks?
2. Literature Review

Kim (2009), based on the study of use of Korean noun-verb collocations, suggested collocations should be taught explicitly as a critical part of second language vocabulary learning. In addition, the results indicated that the starting points of teaching collocations should be raising learners' level of awareness about the collocation phenomenon, stressing on the importance of learning collocations to achieve native speaker like fluency and accuracy.

Although lexical collocations, rather than grammatical ones, seem more flexible, its greater possibility of formation may make learners feel they have the most freedom in combining words. Therefore collocational errors the learners are likely to commit are the transfers of L1 elements in their combinations which unfortunately are not always acceptable collocations (Moehkardi, 2002). The following are possible L1 transfers:

a. Learners will transfer L1 verbs in English verb + noun collocation. For example, Indonesian learners will think ‘make a conclusion’ is the only acceptable word combination because in BI ‘membuat kesimpulan’ is an acceptable collocation.

They will hesitate to adopt ‘to draw a conclusion’. Moreover ‘membuat persetujuan’ has its acceptable English equivalent: ‘make an agreement’. Therefore learners transfer the verb ‘membuat’ as ‘make’ which is not always acceptable verb for certain nouns, or avoid using ‘make’ + noun because in BI structure other verbs are more likely used. For example: English ‘make the bed’ requires different use of verb, “membersihkan/merapikan tempat tidur”. Lower level learners will likely use ‘clean’ or more acceptable verb ‘tidy up’ to express the same meaning, but will hesitate to use ‘make the bed’

b. The transfer of L1 adjectives that collocates with nouns Because in BI, an expression ‘kopi kental’ is acceptable, learners will likely find the equivalent of the adjective ‘kental’: ‘thick’ or ‘heavy’, whereas ‘strong coffee’ is the acceptable English collocation. Adjectives with similar and or opposite meanings are also often confusing to learners when they have to combine them with particular nouns: should they choose ‘light coffee’ or ‘mild coffee’? Should they choose ‘weak dish’ or ‘mild dish’ when their intention is that the food is not spicy?

c. The transfer of L1 adverb ‘sangat’ in most ‘adverb + adjective’ combinations Most English adverbs that precede adjectives have the same meaning of ‘sangat’ in BI which is equivalent to English ‘very’, therefore learners will likely play safe by avoiding using adverb but will overuse adverb ‘very’ with most adjectives.
Kaur and Hegelheimer (2005) maintained that L2 learners' competence of formal writing in an academic setting should involve a strong linguistic base, including a vast range of lexical skills. They called attention to the fact that L2 learners did not have as much exposure to the target language as native speakers do, so they had a more limited command of the language as well as of vocabulary. Hinkel (2004) affirmed that if the intention of non-native academic students was to achieve the educational objectives, they would do their best to approximate their level of writing to that of native speakers. Hinkel also commented that written academic discourse was highly conventionalized and its features recurrent.

Mounya (2010), who investigated the role of teaching collocations in raising foreign language writing proficiency, argued that a strong linear correlation exists between writing proficiency and using collocations. Thus, he recommended the adaptation of a Communicative-Collocational Approach to teaching writing which entails teaching writing through a communicative approach by developing students' collocational competence.

3. Method
3.1. Participants
To collect the required data, 200 EFL students at BA level from University of Kashan were selected through purposive sampling. The rational behind this sampling was basically practical issues. These EFL learners' characteristics were more or less similar to typical EFL university students of Iran. In other words, these learners did not differ considerably from other EFL learners of universities in Iran. All learners were sophomore, majoring in English literature and translation. More specifically, 120 EFL learners were passing the paragraph writing course and 80 ones were passing the essay writing course. The first group (120 learners) were studying in educational year of 2008 and the second (80 learners) were in educational year of 2009. The participants were both male and female English learners and ranged in age from 19 to 21.

3.2. Instruments
Three kinds of materials were used in the writing classes to collect considerable samples of EFL learners' writings. These materials including assignments, mid-term papers and final exam papers were used in the paragraph and essay writing courses.
3.3. Procedures

Two groups were asked to write the paragraphs and essays in two successive educational years (2008 and 2009). During the semester, the books titled *paragraph development* by Arnaudet and Barret (1990) and *practical writer with readings* by Bailey and Powell (1989) were taught for the paragraph writing course and essay writing course.

The 40 participants in the educational year of 2008 were asked to write three paragraphs on the topics of "Why is it difficult to write in English", "Three major causes of divorce" and "Night shift students". For every topic, they had one month time to write these assignments. Indeed, they had more opportunities to refer to different resources and develop their paragraphs.

30 other participants at the next educational year (2009) were also asked to write paragraphs, both in English and Persian on the common topic of "Environment". These paragraphs were examined with the aim of comparing L1 and L2 collocations and also L1 impact on producing collocational phrases.

In the next step, mid-term exam including 40 essays was administered at the same educational year. The time limit that allocated for the exam was about 60 minutes. Meanwhile, there was a common topic "Death rate of car accident in Iran is high" for 40 EFL learners.

Next, a final exam was given at the end of the two semesters (2008 and 2009). The time limit allocated for the essays was 90 minutes on the common topic "Modern technologies have had several effects on our way of learning". For paragraphs with the topic of "characteristics of a good partner" written by other learners, 60 minutes was also devoted.

Learners, probably, tried their best to use more technical and complicated structures including collocational expressions in the final exam. For this reason, the final exam papers seemed to be more vital and challenging than other papers.

It is noteworthy that the data collected including assignments and exams covered diverse topics to evaluate the collocation structures thoroughly.

Furthermore, since the researcher intended to analyze the real rate of collocations in their writing productions, the EFL learners were asked to write these paragraphs and essays without being aware of the researcher's purpose.
The research started at the beginning of the educational year of 2008 when learners initiated writing their assignments, and then it continued until the next educational year. In fact, mid-term and final exams were taken during the semester in the year 2009. After collecting the papers, the researcher began identifying collocational structures and phrases. Afterwards, collocation categorization was conducted; indeed they were divided into five subcategories:

1. adjective + noun
2. verb + noun
3. verb + adverb
4. be + adjective
5. noun + verb

In the next stage, the researcher had to find the most authentic source in order to evaluate EFL learners' collocations in their writing. To this end, *Oxford Collocations Dictionary for students of English* (2002) was used. By referring to this dictionary, the researcher was able to separate the proper collocate words from improper ones. Furthermore, some structures that were not collocations including free combinations were extracted from the data. Then frequency of the remaining expressions was calculated.

Besides, in order to evaluate the rate of different kinds of collocations the number of words, sentences and texts in each paragraph or essay were specified. Indeed, the number of words, sentences, and texts could show the rate of collocations in learners' writing.

**3.4. Data analysis**

After categorizing various collocational groups, the necessary statistical analyses were performed in order to extract the rate of lexical collocations in the writing production of EFL learners. Due to nominal nature of data which was in terms of frequency counts rather than scores, the Chi-Square test was employed for the data analysis. That is, after gathering the data they were displayed in frequency tables.

**4. Results and discussion**

Table one presents the rate of lexical collocations in the writing samples.
Table 1: The results of rate of lexical collocations in 200 writing samples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of collocation</th>
<th>Total collocations</th>
<th>Rate of collocations per word</th>
<th>Rate of collocations per sentence</th>
<th>Rate of collocations per text</th>
<th>$X^2$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verb-noun</td>
<td>1388</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.42</td>
<td>6.94</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verb-adverb</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>0.003</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.475</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be-adjective</td>
<td>537</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>2.68</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjective-noun</td>
<td>1334</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noun-verb</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>0.002</td>
<td>0.019</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$d_{f=1}$ $\alpha = 0.05 (3.84146)$

$\alpha = 0.01 (6.63490)$

As pointed out in Table one, the rate of verb-noun is 0.05, 0.42, and 6.94 per word, sentence and text. The rate of verb-adverb collocation is 0.003, 0.02, and 0.475 per word, sentence and text respectively. The rate of be-adjective collocation is 0.02, 0.16, and 2.68 per word, sentence and text respectively. The rate of adjective-noun collocation is 0.05, 0.4, and 6.6 per word, sentence and text respectively. Finally, the rate of noun-verb collocation is 0.002, 0.019, and 0.31 per word, sentence and text respectively.

Table 2: The results of frequency, percentage, and chi-square of total collocations used in the writing samples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of collocation</th>
<th>Frequency and percentage of Correct collocations</th>
<th>Frequency and percentage of Incorrect collocations</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>$X^2$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verb-noun</td>
<td>1034(54%)</td>
<td>354(19%)</td>
<td>1388</td>
<td>333.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verb-adverb</td>
<td>67(47%)</td>
<td>28(19%)</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>16.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be-adjective</td>
<td>566(86%)</td>
<td>49(8%)</td>
<td>609</td>
<td>428.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjective-noun</td>
<td>982(55%)</td>
<td>352(20%)</td>
<td>1334</td>
<td>297.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noun-verb</td>
<td>51(52%)</td>
<td>12(12%)</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>24.14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$d_{f=1}$ $\alpha = 0.05 (3.84146)$

$\alpha = 0.01 (6.63490)$
As it is shown in Table two, the frequencies of verb-noun and then adjective-noun collocations are the greatest among different categories of collocations.

Table 3: Results of frequency, percentage and chi-square of L1 influence on correct collocations used by EFL learners in 200 writing samples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of collocation</th>
<th>Frequency and percentage of L1 influence</th>
<th>Frequency and percentage of No L1 influence</th>
<th>Frequency and percentage of total collocations</th>
<th>(X^2)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verb-noun</td>
<td>512(50%)</td>
<td>511(50%)</td>
<td>1023</td>
<td>0.0008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verb-adverb</td>
<td>35(56%)</td>
<td>27(44%)</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>1.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be-adjective</td>
<td>476(87%)</td>
<td>70(13%)</td>
<td>546</td>
<td>301.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjective-noun</td>
<td>507(40%)</td>
<td>771(60%)</td>
<td>1278</td>
<td>54.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noun-verb</td>
<td>31(65%)</td>
<td>17(35%)</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>4.08</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(df = 1\)  
\(\alpha = 0.05 \ (3.84146)\)  
\(\alpha = 0.01 \ (6.63490)\)

As shown in Table three, there is a significant difference between the frequencies of correct be-adjective, and adjective-noun collocations influenced by L1 and correct be-adjective, and adjective-noun collocations not influenced by L1. Also, Table three indicates that there is no significance difference between the frequencies of correct verb-noun, verb-adverb, and noun-verb collocations influenced by L1 and correct verb-noun, verb-adverb, and noun-verb collocations not influenced by L1.

Table 4: The results of frequency, percentage, and chi-square of L1 influence on incorrect collocations used in the writing samples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of collocation</th>
<th>Frequency and percentage of L1 influence</th>
<th>Frequency and percentage of No L1 influence</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>(X^2)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verb-noun</td>
<td>348(41%)</td>
<td>507(59%)</td>
<td>855</td>
<td>29.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verb-adverb</td>
<td>28(36%)</td>
<td>49(64%)</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>5.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be-adjective</td>
<td>45(53%)</td>
<td>40(47%)</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>0.028</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjective-noun</td>
<td>307(45%)</td>
<td>378(55%)</td>
<td>685</td>
<td>7.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noun-verb</td>
<td>12(26%)</td>
<td>35(74%)</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>11.26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(df = 1\)  
\(\alpha = 0.05 \ (3.84146)\)  
\(\alpha = 0.01 \ (6.63490)\)
As it is shown in Table four, there is a significant difference between the frequencies of incorrect verb-noun, verb-adverb, adjective-noun and noun-verb collocations influenced by L1 and incorrect verb-noun, verb-adverb, adjective-noun, and noun-verb collocations not influenced by L1. Also Table four indicates that there is no significance difference between the frequencies of incorrect be-adjective collocations influenced by L1 and incorrect be-adjective collocations not influenced by L1.

Table 5: Results of frequency, rate, and chi-square test of L1 and L2 collocations in 30 paragraphs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of collocation</th>
<th>Frequency of collocations</th>
<th>Rate of collocations per word</th>
<th>Rate of collocations per sentence</th>
<th>Rate of collocations per text</th>
<th>$X^2$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Persian noun-verb</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.006</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persian noun-adjective</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.007</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persian adjective-be</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0.006</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Persian collocations</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Persian collocation</td>
<td>372</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>2.36</td>
<td></td>
<td>12.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English verb-noun</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English adjective-noun</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English be-adjective</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English verb-adverb</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.002</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English noun-verb</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.005</td>
<td>0.042</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total English collocation</td>
<td>290</td>
<td>0.157</td>
<td>1.402</td>
<td></td>
<td>9.62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As pointed out in Table five, the rate of Persian collocations is 0.23, 2.36 and 12.4 per 1590 words, 157 sentences and 30 texts. Moreover, the rate of English collocations is 0.157, 1.402 and 9.62 per 1584 words, 189 sentences, and 30 texts respectively. Results of chi-square also indicate that there is a significant difference between the rate of Persian and English collocations in 30 paragraphs.
Comparing 5 sub-categories of lexical collocations, it can be revealed that the rates of verb-noun and adjective-noun collocations were the highest, while the rate of noun-verb collocations was the lowest. The high rate of verb-noun and adjective-noun collocations may be due to the larger number of these categories than other ones, or similarities between L1 and L2 collocations.

Another finding about the rate of collocations was related to comparison between English and Persian collocations in 30 paragraphs. According to Table five, the chi-square test showed there is a significant difference between frequencies of Persian collocations and English collocations. The greater exposure of Persian EFL learners to their mother tongue collocations could naturally lead to greater frequency of Persian collocations than English ones.

Moreover, the rates of English collocations (in 30 paragraphs) from the highest to the lowest were: adjective-noun, verb-noun, be-adjective, verb-adverb, and noun-verb, respectively. As compared to the total rates of lexical collocations, here again the rate of adjective-noun collocation was the highest and the rate of noun-verb collocation was the lowest. From these results, it might be found that adjective-noun and verb-noun collocations were effectively acquired from the language; or interlingual transfer might contribute to produce these two kinds of collocations effectually.

Another principal finding of this study was that the frequency of correct verb-noun collocations was higher than that of the incorrect ones. According to Table three, it seems that use of verb-noun collocations by EFL learners was not much affected by L1 because only half of correct verb-noun collocations were influenced by mother tongue. In other words, it appears that L1 did not have a leading and decisive role in creating correct verb-noun collocations. This finding may be interpreted by referring to the results obtained by Highuchi (1999): many Japanese EFL learners dislike making errors and problems in their production. Hence, they always write simple combinations in order to avoid making errors. As a result of using simple verb-noun collocations most of them may be correct. Highuchi (1999) suggested that students should be encouraged and given opportunities to write creatively without caring so much about collocational errors. EFL learners of this study also utilized simple verb-noun collocations in order to prevent committing errors. As a result of using simple verb-noun collocations most of them may be correct.
On the other hand, looking at Table two revealed that only 41% of incorrect verb-noun collocations were influenced by L1, while a higher percentage was free combinations which were not affected by L1. Here again it is clear that L1 did not have a major role in generating incorrect verb-noun collocations.

These findings is consistent with results of the research done by Martyńska (2004) that showed Polish students utilized 63% correct verb-noun collocations in their exercises but in some cases the students resorted to their native language and its rules which resulted in producing incorrect verb-noun collocations, e.g. *ride a car* which in English is inadmissible.

In sum, it could be suggested that either EFL learners were proficient enough to use verb-noun collocations correctly without any need to resort to their L1 structures; or they avoided using more complicated verb-noun collocations in order not to commit errors. Even though most of verb-noun collocations produced by EFL learners were correct, it seems that EFL learners do not have profound and wide knowledge of verb-noun collocations.

The results of verb-adverb collocations indicated that the frequency of correct verb-adverb collocations was higher than that of incorrect ones. In accordance with Table two, it is clear that although there was not a significant difference between the frequencies of correct and incorrect verb-adverb collocations; L1 had more positive and crucial influence on generating correct verb-adverb collocations.

Next possible view is that due to small number of verb-adverb collocations in comparison with other lexical ones, their frequency of use is great. Perhaps EFL learners could learn to verb-adverb collocations more effectively, because of the limited number of this kind of collocations.

This finding supports the results of the research done by Martyńska (2004) that showed Polish language learners utilized 54% verb-adverb collocations in their exercises. On the other hand frequency of verb-adverb collocations in Table four revealed that only 36% of incorrect verb-adverb collocations were influenced by L1 while 64% were not affected by L1. That is, mother tongue did not make any significant impact on most of verb-adverb collocations. This finding contributes to the suggestion that perhaps EFL learners were proficient enough to produce correct verb-adverb collocations.

Considering the results of be-adjective collocations, it could be found that the frequency of correct be-adjective collocations was higher than incorrect ones. As compared to other lexical collocations, EFL learners might be more proficient in creating correct be-adjective collocations. However, findings of Table three may also indicate that a large
number of correct be-adjective collocations were affected by L1. That is, L1 had a considerable and positive effect in producing correct be-adjective collocations. Additionally, it may be suggested that due to simplicity of be-adjective collocations structure, this kind of collocation was acquired better and easier by EFL learners.

Moreover, the results of L1 influence on incorrect be-adjective collocations revealed that most of incorrect be-adjective collocations were influenced by L1. In fact L1 also had a significant impact on generating incorrect be-adjective collocations. When L1 influence in both correct and incorrect be-adjective collocations was compared, it was apparent that L1 had more effect in producing correct collocations than incorrect ones. In other words, although L1 influenced on both correct and incorrect be-adjective collocations, it played more leading role in creating correct be-adjective collocations.

Another finding of the study was related to adjective-noun collocations. More than half of this kind of collocation was correct. But looking at Table four, it appears that most of correct adjective-noun collocations were not affected by L1; consequently it could be found that L1 had not a significant influence on creating correct be-adjective collocations.

These findings were consistent with research done by Martyńska (2004) revealed that Polish language learners generated 64% correct adjective-noun collocations in their exercises due to L1 transfer.

Due to this fact that a large number of correct adjective-noun collocations were not affected by L1, it may be implied that EFL learners were competent enough to utilize correct adjective-noun collocations without resorting to their L1 structures. On the other hand, results of L1 influence on incorrect adjective-noun collocations indicated that most of them were not influenced by L1. Indeed here L1 did not have a considerable effect on incorrect adjective-noun collocations. It is noteworthy that although L1 did not have a significant effect on both correct and incorrect adjective-noun collocations L1 influence on creating incorrect adjective-noun collocations was more than correct ones.

Looking at the results of noun-verb collocations, it could be seen that the frequency of correct noun-verb collocations was greater than incorrect ones. Indeed there was a significant difference between the correct and incorrect noun-verb collocations.

Considering the frequency of L1 influence on noun-verb collocations, it revealed that most of correct noun-verb collocations were affected by L1. Therefore, it could be suggested that L1 played a crucial role in generating correct noun-verb collocations.
This finding was not congruent with researches carried out by Martyńska (2004) that demonstrated Polish language learners applied 42% correct noun-verb collocations in their exercises. In fact Polish learners found this kind of collocation the most difficult ones as compared to other types of collocations. One example will be "bombs explode".

Furthermore, the results of incorrect noun-verb collocations revealed that a limited number of this kind of collocation was influenced by L1. In other words, L1 did not have an important effect on producing incorrect noun-verb collocations. Therefore, it may imply that EFL learners were more proficient in generating this kind of collocation. Another explanation may lie in small number of total noun-verb collocations which resulted in their better acquisition of EFL learners. That is, due to the limited number of total noun-verb collocations, EFL learners got greater exposure to this kind of collocation, so they utilized them correctly.

To sum, positive L1 transfer and limited number of some collocations were emerged as possible explanations for the accuracy of using collocations by EFL learners.

More specifically, the answer to the first research question is 0.1, 1.01, and 17.005 per words, sentences and 200 texts, respectively. Moreover, as the results show, the answer to the second research question is yes. Eventually, as illustrated in Table five, the critical value of \( X^2 \) with 1 degree of freedom is 3.84 for the 0.05 level and 6.63 for the 0.01 level. So the obtained data (\( X^2 = 25.17 \)) substantiate the claim that there is a difference between the rate of lexical collocations across L1 and L2 writing tasks.

5. Conclusion
The findings of the present study may lead to the view that one of the main objectives of the writing course should be collocation instruction. Each individual word may be known to the learners, but they probably do not know the whole collocation. This lack of collocational knowledge can considerably affect on the writing skill. In other words, teachers should take into account the importance of collocations in their teaching and learning to improve EFL learners' productive skills such as writing. Changing the learners' attitude towards collocation particularly in more problematic parts may broaden vocabulary skill. According to this research the greatest problem of Iranian EFL learners in collocation was related to noun-verb collocations. Teachers can concentrate on this area and consider numerous classroom activities and exercises in order to promote the use of this kind of collocation, particularly in writing skill.
Moreover, syllabus designer and material developers can benefit from the current study. Collocation is one of the most important and problematic parts for EFL learners. The reason for this is not that L2 learners are incapable of learning collocation, but most likely they have never exposed in formal and explicit way to the lexical and grammatical collocations of target language.

In addition to direct teaching tasks, a bilingual list of collocations could be included in the course books. This is in line with the students' tendency to transfer collocations from their mother tongue (Persian). The English books used in Iran high schools contain single word lists at the end of each unit. These single words could be replaced by word combinations or collocations. Such bilingual lists of collocations might help in countering interlingual errors. They could be a source of input for direct acquisition. Since collocations are fixed units, as opposed to free single items, they could be listed with their Persian equivalents at the end of each unit or at the end of each course book instead of single word lists.

It is necessary to mention that translators can also profit from the present study. Due to the lack of collocational knowledge, serious problems are created in translation. So, translators should be aware of collocations and consider their equivalences in both L1 and L2 to enhance the quality of their translations. In addition to the monolingual collocation dictionaries (e.g. Oxford collocations dictionary for the students of English, 2002) bilingual English-Persian and Persian-English dictionaries of collocations are needed.

References


Title
The Effect of Autonomous CALL Based Task on Speaking Skill

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Biodata
Mostafa Younesi received his M.A. in English language education from university of Semnan, Iran. His current interests include researching on English language education and designing EGP courses for students.

Abstract
The aim of this study is to explore the effect of autonomous CALL-based task on speaking skill of Iranian EFL students at the intermediate level. In addition, this study seeks to find the effect of autonomous CALL-based task on the students’ motivation to improve speaking skill. The study was conducted with a control group of 16 freshmen at Neyshaboor University and an experimental group of 16 freshmen at Semnan University. Students in experimental group practiced autonomous CALL-based task to improve speaking skill while students in control group discussed about specific topics. The results of study indicate that autonomous CALL-based task improves speaking skill of students. In fact, the results of post-test indicate that autonomous CALL-based task is significantly effective to improve speaking skill.

Keywords: Speaking skill, Autonomy, Task-Based Approach, Computer-Assisted Language Learning, Motivation.

1. Introduction
Today's world has been labeled the global village and the world of information. People hardly deny the significance of interaction with each other. Speaking is probably one of the most useful language skills for all. It is the vehicle par excellence of social solidarity, of social ranking, of professional advancement of business. (Bygate, 1987). Students use speaking skill greatly since it conducts to learning. "Learners consequently often evaluate their success in language learning as well as the effectiveness of their English course on the basis of how
well they feel they have improved in their spoken language proficiency”. (Richard, 2001, p.1).

However, ability to communicate in a foreign language is not an easy task since speaking skill is a multidimensional. According to Bygate (1987) in order to achieve a communicative goal through speaking, there are two aspects to be considered – knowledge of the language, and skill in using this knowledge. Bygate states, "we do not merely know how to assemble sentences in the abstract: we have to produce them and adapt to the circumstances. This means making decisions rapidly, implementing them smoothly, and adjusting our conversation as unexpected problems appear in our path" (as cited in Vilímeč, 2006, p.11). In other words, a good speaker is able to decide what to say on the spot, say it clearly and is flexible during a conversation as different situations come out.

The result is that speaking skill is not like grammar that could be restricted within teacher-centered classrooms. Many perquisite conditions should be prepared for a speaking course. This study analyzes the effect of three main concepts (students' autonomy, CALL and task-based approach) that changed the whole process of language teaching in recent century, on speaking proficiency of students and their motivation to enhance their speaking proficiency.

2. Review of literature

2.1. Autonomy

2.1.1. What is autonomy?

The concept of autonomy is difficult to define properly. This difficulty is related to two related assumptions: one is related to degrees of autonomy and the other one is related to the behavior of autonomous learners that take different forms according to their ages, how far they have progressed with learning, what they perceive their immediate learning needs to be, and so on (Little, cited in Benson, 2006). The most famous definition of autonomy is Holic's (1985). He defines autonomy as the ability of learners to take charge of their own learning. By taking charge of one's own learning, learners hold the responsibility for all the decisions concerning all aspects of the learning, they determine the objectives, contents and progressions and select methods and techniques to be used. They monitor the procedure of acquisition properly and evaluate what has been acquired. According to Holic, this ability is an inborn ability must be acquired by natural means or by formal learning. In this definition the social aspect of learning is neglected. Dam (1995) indicates that autonomous learners
want to act independently and in co-operation with others, as a socially responsible person. In other words, the concept of autonomy encompasses collaboration and interdependence. (Lillte, 1991 cited in Littlewoods, 1999). Little (1991) states that "learner autonomy is not a methodology or simply self-instruction. It is an educational goal and it is an interactive and social process" (P.5).

As a whole, many researchers take autonomy as an attribute of the learners. For example, Little (1991) states that “autonomy is a capacity for detachment, critical reflection, decision making and independent action" (p.4). Nevertheless, some other takes autonomy as a situation. For example, Dickinson (1987) asserts that "autonomous learners are responsible for all decisions on their own learning and the implementation of those decisions (as cited in Lamb & Reinders, 2007).

Littlewood (1999) in his model predicated the word autonomy in three related domains. Autonomy as learner, autonomy as communicator and autonomy as a person. To be autonomous in these domains, he asserted that students should have ability and willingness. Ability depends on possessing the knowledge about the alternative choices available and the skills to carry on the choices. Willingness depends on the motivation and confidence of the learner to take responsibility for the choices required. All of these four components need to be present together. Therefore, motivation, confidence, skill and knowledge are necessary for all three kinds of autonomy.

Benson (2006) states that autonomy is not synonym with self-instruction, 'self-access', 'self-study', 'out-of-class learning' or 'distance learning'. He asserts that "These terms basically describe various ways and degrees of learning by one’s self, whereas autonomy refers to the abilities and attitudes (or whatever we think the capacity to control one’s own learning consists of") (p.1). In other words, learning in isolation is not the same with the ability to direct one's own learning. Benson states that not only there is not necessary condition between autonomy and self-instruction but also self-instruction may hinder autonomy. He emphasizes on the presence and contribution of teacher toward the smooth progress of the process while preceding control to the learners.

Autonomy is a gradual, individual and never ending process of self-discovery. It is a process which a person gradually discovers what autonomy is. An autonomous learner acts independently and in cooperation with others, he participates actively in social processes of his learning, he interprets new information according to his background knowledge, he knows exactly how to learn and how to reflect critically on the process of learning. He can make correct decisions during the process of learning, he can act independently when it is
necessary and he can develop this knowledge to real life situation. Little (1991) states "The capacity for autonomy will be displayed both in the way the learner learns and in the way he or she transfers what has been learned to wider contexts" (p.4).

2.1.2. The Effect of autonomy on speaking skill
According to Moulton, Karen D.; Brown, Steven D.; Lent and Robert W. (1991) self-efficacy has a facilitating role on academic performance. In his meta-analytic review of research, he concludes that self-efficacy beliefs accounted for approximately 14 per cent of the variance in students’ academic performance. In the realm of oral language communication, he asserts that high self-efficacy learners are able to use more effective tactics of oral language learning and have much more control over the result of oral language communication when they are compared with low self-efficacy learners. Bandura (1996) defines self-efficacy as "the belief in one's capability to organize and execute the course of action required to manage prospective situations". (as cited in Tella). Beside self-regulation and self-awareness, self-efficacy is one of the components of learner's self-autonomy. In fact, these components are involved within the meta-cognitive knowledge which refers to the knowledge, awareness, and deeper understanding of one's own cognitive processes and products (Yuan, 2007). Metacognitive knowledge encompasses the declarative knowledge (knowing what: a kind of learner's judgment of his own ability to organize, perform or execute a certain behavior), task conditional knowledge (knowing how and why: It helps learners to perceive the difficulty and nature of task and to decide how much time and energy he needs to do it.) and strategy procedural knowledge (knowing how: learner's ability to proper use of strategies). The self-efficacy is defined as a kind of declarative knowledge. Developing meta-cognitive knowledge is one of the prequisite and necessary conditions for developing autonomy in learners. Since an autonomous learner has developed his meta-cognitive knowledge, he has high self-efficacy level. Eventually, according to Moulton et al (1991), he can communicate appropriately because he is able to use appropriate tactics and control the interaction process. Therefore, autonomy has positive effect on ability to speak and communicate in foreign language.

2.2. Computer-assisted language learning (CALL).
2-2-1. The application of CALL in learning speaking skill
According to Pennington (1995), spoken language competence covers two aspects, i.e. the mechanical aspect and the meaningful aspect. (cited in Gong, 2002) In mechanical aspect, learners learn to discriminate and produce sounds of a language and tie these together prosodically in fluent strings of sounds comprising syllables, words, phrases and longer
utterances or articulation and decoding of individual sounds (phonemes) while in meaningful aspect, learners learn to build as well as to decompose grammatically coherent utterances and to tie these to communicative functions according to rules of pragmatic appropriateness in a given speech community.

2-2-1-1. The application of CALL in mechanical dimension

The major application of CALL in the mechanical dimension is in pronunciation training (Gong, 2002). Computers apply to this dimension by incorporation of extensive texts, graphics, animation, audio, and digitized audio or video clips or the production of relatively natural speech from individual phonemes stored as digital codes that are strung together by rule as the user types on the keyboard. Since the naturalness of speeches depends on the quality of software or systems, digitized audios or videos are employed to provide a range of natural and authentic models of phonology for language learners. "Digitized videos also allow learners to see how speakers speak, which is very helpful in preparing learners for encounters with real native speakers, since a great deal of face-to-face communication is nonverbal" (Gong, 2002, p.3).

To articulate sound and words in target language, some soft wares offer diagrams that translate sound into graphic representations. Also, they provide video clips or animation of the speaker's mouth in motion during the pronunciation of words or sounds, which visualizes the articulation. These kinds of soft wares enable Learners to familiarize themselves with the target sounds and discriminate like sounds. Computers can process the spoken input and respond by speech recognition technology. This technology enables computers to include active participation in speech production, oral reading, and limited conversation in the range of language activities available for students. Also, combination of speech recognition technology with speech analysis technology enables the machine to give learners real-time feedback with clear and interpretable visual images on the learners' performance in pronunciation. MyET is an example of such development:

It is a web-based program employing automatic speech analysis system (ASAS) to identify the words spoken into the recording device, and it can analyze the speech on pronunciation, pitch, timing and emphasis. It then displays the spectrum and contour of the user's utterance, and provides a scoring mechanism with corrective feedback information that helps users to improve their pronunciation. MyET can explicitly pinpoint learners 'pronunciation errors by giving one on one feedback that compares the learner's pronunciation with a model pronunciation (L-Labs, 2007, cited in Wenchao 2007. p.10).
2.2.1.2. The application of CALL in meaningful dimension.

According to Gong (2002), "Due to the complexity of natural spoken language, the application of CALL in developing speaking competence in terms of meaningful dimension is currently realized mainly by the simulation the CALL environment creates" (p.4). This environment encourages learners to speak and create a micro-world in which students can operate in the target language. According to Lee (2006) the style of operation is in the form of interaction that happens between language learners and the computer itself [human–machine conversation (HMC)]. The application of AI (Artificial Intelligence), e.g., natural language parsing using database management programs and expert systems, allows computers to engage in natural conversation with learners in the field of language teaching and learning (Lee, 2006). This environment covers practical language functions and various topics. Learners choose a situation, study the dialogue, record themselves and then play the recording back and compare it to the model. For example, a computer program, Tell me More, allows learners to listen and answer the computer's questions and determine the outcome of each conversation. The computer evaluates the learner's pronunciation and responds accordingly.

2.2.1.3. The application of CALL in communicative dimension.

Wenchao (2007) adds one more dimension to the process of communication and emphasizes that in this dimension the learned language patterns are transferred freely. He states that the difference between this dimension and meaningful dimension is that in communicative dimension students can add new information to the class from the real world. This dimension can be realized in structured or unstructured instructional environment where computer mediated communication (CMC) technology is employed (Wenchao, 2007). CMC is an excellent medium for cultivating new social relationships within or across classroom, resulting in collaborative, meaningful and cross-cultural human interaction among members of a discourse community (Warschauer, 2011). In recent century, the advent of internet promoted the situation of CMC around the world. "The power, flexibility and interactivity of the Web make it an ideal medium for language instructors who are interested in providing in-class, out-of-class or even off-campus access to speaking practice materials"(Gong, 2007,p.5).

2.3. Task-based language learning (TBLT).

2.3.1. The effect of task-based approach on speaking skill

According to one body of theory, learners need opportunities to engage in meaning negotiation in order to obtain the kind of input that works for acquisition and to experience
occasions when they are pushed to use the second language more precisely and appropriately. (Khomeijani Farahani & Khaghani Nejad, 2009). Task can prepare these conditions. In fact, the advent of communicative language teaching and the belief that language is best learned when it is being used to communicate messages ascended the communicative task to a position of prominence as a unit of organization in syllabus design. Ellis (2003) reports that "task-based language teaching is a form of teaching that treats language primarily as a tool for communicating rather than as a subject for study or manipulation" (p. 206).

There are many researches that emphasize on positive effect of TBLT on speaking skill. For example researchers like Aljarf (2007) Ellis (2003) investigated the effect of TBLT on speaking skill. They found out that TBLT improved the learning of communicative speaking. The students could speak fluently using correct grammar and pronunciations, and could easily generate ideas. More over, Birjandi and Ahangari (2008) examined the effects of task repetition and task type on fluency, accuracy, and complexity. The researchers assigned 120 students to six groups. The results and the analysis of variance indicated that task repetition and task type, as well as the interaction between these variables, resulted in significant differences in subjects’ oral discourse in terms of fluency, accuracy and complexity. TBLT enhances the motivation of students and promotes their proficiency. It also creates a learning environment in which students' anxiety is low and they can develop their confidence while they practice their language (Murad, 2009).

Bygate (1996 cited in Murad, 2009) suggests that, learners should be able to manage their interaction as well as negotiation of their meaning. When students learn how to introduce or change a topic, how to invite someone else to speak, how to keep a conversation going and so on, they learn to manage their interaction. Also, they learn to negotiate their meaning when they could correctly understand the person they are speaking and that he can correctly understand them. (Murad, 2009). Obviously, students learn to manage their interaction and negotiate their meaning, if they use language in a similar situation. In TBLT, learners experience how language is used as a tool for communication within the situation they meet outside the classroom. The result is that students develop the competence they need in order to use a second language easily and effectively. From the psychological point of view, Ellis (2000) asserts that a task is a device that guides learners to engage in certain types of information-processing that are believed to be important for effective language use and/or for language acquisition from some theoretical standpoint. Ellis (2006) points the effect of tasks on reducing the cognitive or linguistic demands placed on the learner. Richards and Rodgers (2001) suggest that "tasks are believed to foster processes of negotiation,
modification, rephrasing, and experimentation that are at the heart of second language learning" (p. 228).

A research was done by Murad (2009) on the effect of TBLT on developing speaking skill among the Palestinian Secondary EFL Students in Israel and Their Attitudes towards English. The study was done between Two Arab schools were deliberately chosen from the Arab secondary schools in the lower Galilee in Northern Israel. The results propose that TBLT program enhanced significantly the speaking skill of the students of the experimental group and positively affected their attitudes towards English. Also, the results of this research show that through TBLT students' fluency and accuracy have improved significantly. Therefore, TBLT programs develop language proficiency in general and speaking skill in particular.

3. Method
3.1. Setting, population and participants.
This study was done among university freshmen at Semnan and Neyshaboor Universities in Iran. The classroom was carried on in English language laboratory for experimental group in Semnan University. The laboratory was equipped by DVD player, computer and satellite. Teacher could play audio or visual programs while students heard the correct language patterns all the time through their headsets and watched them on TV in their private cabin. Students were attentive towards the sounds in the lab more careful than the theory classes. The learners had the ability to record their own voices along with the master stimulus and played back for self-evaluation. The instructor could produce materials and oversee class activities due to the automatic, rather than manually, controlled instructor console features. Students in Semnan University were selected as experimental group since the technological instruments especially computer that was the main perquisite condition in this study were more available.

Control group participated in classroom discussions in Neyshaboor University

This study was carried out in autumn 2011. Both experimental and control group participated in 18 sessions. For both groups, these 18 sessions were held in a period of nine weeks, with 90 minutes allotted for each session. Both groups had their own teachers. In this study, Target population is all EFL learners at the intermediate level who tries to develop their speaking proficiency. Also, accessible population was fifty three freshmen that twenty freshmen in Semnan University and thirty three freshmen studied this course in Neyshaboor University. The students' homogeneity in term of the level of speaking proficiency was
checked by an IELTS speaking test was administered as pre-test to measure the level of their speaking skill proficiency. Finally, Participants were Thirty two homogenous English students at the intermediate level which was randomly selected from population. Sixteen English freshmen were selected through twenty English freshmen in Semnan University as experimental group and sixteen English freshmen were selected through thirty three English students in Neyshaboor University as control group. While their ages ranged from eighteen to twenty, the majority were nineteen. Also, there were six male and ten female participants in control group. Their age ranged from seventeen to twenty two.

3.2. Procedures

This study was based on the effect of three factors on speaking skill: computer, task- based approach and students' autonomy. Below, the role of these factors in the classroom is explained in details.

3.2.1. Computer

Learning English through news comprehension was applied as provider of materials in communicative dimension in this study. The software was a collection of news about different subjects. It was designed in a way that students could practice autonomously. Learners watched the news while the reporter reported authentically and in natural speed. If they couldn’t perceive the news, the written passage of report was available too. Learners could read the passage while simultaneously the reporter reported the news. In addition, they could adjust the speed of reporting and slowed it down. Also, the meaning of unfamiliar words was available. However, students had to guess the meaning of some words from the text. The software was available for students from the first session. Everybody had his own software. According to teacher's advice, students used the software for glimpsing at the whole topics in order to be familiar with subjects in the first sessions, and scrutinizing the chosen topic autonomously to be ready for discussion in the task phase. In fact, the software was used as a certain source as provider of materials for developing speaking skill. Students used the software for analyzing the subject carefully, recognizing distinctive viewpoints, acquiring information, checking the meaning of words, attending to the prosodic features and the pronunciation of different words and monitoring authentic communication among native speakers in a real situation (the process that happened frequently during the report). In addition, the titles for discussion were chosen according to the available titles in the software. Finally, they could comprehend the news perfectly to be ready for discussion.
3.2.2. Task-based approach

The second dimension of this study was the use of task-based approach in the classroom. The type of task being used in this study was opinion-exchange task. It was a divergent task that students were assigned different viewpoints on an issue and they had to defend their positions and refute their peers. Also, it was an open task in which participants knew that there was not a predetermined solution to the focused problem but they tried to find a reasonable one. Since opinion exchange task should be in accord with CALL and learners' autonomy in this study, the task cycle (Pre-task, task and post-task phase) turned around the available subjects in the software. In addition, the whole process of opinion exchange task was student-dependent. Before starting a new task cycle, students chose their favorite subjects through available topics in the software for discussion. In addition, a student or a group of students were selected through volunteers to present materials and play the role of their teacher in the class. The first part of pre-task phase appertained to out of classroom activities. In fact, before coming to the classroom, students analyzed the subject carefully, recognized distinctive viewpoints, acquired information, checked the meaning of words, attended to the prosodic features and the pronunciation of different words and sentences autonomously. Also, the students playing the role of the teacher selected appropriate strategies for task phase. Teacher as the counselor advised students what to in this part and helped them with their decisions. Accordingly, learning was transferred to out of classroom and students developed their knowledge of language and subject matter autonomously. The second part of pre-task allocated to the classroom. Students playing the role of the teacher followed two main purposes in this part: First, they should check their classmates' knowledge of language and subject matter. Second, they should develop their knowledge of language and subject matter. The strategies were student-dependent. Generally speaking, they used variety of strategies in this part. Learners liked to participate in the pre-task phase, since they did the whole process autonomously and they could use creative ways for developing materials. In the task phase, Learners exchanged their opinions about the subject was considered in the news. Typically, learners discussed with each other enthusiastically, since they tried to defend their ideas. They were free to express their personal meaning, to use appropriate communicative strategies and to create personal learning context that helped them to develop their speaking skill. Eventually, they were autonomous as learner, as communicator and as a person. The students who presented the materials were responsible for controlling discussion and developing order. If discussion among students led to velitation, they changed the way of discussion by asking question, expressing their ideas, etc. Teacher
didn’t interfere in the classroom activities. He monitored the students during the task – phase. In post-task phase, both teacher and students concentrated on errors. If their discussion was recorded, it replayed to analyze the students' speeches. The correction was not done directly, but students had to monitor their speeches and evaluate them. If they couldn’t find their errors, teacher corrected their errors. Also, teacher concentrated on the style of presentation in the classroom, referred to its weak and strong points and suggested useful points to be followed by the next groups.

In this process, students acted independently and cooperatively to develop their speaking skill. When they analyzed the news from different aspects to be able to participate in classroom discussion, they followed a native speaker privately to develop their speaking skill. They became familiar with different components of a standard language pragmatically in one way interaction when the reporter reported the news and in two way interactions when people interacted with each other during the news. Also, they became familiar with one standard language (the language of news). In addition, they developed their speaking skill cooperatively and automatically when they discussed in the classroom. Since autonomy, CALL and task base approach were new experiences for students, teacher should initiate students into the program and guide them how to present the materials, how to act autonomously in the classroom, what to do during different levels of classroom activities and what to do out of class. Also, in post-task phase, teacher was responsible for presenting general guidelines on the style of presentation in the classroom.

3.2.3. Students' autonomy

Student's autonomy was ubiquitous during the whole process of learning. Learners took charge of their own learning when they analyzed the news independently to learn about every existed component in the news that helped them to develop their speaking skill. Also, in the classroom, learners decided about the topics, techniques, procedures and strategies that helped them to develop their speaking skill cooperatively. They critically reflected on their own leaning. Eventually, they developed their speaking skill autonomously.

The physical setting of the control group was a conventional classroom. They were taught in the traditional way of teaching speaking skill by the instructor. To be concrete, they were presented with the New Interchange book 3 and followed the discussions presented in the book. In each session, First, according to available topics in the book teacher introduced a topic. Next, students sat in circle and discussed about the topic. The teacher didn’t interfere in their discussion. He watched out the whole process of discussion and at the end of the class; he corrected the student's errors.
4. Results for speaking proficiency tests

4.1. Pre-test of speaking proficiency

To ensure the homogeneity of the groups in terms of their EFL speaking proficiency, a test was administered to every subject in the study. Table 4.3 presents descriptive statistical means and standard deviations in the pretest scores of the subjects in the experiment. The results as shown in table 4.2 indicate that: The IELTS pre-test speaking mean score for the experimental group is 4.96 and for the control group is 5.12

Table 4.1. Descriptive Statistics of IELTS Pre-test in Terms of Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable: pretest</th>
<th>Number of subjects</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ex- group</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>4.9688</td>
<td>.84595</td>
<td>.21149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Con- group</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>5.1250</td>
<td>.88506</td>
<td>.22127</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mean Difference = - 0.15

A two-tailed t-test was carried out at the .05 level of significance to decide whether the difference between the means was significant or not. The results of the t-tests presented in table 4.4 show that there was no significant difference between the groups as far as their speaking proficiency was concerned before the experiment began. Since obtained t is less than critical t, it can be assumed that the two means were not different and the conclusion is drawn that the two groups were homogeneous at the beginning.
Table 4.2. Independent sample T-test for pre-test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Levene's Test for Equality of Variances</th>
<th>t-test for Equality of Means</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval of the Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Sig.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances assumed</td>
<td>.174</td>
<td>.679</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances not assumed</td>
<td>-.510</td>
<td>29.939</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ \text{tobs} = -.510 \quad \text{tcrit} = 2.042 \quad p< .05 \]

4.2. Post-test of speaking proficiency

Hypothesis one stated "There is no relationship between autonomous CALL-based tasks and speaking skill of intermediate Iranian EFL learners. Table 4.5 shows the results of a speaking test administered after the instructional period in both control and experimental groups. The results depicted in table five show a difference between the groups. The mean for the experimental group is 6.93 and for the control group it is 6.00.

The experimental group performed better because they were more involved in speaking than the control group. It can be said that the experimental group benefited from using Autonomous CALL-based task in the speaking class. The results also support the conclusion that if students use Autonomous CALL-based tasks, they can develop their speaking proficiency.

Table 4.3. Descriptive Statistics of Post-test in Terms of Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable: posttest</th>
<th>Number of Subjects</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Std. Mean</th>
<th>Error</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ex-group</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>6.93</td>
<td>.57373</td>
<td>.14343</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Con-group</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>.83666</td>
<td>.20917</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mean Difference = 0.93
The analysis of the data in table 4.6 shows that at the .05 level of significance there was a difference between the posttest speaking mean scores of the subjects from the experimental group and the post-test speaking mean scores of the subjects from the control group. Eventually there was significant difference between the groups as far as their speaking proficiency was concerned after the experiment finished. Since obtained $t$ is more than critical $t$, it can be assumed that the two means were different and the conclusion is drawn that the two groups were not homogeneous at the end of the study.

### Table 4.4. Independent Samples T-test for Post-test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Equal variances assumed</th>
<th>Levene's Test for Equality Variances</th>
<th>t-test for Equality of Means</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Sig.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances assumed</td>
<td>.458</td>
<td>.504</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances not assumed</td>
<td>3.696</td>
<td>26.553</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$t_{obs} = 3.696$  \hspace{1cm} $t_{crit} = 2.042$  \hspace{1cm} $p < .05$

Results of the analysis show that when leveled on their pre-test scores, the students who received instruction on the basis of autonomous CALL-based task did score significantly higher than the participants from the opposite group. Consequently, when we examine the data in tables five and six, it becomes obvious that the first null hypothesis should be rejected and the difference in means can be attributed to the type of instruction received.

### 5. Discussion

The analysis and comparison of the results on the posttests given to the subjects, revealed that the subjects in the experimental group scored better on their post-test than did those in the control group. It was thus concluded that the main difference in the students' scores was due to the use of autonomous CALL-based task. Students' comments showed that in general, they believed this program and the various types of strategies that were used in the classroom were helpful in improving their speaking skill. These results confirm the previous studies (Bradley and Lomicka, 2000 cited in Liu, Moore, Graham, & Lee, S 2003) that states, technology in combination with tasks that were based on meaningful interactional purposes could be used to promote a positive second language learning environment.
Consistent with previous studies (Pertiwi, 2010, LeLoup & Ponterio 2007), this study also indicates that the score of speaking proficiency of students increases when students utilize CALL. The use of computers increased interaction in the classroom and sustained and enhanced the students' interest. Since opinion exchange task was based on the CALL lessons and CALL used in mechanical dimension in this study, students used computer to check their pronunciation, practice prosodic feature, develop their vocabulary and grammatical knowledge. Accordingly; the facilities that the computer software prepared were effective factors for developing their knowledge of language. These results confirm what other researchers claimed in terms of the effect of CALL in language learning. (Clark & Paivio, 1991, Gong, 2002, Galloway, 2007).

In the present study, interaction was ubiquitous in the classroom. It had its positive effect on students' speaking skill. Students experienced much life-like situations during interaction. They learned how to use language in different situations. For example, when they interacted with a less proficient speaker, they learned to adjust the level of their speaking skill to the listener's. They used facilitative devices such as simplifying structures, hesitation devices or formulaic expressions during discussion in the classroom. They used different routines such as explanation, justification, instruction and descriptions.

According to students' comments, they learned them from native speakers in the software and from their friends when they discussed in the classroom. Also they learned to manage their interaction: when they exchanged their opinions in the classroom, they learned how to take turn. Also, when they presented a topic instead of teacher, they learned how to choose a topic, develop it and finish it in the classroom. Many students attended to their conversational problem and used compensation devices such as self-correction, reformulation or repetition in order to make their speech more comprehensible when they interacted in the classroom. Also, learners tried to communicate their ideas clearly in the process of negotiating for meaning in order to address communication problems, they tried to communicate the idea clearly. Accordingly, this study conformed the idea of interaction theory that assumes language learning takes place in the course of interaction, because interaction provides input, promotes output and allows for feedback and modified output.

One of the great capabilities that students experienced in experimental group was the concept of autonomy. Based on the observations of the instructor, students' comments, students in experimental group were less anxious than students in control group since they could develop their speaking proficiency autonomously. Thanks to the use of CALL, students practiced accuracy especially in the realm of pronunciation and fluency autonomously. In
addition, self-efficacy in speaking was one of the great results of autonomy in learning for many of the students in experimental group. These results are consistent with previous researches on the effect of autonomy on learning (Gong, 2002).

In addition to the findings mentioned above, the instructor made the following observations during her investigation:

1. Learning to use hypermedia autonomously provided some benefits for students. Hypermedia instructed students by presenting textual, verbal and visual information about unknown words and the topic, and students played a much more active role, since they should use all of the facilities in the hypermedia for developing their knowledge about the topic and developing their knowledge of language and interactional skill. In fact, students using hypermedia were mentally active while they were interacting with the information. Consequently, the class that was learning with hypermedia, became more student-centered because hypermedia required active Learners.

2. Autonomy created an environment in which not only students undertook their own learning but also they conducted others' learning when they presented the subject in the class. This reality changed the role of teachers. Teachers found opportunity to monitor students' action in the classroom, facilitate their development in speaking skill, evaluate their progress and enhance the positive affective factors such as self-confidence and reduce the negative one such as anxiety.

3. TBLT was one of the important factors to develop student's interest and motivation. Learners naturally produced English or interacted with others while they attempted to complete the tasks, which led them to activate their implicit knowledge. In fact, they experienced how language was used as a tool for communication within the situation they met outside the classroom.

6. Conclusion

Autonomous CALL based task is a new and enriching learning experience for the students. Computer applications in a task environment hold great promise as instructional tools to increase students' engagement in speaking classrooms, promote their speaking skill and stimulate their interest.

Enhancement of students' participation in the classroom activities, development of speaking skill of students at their own pace, availability of native speakers, freedom from the restrictions of classroom, development of speaking skill indirectly, wider ranges of students'
choice to present materials in the classroom, direct and immediate feedback are the strong points of this program.

Autonomous CALL-based task can assist teachers in developing a more individualized approach to improve speaking skill and to meet the diverse range of students' needs in classrooms. They can change their traditional role in the classroom to persons who monitor classroom activities, conduct his students’ actions, vary the pace of instruction, reinforce speaking skills and strategies, improve motivation and provide students with relevant and timely feedback.

Autonomous CALL-based task provides students with highly motivating educational environment and enhanced learning contexts. It allows learners to take an active participation in their own learning process. In fact, they develop their speaking skill at their own pace. To present educational materials, they play the role of the teacher in the classroom and learn how to manage their interaction in the classroom when they want to present the material. They use computer for developing their speaking skill autonomously. Thanks to the use of computer, they develop their speaking skill, by imitating from native speakers.

This study introduces three important factors that can positively change the whole process of language education. The effect of computer on the speaking skill, wide ranges of facilities that computer can establish in the classroom, different functions that computer can undertake to develop language learning generally and speaking skill especially in the classroom should be of great benefit to teachers. In addition, they become familiar with task-based approach and its different tasks especially opinion exchange task. In fact they learn to use an approach in the classroom in which students develop their speaking proficiency indirectly in a motivating environment. Also, they get acquainted with a classroom in which students undertake an active role in their own learning. In other words, they get used with the concept of autonomy, its role in language education and its effect on the process of language teaching. Finally, this study suggests a new role for English teachers that is more effective than their traditional role in the classroom.

Students experience a different learning situation in this study. The facilities that computers prepare are very effective for developing speaking skill and the knowledge of language. Computers allow students to learn English language in an interactive learning situation where image, sound and text are combined together to create a life-like situation. Also, the application of CALL in the meaningful and communicative dimension allows non-native speakers to engage in natural conversation with native speakers. These conditions prepare an interesting and motivating situation for students. In addition, TBLT creates a new
learning experience for students. They learn to engage in developing their speaking skill indirectly, while they interact in the classroom. In fact, students practice many interactional skills such as turn taking, simplifying their structures, self-correction automatically during interaction in the classroom. Finally, students get acquainted with autonomy in learning and its' positive effect on developing speaking skill.

This study represents a preliminary effort to empirically examine the efficacy of autonomy, CALL and TBLT on speaking skill when they are used with each other. Further research is needed for a thorough understanding of this issue and for confirmation of the findings. This is especially true when considering that there may be additional variables that would add different intrapersonal effects. The following areas can be suggested for further research:

1. This study focused on the application of computer in its mechanical dimension and analyzed the effect of this dimension on speaking skills. Further researches should be done to analyze the effect of application of computer in its meaningful (HMC) and communicative dimension (CMC) on speaking skill.

2. Further research is needed to determine the effect of CALL and its different dimensions on reading comprehension, writing and listening skill.

3. This study concentrated on the effect of opinion-exchange task on speaking skill. Further research can be carried out on the effects other task based activities such as jigsaw task, information gap task and opinion gap task on language skills.

4. It is recommended that this study be replicated with a larger number of participants from the same background.

5. This study was conducted with intermediate students. If this research is applied to other levels, different results may ensue.

References


Murad,T.M. (2009). The effect of task-based language teaching on developing speaking skills among the Palestinian secondary EFL students in Israel and their attitudes towards

Iranian EFL Journal


Appendix 1

IELTS Speaking pre-test (www.ielts-blog.com).

Interview
- What is your full name?. What do you think is special about it?
- How can you improve your hometown?
- How has it changed compared to the past?
- Let’s talk about the weather. What kind of weather do you have in your city?
- What kind of weather do you like and why?

Cue Card
Describe a fascinating job that you heard about, please say
- where you heard about it,
- what kind of job it was,
- what fascinated you, and
- explain why you thought it was fascinating.

**Discussion**

- Was the job in question a well paid job?
- How the working conditions in your country have changed in recent years?
- What was the cause of the change?
- What benefits in your opinion do workers need, apart from salary?
- Does working too much have any influence on family life?

**Appendix 2**

**IELTS Speaking post test** (www.ielts-blog.com).

**Interview**

- What is your name?
- What can I call you?
- Tell me about your home town.
- What do you think it is famous for?
- Do you like your home town and why?

**Cue Card**

Describe a job that you would like to do. Please say:

- What kind of job it is?
- Where would you like to do it?
- How would you like to do it?

**Discussion**

- Do you like sports?
- What kind of sports have you played as a child?
- Do girls and boys play the same sports in your country?
- What are the ways to search for job?
- What is the most efficient way in your view?
- Why is it becoming difficult to find a job these days?
Title

A New Horizon on the Relationship between Cognitive Load and Reading Comprehension

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Abstract

This study investigated the degree of cognitive load imposed on reading passages which sentences were connected with connectors in comparison with the ones connected with conjunctions. To do this, the researcher selected two reading classes from among the students of Islamic Azad University of Malayer and divided the students randomly into two 30-student groups. Then, the study started and it continued for five sessions. Five sets of tests were administered with a one-week interval and the results were analyzed using T-tests and ANOVA procedure. The results indicated that there was a significant difference between the two groups: the experimental group, the group who read passages whose sentences were connected with connectors outperformed the other group (all five tests t= 6.34, significant at p< .05). The research also proved that there is a significant difference between both groups (all tests F= 28.581, p< .05) and the results of the Scheffe tests showed that this difference was due to the methods applied not gender.
1. Introduction

The study of reading includes different disciplines like pedagogy, psychology, linguistics and neurology. From psychological and neurological point of view, for any information to be learned and understood, it first must be processed through working memory or short-term memory. In other words, comprehension is a psychological and neurological process, and for the comprehension to take place, the information should first pass successfully through the working memory. Thus, understanding how working memory works helps us create more effective ways to facilitate reading comprehension. When we understand what our memory does with the gained information from the senses, how it processes the information, how it stores the information, and how it uses this information when needed, we can create better methods and techniques to enhance reading comprehension.

Mind “can store vast amounts of language in long-term memory, but is only able to process small amounts of it at a time, and this processing is done in “working memory”. And when instructional material is presented in a way that prevents working memory from successfully processing it, then learning and understanding will be hindered. In fact, the recent research indicates that limited working memory may be the single most critical factor that needs to be considered when designing education instructions (Chandler & Sweller, 1991; 1992; 1996; Jeung, Chandler & Sweller, 1997; Paas, 1992; Paas & Van Merrienboer, 1994; Sweller, Chandler, Tierney & Cooper, 1990; Tindall, Chandler & Sweller, 1997).

Working memory limitations may have an important impact on learning in complex areas (e.g., Paas & Van Merrienboer, 1994; Sweller & Chandler, 1994). Complex areas put more cognitive load on the mind and thus make it difficult for the learner to comprehend a text or a piece of listening.

1.1. Statement of the problem and focus of the study

“Cognitive load” has been identified as a major factor to be considered in “instructional design” in areas such as science (e.g., Chandler & Sweller, 1991), geometry (e.g., Paas & Van Merrienboer, 1994; Mousavi, Low, & Sweller, 1995), language (Just & Carpenter, 1992), as well as in technical instructions (e.g., Sweller, Chandler, Tierney, & Cooper, 1990; Chandler & Sweller, 1996), and statistics (Paas, 1992). The effectiveness of instructional design is often dependent upon its ability to reduce unnecessary cognitive load. This study has been undertaken to see the impact of pruning unnecessary cognitive load by applying it in
reading comprehension. More specifically, the study has been carried out to see if language simplification, using connectors instead of conjunctions, has a positive influence on reading comprehension and if there is any difference between the male and female subjects in each group and between the two groups.

2. Review of literature
Reading is the most widely used skill in language learning. Many books have been written about reading (Kamil, Mosenthal, Pearson, & Barr, 2000; National Institute of Child Health and Human Development [NICHHD], 2000a) and reading comprehension (Muth, 1990; Pearson & Johnson, 1978; Pressley & Afflerbach, 1995). A lot of researches have focused directly on reading comprehension and its instruction (Dole, Duffy, Roehler, & Pearson, 1991; Fielding & Pearson, 1994; Pearson & Fielding, 1991; Pressley, El-Dinary et al., 1992; Rosenshine & Meister, 1994). But what is exactly “reading” and “reading comprehension”? And what does take place in our mind when we comprehend a reading text?

2.1. Memory and information processing
For any information to be learned, it first must be processed through working memory. Working memory is where current mental activity takes place and is a cognitive structure that is very limited in both capacity and duration (Simon, 1974). Only a limited number of elements of information can be held in working memory (Miller, 1956) and even less of these elements need to be combined or processed concurrently (Halford, Maybery & Bain, 1986; Sweller & Chandler, 1994). If instructional material is presented in a way that prevents working memory from successfully processing it, then learning and understanding will be hindered. In fact, recent research indicates that limited working memory may be the single most critical factor that needs to be considered when designing education instructions (Chandler & Sweller, 1991; 1992; 1996; Jeung, Chandler & Sweller, 1997; Paas, 1992; Paas & Van Merrienboer, 1994; Sweller, Chandler, Tierney & Cooper, 1990; Tindall, Chandler & Sweller, 1997).

Information that is successfully processed through working memory is held in long-term memory. In contrast to working memory, long-term memory is immeasurably large with no known limits (Newell & Simon, 1972). Ironically, an awareness of the size and importance of this cognitive structure originally came from research into problem solving expertise, an area initially not thought to be directly related to long-term memory. The pioneering work by De Groot (1946) (cited in De Groot, 1966), showed that the major difference between expert and
novice chess players was not superior search moves or larger working memories. Rather, the experts have enormous store of real game configurations held in their long term memory. Chess experts can recognize most of the configurations encountered in a typical game by drawing on their huge bank of stored board configurations. Consequently, they are aware of the best move associated with each particular configuration. Replication of the research by De Groot (1946), in a range of problem solving areas (e.g., Egan & Shwartz, 1979; Jeffries, Turner, Polson & Atwood, 1981; Sweller & Cooper, 1985), indicates that long-term memory plays a crucial role in higher intellectual behavior.

2.2. Types of information processing

Information is processed in the mind based on the previous knowledge. When we do not have previous knowledge about the subject, we use bottom-up processing. On the contrary, when we already know about the subject at hand, we use top-down processing of information.

2.2.1. Bottom-up processing

Historically, second language reading focused on bottom-up (or alternately titled text-driven) processing. In a bottom-up processing approach, readers extract information, including the words, letters, and drawings, in a systematic and mechanical fashion from a text (Rivers, 1983). Some theorists hold that bottom-up theory best describes how people read and note that a reader constructs the text from the smallest units on up, that is, letters to symbols to words to sentences, etc., and that through repetition of this process, called decoding, the entire process becomes automatic (Eskey, 1988; Stanovich, 1990). Nuttall (1996) likens bottom-up processing to “a scientist with a magnifying glass or microscope examining all the minute details of some phenomenon” (p. 16).

However, there is one disadvantage of bottom-up processing. Language learners are sometimes too much interested in individual words or phrases that they forget about the overall meaning of the text so teachers must be aware of this problem and must be ready to take any immediate actions where necessary in order not to lose the wood for the trees.

2.2.2. Top-down processing

A top-down (or alternately titled reader-driven) processing approach is based on the theoretical proposition that successful readers utilize their own intelligence and experience to make predictions, interpret, and draw inferences. In top-down processing, the reader guesses and distinguishes main ideas, overall patterns, and general purpose of the text and focuses less on individual words, verb conjugations, or isolated grammar points (Adair-Hauck, 1996; Adair-Hauck & Cumo-Johanssen, 1997). Central to top-down theory is the belief that readers bring their own individual assumptions, expectations, intelligence, questions, etc. to the text,
and that the text addresses and confirms these expectations. According to Nuttall (1996), a reader using top-down processing is like an eagle overlooking the landscape below. Top-down processing is useful to get the overall meaning of a text.

In top-down processing, an individual’s predictions are often based on schemata. Schema theorists propose that schemata, abstract mental structures, enable one to understand the world. For example, based on how one perceived or remembered an event or an occurrence, individuals possess schemata for arrangements of smells, the organization of a typical book, how to shop, etc. (Smith, 2004). According to schema theory, knowledge of relevant schemata is essential for reading comprehension. As an example, a student with no concept of the game of cricket will have difficulty with a story about cricket players or a game of cricket. Schema theorists note that students understand more of a text when they know the content schema and that the instructor plays an important role in helping students build schema via classification and categorization activities (Aebersold & Field, 2002).

Those that view top-down theory as the best description of the reading process differ from bottom-up advocates in that vocabulary is not central to the reading process in top-down theory (Goodman, 1967). In the top-down approach, a reader fits a text into his/her own individual knowledge and checks further when new information occurs. The approach leads to a successful rate of language acquisition (Adair-Hauck & Cumo-Johanssen, 1997). Specifically, beginning learners benefit from experience in top-down processing as they break from word-for-word decoding and are thus able to read more complicated texts, such as authentic texts (Shrum & Glisan, 2000). Guided by research findings, top-down or whole-language theme and task-based approaches have become popular and successful in the second language classroom.

2.3. Schema theory

Bartlett first introduced the notion of schema as early as 1932 in order to explain why people reconstructed a story when recalling it so as to make more sense of it in terms of their own knowledge and experience. According to Bartlett, the story is assimilated to pre-stored schemata based on previous experience. Rumelhart (1980) defined a schema as "a data structure for representing the generic concepts stored in memory. In other words, schema is an "organizing and orienting attitude that involves active organization of past experience" (Driscoll, 2000). Modern versions of schema theory incorporate many of Bartlett's ideas. For example, Shank and Abelson's concept of scripts (1977) proposed that such event schemata could be organized into a temporally ordered sequence of events. Alba and Hasher (1983) examined all schema theories and identified four major processes: selection, abstraction,
interpretation, and integration. It explicitly illustrates how memory and comprehension operate.

One of the central issues that cognitive psychologists are interested in is mental structure. According to schema theory, the knowledge we have stored in memory is organized as a set of schemata or mental representations, each of which incorporates all the knowledge of a given type of object or event that we have acquired from past experience.

Schema theory provides an account to the knowledge structure and emphasizes the fact that what we remember is influenced by what we already know. Schemata facilitate both encoding and retrieval. Moreover, the mental structures are active. Memory can be reconstructed through the integration of current experience with prior knowledge. In other words, schemata represent an active process and can change over time as a result of new experiences and learning.

There are two information resources: the incoming from the outside world and information already stored in memory. The analysis of the sensory information coming in from the outside is known as bottom-up processing or data-driven processing because it relies on the data received via the senses. The information already stored in the memory in the form of prior knowledge influences our expectations and helps us to interpret the current input. This influence of prior knowledge is known as top-down or conceptual-driven processing. Schemata operate in a top-down direction to help us interpret the bottom-up flow of information from the world. Research on functions of the schema focused on the impact of prior knowledge on comprehension and memory (Driscoll, 2000).

2.4. **Cognitive load theory**

Cognitive load may be viewed as the level of ‘mental energy’ required to process a given amount of information. As the amount of information to be processed increases, so too does the associated cognitive load. Cognitive load theory (CLT) suggests that effective instructional material promotes learning by directing cognitive resources towards activities that are relevant to learning rather than to processes that are an adjunct to learning (Cooper, 1990, p.1).

CLT is an instructional theory conceived of by Sweller (1988). The theory associates cognitive load with working memory, also referred to as short-term memory. “Cognitive load refers to the total amount of mental activity imposed on working memory at an instance in time” (Cooper, 1998). Cooper (1998, p. 1) describes the fundamental tenet of CLT as one that will raise the quality of instructional design “...if greater consideration is given to the role
and limitations, of working memory.” CLT, therefore, is associated with learning and the cognitive structures that make up an individual’s knowledge base.

2.4.1. Principles of cognitive load theory
Cognitive load theory states that human working memory is limited. Our limited memories make it hard to learn multiple elements of information at the same time and a heavy load is imposed on a learner when multiple elements interact (Wilson, 1996). In principle, it is possible to externally control cognitive processes of working memory by presenting certain instructional formats (Bannert, 2002). Such external control would lead to reduction of extrinsic overload.

The limitations of short-term memory can be circumvented by chunking, by automating rules, and by using more than one presentation modality according to the theory (Kirschner, 2002). CLT provides guidelines for “improving the training of complex cognitive skills and their transfer to new situations” (van Merrienboer, Schuurman, deCroock, & Pass, 2002, p. 11). Another guideline states that germane cognitive load that is directly relevant to schema construction should be optimized. Sweller (1988) found that learning requires a connection to constructed schema. If the schema connection is not made in long-term memory, then it is likely that learning will not occur. CLT does not explicitly account for the role of prior knowledge (Valcke, 2002). As long as there is no prior knowledge in long-term memory, complex learning cannot take place because there is no schema to retrieve. Valcke (2002) reports that instructional approaches that foster construction of basic schemata will help.

3. Methodology
3.1. Subjects
The study was carried out with 60 undergraduate students at Islamic Azad University of Malayer. The subjects were between the ages of 18 and 22.

The study was carried out on two reading classes. The subjects were divided into two equal classes. Each class consisted of 30 students. One served as the experimental group consisting of both males and females. The other one served as the control group consisting of 30 female and male students. None of the subjects had lived in, studied in, or traveled to English-speaking countries before. All the subjects were sophomores who were taking their third course of “reading comprehension.”
3.2. Measuring instruments and materials
The measuring instruments & materials used in this study consisted of five equivalent sets of tests: one test with connectors, and the other one with conjunctions (in each set there were two tests, one test for the experimental and one for the control group). Each test was composed of a reading text with ten comprehension questions afterwards.

3.3. Design
In this design, the control group and the experimental group were compared according to their performance on the amount of reading comprehension. Both groups were given five equivalent tests in five sessions. Thus, the schematic representation for the design of this study is as follows:

Experimental group → Cn test 1 → Cn test 2 → Cn test 3 → Cn test 4 → Cn test 5

Control group → Cj test 1 → Cj test 2 → Cj test 3 → Cj test 4 → Cj test 5

Cn test = connector test
Cj test = conjunctive test

As can be seen from the schematic representation above, both groups were given the same passages. However, the passages differed in the use of connectors and conjunctions. The experimental group read passages with connectors, and the control group read the same passages with conjunctions.

3.4. Procedure
All the students were randomly divided into two groups, and this grouping continued for five sessions. Each session, each group of students were given their own test and based on the length of the passage, they were given a special amount of time to read and answer the questions. The amount of time was neither a little nor too much because the researcher believed that the tests were neither speed tests nor power tests. So the time was believed to be enough for both the most gifted and the least gifted students. Further, in this study there was no treatment and just it consisted of a five-session test phase.

3.5. Statistical Calculation
To answer the research questions, the researcher applied T-tests to capture differences, if any, between the experimental group and the control group, and an ANOVA to determine if there is any significant difference between male and female learners.
4. Results and discussion

To test the first hypothesis, the researcher performed T-tests on the results of all tests. Next, they conducted ANOVAs to determine if there is any significant difference between male and female learners or not.

To see whether there is a significant difference between the experimental group, who read passages with connectors, and the control group, who read passages which include conjunctions, the researcher ran a T-test and the results can be seen in Table 3.1 below. A point to be considered in analysis of the following results is that the results of all five tests were considered as a single whole.

Table 3.1
The t-test results of all tests

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experimental Group</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>14.01</td>
<td>1.69</td>
<td>6.34</td>
<td>.025</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control Group</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>13.53</td>
<td>1.78</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p< .05

Experimental Group = Connector Group
Control Group = Conjunctor Group

A look at Table 3.1 clarifies that there seems to be a significant difference between the experimental group and the control group (t= 6.34, p<.05), which means that students’ reading comprehension gets better when we reduce the amount of cognitive load of the reading passages.

To see whether there is any significant difference between male and female learners an ANOVA was conducted and the results are as follows:

Table 3.2
ANOVA on all tests

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>120.590</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>41.761</td>
<td>.025</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>169.410</td>
<td>176</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>290.000</td>
<td>179</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p< .05
As can be seen from the table above, there is a significant difference between both groups. Scheffe test clearly demonstrates where exactly this difference is located.

**Table 3.3**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean Difference</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>experimental female</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>experimental male</td>
<td>-.37</td>
<td>.249</td>
<td>.528</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>control female</td>
<td>1.53*</td>
<td>.173</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>control male</td>
<td>1.56*</td>
<td>.214</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>experimental male</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>female</td>
<td>.37</td>
<td>.249</td>
<td>.528</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>control female</td>
<td>1.90*</td>
<td>.253</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>control male</td>
<td>1.93*</td>
<td>.283</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>control female</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>female</td>
<td>-1.53*</td>
<td>.173</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>experimental male</td>
<td>-1.90*</td>
<td>.253</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>control male</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.219</td>
<td>.999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>control male</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>female</td>
<td>-1.56*</td>
<td>.214</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>experimental male</td>
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<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>control female</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>.219</td>
<td>.999</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The mean difference is significant as the .05 level

The output data reveals that the difference lies between the control and experimental groups.

**5. Conclusion**

This study was undertaken to see the impact of reducing unnecessary cognitive load. To do so, the researcher chose a reading class and divided students randomly into two 30-student groups. Then, five sets of tests were administered with a one-week interval and the results were analyzed using T-tests and ANOVA procedure. The results indicated that there was a significant difference between the two groups: the experimental group, the group who read passages whose sentences were connected with connectors outperformed the other group (all five tests t=6.34, significant at p<.05). The research also proved that there is a significant difference between both groups (all tests F= 41.761, p< .05) and the results of the Scheffe tests showed that this difference is due to the methods applied not gender.
References


Title
Critical Inquiry into EFL Teachers’ Perception of Culture Teaching and Practices
Tehran, Iran vis-à-vis Khartoum, Sudan

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Abstract
This cross-cultural study investigates EFL teachers’ perception of culture teaching and practices. It is a qualitative study in which semi-structured recorded interviews were conducted with EFL teachers in Khartoum and Tehran. Likewise, it is a critical inquiry in the sense that it aims at exploring the interconnections between EFL teachers’ views and the wider socio-economic and political context within which they operate. The main finding of the study indicates that for the most part, the way culture teaching is conceptualized and practiced is incongruous with the reality of English as a global language and in turn this leads to maintaining and reproducing the system which has given rise to the incongruity in the first place.

Keywords: Critical, Culture, Teaching, Practices, EFL teachers.
1. Introduction

"Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity or it becomes the practice of freedom, the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world" (Paulo Friere, 1970, p.34).

This quote lays out two diametrically opposed approaches to education. The first one aims primarily at maintaining, legitimizing, and ultimately reproducing the dominant social order while the second one is geared toward challenging, contesting, and ultimately transforming the dominant social order. What’s more, these two approaches entail entirely different sets of pedagogical practices and implications. This study turns a lens on these two approaches through looking into the way EFL teachers perceive culture teaching and practices within EFL contexts. Of special interest is the attempt at ferreting out the dialectic link between the way culture is taught and the broader socio-economic and political context within which they are situated. In other words, the term critical in the title is used in the sense of “making visible the interconnectedness of things” (Fairclough, 1985, p. 747).

That culture and language are dialectically intertwined is self-evident. As a conceptual structure, culture is encoded in and transmitted through language. Consequently, studying language presupposes studying culture and the reverse is equally true. This axiom is especially significant when it comes to studying a lingua franca like English. This fact brings into sharp focus the issue of its cultural baggage. In other words, since language and culture are inextricably intertwined, the questions arise; how is culture taught? Whose culture is taught? And who benefits from the way culture teaching is framed? The answers to these three broad questions can be found in the views and practices of ELT teachers.

Hence, this study addresses the following research questions:

RQ1 How do EFL teachers perceive the way in which culture is taught?
RQ2 What is the perception of EFL teachers with respect to question of whose target culture is taught?
RQ4 What power relations are embodied in culture teaching and practices?

2. Conceptions of culture
“The production of ideas, of conceptions, of consciousness, is at first directly interwoven with the material activity and the material intercourse of men, the language of real life. Conceiving, thinking, the mental intercourse of men, appear at this stage as the direct efflux of their material behavior. The same applies to mental production as expressed in the language of politics, laws, morality, religion, metaphysics, etc., of a people” (Marx, 1845, p. 9).

This quote encapsulates the ensemble of dialectical relations which constitute the dynamic process of social evolutions. Within this conceptual framework, culture is seen as dialectically bound up with other relations within the totality of the system. To put it another way, culture is a set of conceptual expressions of the dominant material conditions. This raises the questions of why certain cultural symbols prevail at a given time and place and then give way to a new set of ideas as has been the case throughout recorded history. The materialist conception of history offers deeper insights into the answers to these questions.

“in the social production of their life, men enter into definite relations with each other, corresponding to stages of development of the material powers of production. The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society. That this economic structure is the real foundation of society on which is built up the corresponding legal and political superstructure, and definite forms of social consciousness, the social, political and spiritual processes of life” (Marx, 1859, p. 1)

This brief statement ties together all the different elements that go into the making of a given social structure at a given historical period. Viewed from a materialist perspective, mental conceptions such as cultural symbols arise from particular social relations as conditioned by the level of the development of productive forces. Therefore, the materialist conception brings into sharp focus the socio-economic and political dimensions of culture. By the same token, social consciousness is expressive of a certain mode of production. For example, chivalry, loyalty, and honor were the social and individual values under Feudalism whereas “freedom”, “democracy”, and competition represent the social and individual values under capitalism. This begs the question of whose ideas gain prominence in a given social structure. In this regard, Marx shines a light on this issue when he says:

“The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e. the class which is the ruling material force of society, is at the same time its ruling intellectual force” (Marx, 1845, p. 21).
The implication is that the prevailing ideas in a society have a social function: to maintain and reproduce the existing social order. To put it differently, a given social structure is perpetuated not only through economic and political coercion but also through cultural hegemony (Gramsci, 1971). Cultural hegemony is one of the numerous manifestations of class-structured society where the dominated classes internalize the ideology of the dominant class (Phillipson, 1992).

Such a class-based analysis of culture can be seen in the concepts of “high culture” and “low or popular culture” where the culture of the elite is associated with prestige and hence serves as a tool for upward mobility by the “lower classes”. looked at from global perspective, Western cultural values in general and American in particular have come to be seen as superior (high) and worth emulating by the rest of the third world (low) simply because they happen to be the ideas of the ruling power in the world.

Another distinctive feature of this framework is that it dialectically incorporates the seemingly disparate elements of culture. For instance, Adaskou, Britten and Fahsi (1990, pp. 3-4) make a distinction between four different meanings of culture. The esthetic sense with capital C which refers to the media, cinema, music, and above all literature, the sociological sense which has to do with “organization and nature of family, of home, of interpersonal relations, material conditions, work and leisure, customs, and institutions” (Adaskou, Britten and Fahsi), the semantic sense which is related to “the conceptual system embodied in the language” (Adaskou, Britten and Fahsi), and the sociololinguistic sense which is concerned with the “background knowledge, social skills, and paralinguistic skills that, in addition to mastery of the language code, make possible successful communication” (Adaskou, Britten and Fahsi). Seen from a materialist outlook, culture with capital C is expressive of culture with small c where both are reflected in the conceptual system embodied in the language. However, as stated above, these four dialectically interrelated senses of culture represent the mental conceptions that in turn are expressive of a certain dynamic and interacting socio-economic power structure.

2.1. Culture and Language

Since language stems from social life, it would be inconceivable to think of the existence of culture independently of language. In fact, it is through language that children are socialized into the cultural norms of society. This dialectic interconnectivity between culture and language has been conclusively demonstrated by philosophers such as Adorno (1993), Foucault (1994), and Chomsky (1968). Likewise, the political and socio-economic linkage to culture and language has been extensively researched by critical academics such as Phillipson.
For instance, Pennycook draws a dialectic connection between economic forces of international capitalism and the ubiquitous spread of English language along with its cultural baggage. Bapuji (1993) sees imperialism as enmeshed in a cobweb of practices such as economic exploitation, military coercion, political oppression, cultural domination and linguistic imperialism. He maintains that “imperialism sees education in general and language education in particular as main instruments for disseminating its culture” (Bapuji, p.40). This economic exploitation embedded in the spread of English language and culture was highlighted by a statement made by the Director-General of the British Council in its 1987/1988 annual report.

Britain’s real black gold isn’t North Sea oil but the English language. It has long been at the root of our culture and now it is fast becoming the global language of business and information. The challenge facing us is to exploit it to the full. (Phillipson 1992, p. 146)

This explicit statement shows the value-laden link between globalization and commodification of ELT. Marxists view this link as emblematic of capitalist ethos where the inbuilt quest for profit propels capitalism to explore new markets and in doing so, the world gives the impression of being the personification of capitalist value system.

“The bourgeoisie, by the rapid improvement of all instruments of production, by the immensely facilitated means of communication, draws all, even the most barbarian nations into civilization. The cheap prices of commodities are the heavy artillery with which it batters down all Chinese walls, with which it forces the barbarians’ intensely obstinate hatred of foreigners to capitulate. It compels all nations, on pain of extinction, to adopt the bourgeois mode of production; it compels them to introduce what it calls civilization into their midst, i.e., to become bourgeois themselves. In one word, it creates a world after its own image” (Marx, 1848, p. 6).

Therefore, the spread of English language and culture is interwoven with the quest for global markets. It is an undisputed fact that initially the pursuit of new markets led the British imperialism to explore new places through colonization. However, with the downfall of the British Empire, American capitalism has taken over this role. In other words, the spread of English language along with its culture is concurrent with the spread of capitalism. Among the manifestations of this trend in today’s world is MacDonaldization of the world (Ritzer, 1993). The invasive influence of marketing famous brands on local cultures across the globe is self-evident. Each brandname comes wrapped up in a glamorized story that extols the
virtues of western lifestyles which eventually led to what Phillips (2006) called cultural cringe which is defined as a sense of inferiority whereby people feel a given culture is superior to theirs.

The ramifications of this state of affairs for ELT can be seen in teaching methods and materials as well as culture teaching and practices in that there is an economic-driven and hegemonic flow from center countries to the periphery where anything local such as course-books, non-native teachers, accent and so on are perceived to be inadequate by the local people. Similarly, language institutes in the expanding circles contribute immensely to promoting cultural cringe in structuring language teaching and learning along lines drawn by the inner circles practitioners. A case in point, the mainstream teaching method which is perceived to be communicative language teaching is practiced regardless of its relevance to local contexts. Alptekin (1993) aptly remarks on communicative approaches and materials as being value-laden modes of behavior which reflect western modes of communication that may run counter to the traditions of local cultures, including learning conventions.

By the same token, it is striking to note the absence of serious issues in commercialized textbooks. This has to do with the fact that over the last three decades, there has been a relentless process of commercialization of culture through the imposition of neoliberal agenda on the world. As a result, learners of English are exposed to an insidious process of cultural commodification. Cultural commodity as coined by Adorno (1993) refers to cultural products designed solely for their marketable surface effect rather than their intellectual content. For this reason, mainstream ELT textbooks are devoid of any intellectual content and aid and abet in the spread of the culture of consumerism which is vital to the existence of capitalist system. Given such a set-up, language teaching tends be promote certain types of knowledge and culture (Pennycook, 1994).

The culture-language dialectic has generated heated debate with respect to the teaching of English in relation to its culture in light of the political reality of globalization. To put it differently, globalization raises many questions regarding culture teaching in EFL settings. Taking into account the inseparability of language and culture, the question of how culture is or should be taught has come to the fore over the last three decades.

2.2. EFL and the question of culture

The internationalization of English language, which echoes an all-pervasive internationalization of almost every aspect of life, has raised numerous questions concerning the incorporation of culture into language teaching and learning in EFL contexts. Some researchers argue that learning a language without its culture leads to learners becoming
“fluent fools” (Bennet, 1993), hence it is necessary to expose learners to the “target culture”. Others maintain that since English has become a lingua franca (Crystal, 1997), the need for learning its culture is irrelevant.

The first argument raises a number of contentious issues. First, whose target culture from the inner circle countries should be incorporated? Second, the concept of culture isn’t monolithic which suggests that there are cultural variations within inner circle countries, so whose cultural variation should be taught? Third, what are the criteria for selecting cultural information to be included in the language curriculum? And more importantly, what are the implications for language teachers? In other words, should non-native teachers take a course on the “target culture” in order to be able to teach it or should native teacher be in charge of transferring their cultural information?

The answer to the first question used to be straightforward: American or British culture. Anachronistic as it may seem, ELT still gives the same answer which can be seen in the mainstream textbooks. However, this contradicts the new realities of English as a global language. For one thing, non-native speakers outnumber native speakers three to one (Crystal, 2003). Likewise, many people from the expanding circle want to learn English for instrumental purposes, which mean they are not interested in the cultural aspect. For instance, Coskun (2010) demonstrated that most English learners in Turkey are learning English for Business or tourism purposes. The persistence of these outdated ideas and practices in ELT can be attributable to the fact that ELT is dominated by the US and UK for hegemonic purposes.

The class-based analysis of culture provides an answer to the second question (whose cultural variation should be taught? A closer examination of the mainstream textbooks in terms of its cultural content will reveal that they predominantly represent the culture of the upper and middle classes while the cultures of minorities are excluded. As a result, whether consciously or unconsciously the cultural values embodied in those textbooks are selected in terms of the social class in power. Mainstream English textbooks reflect the same marginalization of minorities in American society where cultural diversity is backgrounded and mainstream culture is foregrounded (Naylor, 1998).

Moreover, the incorporation of the target culture tends to favor native teachers over non-native teachers with the result that they have better job opportunities and better pay. Another downside is that these arrangements tend to make non-native teachers feel inadequate and incompetent because they are less familiar with the cultural content. Many researchers have raised concerns about this practice in creating political inequalities within
In a nutshell, this position tends to maintain the existing arrangements in favor of those in control.

The view that teaching a specific variation of the “target culture” is out of tune with English as a global language makes intuitive sense. This has prompted researchers such as Kachru (1992) to call for “world Englishes across cultures”. Such a model is less culturally intrusive than the previous one and it captures the realities of the ways in which English has come to be used in this era of globalizations. Equally significant is the fact that world Englishes is by implication counterhegemonic in the sense that it doesn’t promote the inner circle cultures at the cost of the diversity of world cultures. This has led to attempts at incorporating world Englishes into language teaching and learning. Similarly, it has given rise to novel ways of conceptualizing culture teaching that are more in line with the needs of our time. It is against such backdrop that alternative models to culture teaching such as multiculturalism and intercultural education emerged.

3. Methodology
This is a qualitative inquiry in which audio-recorded semi-structured interviews constituted the main source of data collection. EZ-Text, a qualitative data analysis software package, was used for organizing, managing, and coding the interview transcripts.

The study made use of semi-structured interviews with 10 EFL teachers: five from Khartoum, Sudan and five from Tehran, Iran. The interview questions were based on culture teaching-related themes that emerged from extensive reading of the literature. It should be noted that the age of the participants ranged from 25 to 45.

Data analysis went hand in hand with data collection because unlike in quantitative research, data analysis in qualitative research can occur before the data collection process has been completed. So, as data collection was in progress, codes were assigned to the major themes using the software EZ-Text. This made for a painstaking analysis.

4. Results and discussion
Since this study sought to critically investigate EFL teachers’ perception of culture teaching and practice, the responses to each one of the interview questions were selected on the strength of their relevance to the research questions. The Findings are presented thematically based on the questions asked in the interviews.

4.1. How would you define culture?
The first interview question dealt with the way teachers define cultures. It is striking to see how the respondents in both countries unanimously echo the definition of culture reflected in the English textbooks they teach; namely, culture with small c which is seen as comprising routine habits, customs, and traditions.

Culture is the traditions and beliefs of a society and different communities have different cultures (Abdullah, Khartoum)

Culture is a combination of beliefs, traditions, some subcategories like beliefs, language, food, different things combined in order to make something called culture. (Shirin, Tehran)

This consensus among EFL teachers in Tehran and Khartoum on the sociological sense of culture as a way of life has gained currency as a result of the shift in language teaching from grammatical competence to communicative competence (what to say and what not to say to whom, where, when and in what manner). The commercialized English Textbooks are fraught with culture c topics which supposedly aim at familiarizing learners with so-called appropriate use of language.

Such conceptualization of culture which permeates ELT profession covers only the observable manifestation of culture i.e what is going on but what is left out of this understanding of culture is how we got here. In other words, ELT establishment set the framework within which culture is viewed and EFL teachers conform to it.

4.2. How do you see the link between language and culture?

As with the definition of culture, this question also yielded unanimity in the sense that all the responses indicate that language and culture are perceived as inseparable. Though the nature of this link isn’t clear to them, language is seen as a medium for transmitting culture.

Language is the means for transferring culture. To show your culture, you have to use language. (Ahmed, Tehran)

Teaching a new language is teaching a new culture. Once you want to teach a language, you have to contextualize it through cultural ethics. (Hamid, Tehran)

Language and culture are inseparable (Abdullah, Khartoum)

If you separate the culture and language, we can’t learn the language at all (Modasir, Khartoum)

4.3. What is the role of the target culture in language teaching and learning?

Although all the respondents agreed that teaching the target culture is important, some expressed ambivalence over the issue of teaching elements of the target culture that run counter to the local culture.
One cannot teach a language without first having a cultural understanding of the people (mainly the native speakers) who speak that language. To teach a language often requires knowing and teaching about that language and much of this about-the-language includes cultural elements. Being as such, teaching a language becomes more problematic where the language taught and learned is more at odds with the learners’ first language culturally. (Ali, Tehran)

While acknowledging the need to teach culture alongside language, Ali seems to question the soundness of doing this especially when the target and local cultures clash. In order to circumvent this conundrum, He draws learners’ attention to cultural differences.

It is important to remind students of the cultural differences especially when we come to sharp oppositions. Sometimes it’s good to change the content (its setting and atmosphere) so as it comes closer to the learners’ culture while preserving the important linguistic elements. Generally what determines how to deal with something. There are also some positive points in every culture and if teachers highlight them, it may help reduce the negative aspects. (Ali, Tehran)

Ali explicitly challenges the unexamined but widely held belief that focusing on the target culture is necessary. He seems to suggest that what matters ultimately is the function rather than the context which he feels free to ignore if it happens to clash with the local one.

His counterpart in Khartoum went even further in making a connection between the practice of teaching the target culture and American domination.

English language represents American culture. This is globalization. So, they try to teach their language to spread their culture. (Ahmed, Khartoum)

This is a clear reference to the role of English language in globalizing American culture. However, Ahmed believes that learning English can cut both ways in the sense that English language can be used to familiarize the western world with Islamic culture. Similarly, he shares Ali’s view that some elements of the target culture are beneficial for learning.

As Muslims, our goal is to display our culture to the western world. There are good aspects of western culture but not all of them are good. So, we have to take what is good and try to apply in our own lives. (Ahmed, Khartoum)

I focus on the target culture only when it doesn’t influence my local culture. If something has bad influence on my local culture, I try to avoid it. I focus on the language skills. (Omar, Khartoum)
Most EFL teachers in Khartoum share this perception of the role of the target culture while only one teacher from Tehran (Ali) subscribes to this view. What’s more, EFL teachers from Tehran seem to take it for granted that teaching the target culture is necessary.

When you want to learn a language it is very important to get familiar with the culture which that language has come from. You would know how to express your feelings. It is very important to concentrate on target culture in the class (Anita, Tehran)

Overall, the respondents from both countries agree on the role of target culture in language learning. However, they differ as to what to do when elements of the target culture is incompatible with the local one. EFL teachers in Khartoum, for the most part, tend to eschew teaching a particular cultural aspect of the target language when it is perceived to have a bad influence on the local one while almost all EFL teachers in Tehran find it necessary to focus on the target culture.

4.4. Whose target culture is taught? Perception of cultural content in English Textbooks

The responses to this question reveal a monolithic understanding of culture. In the view of EFL teachers in both Tehran and Khartoum, target culture is mostly associated with American culture and partly with British culture. None of them questioned the appropriacy of looking at culture as uniform and homogeneous and more importantly none of them considered the question of whose cultural variation or subculture within America or Britain is represented and reflected in the practice of ELT.

In the textbooks I currently teach English culture (mostly American one) is dominant. Whenever there may be parts about other cultures, they mostly attempt a comparison with the American culture. (Ali, Tehran)

American culture is the strongest one because of may be political, economical, or some other reasons. Most teachers are trained to speak with American accent and most of the books available in the market are American again. So, I think American culture is being expanded in our country. (Shirin, Tehran)

Though Shirin is aware of how pervasive American culture is in EFL contexts, she seems to think this state of affairs is ok because America happens to be powerful economically and politically. However, there is no doubt in her mind that American culture in its monolithic sense is being taught.

I teach headway and it is heavily British culture which includes something like Halloween which is a Christian celebration and we don’t have it in Sudan. (Ahmed, Khartoum)
The textbooks which I teach in Sudan are almost British or American culture. They contain the culture of the origin of the curriculum. (Omar, Khartoum)

The perception of EFL teachers in Sudan seems to indicate that British rather than American culture is predominant in the textbooks taught in Khartoum. This may have to do with the fact that Sudan was colonized by Britain. However, American textbooks seem to be vying with British ones to gain the upper hand. Still, whether it is British or American, the general sense is that culture is monolithic.

It is striking that all the participants didn’t entertain the idea that the prevailing culture in ELT textbooks and practices reflect the lifestyle, accent, behavior, and attitudes of the dominant social class (upper Middle white class) whether in Britain or America. In other words, the subaltern cultures of minorities such as African-American, Hispanic and Native Americans aren’t represented.

4.5. ELT as value free versus value-laden

This question asked the respondents to make a comment on the following statement: English language teaching is neutral and value-free. The comments made by the respondents were almost unanimous in maintaining that besides the language, culture is also being taught through Textbooks which indicates an implicit awareness of hidden curriculum. Below are some quotes to illustrate this point:

I don’t know about neutral. I don’t think it can be neutral. You see language has a psychology and certain belief system attached to it and to teach it is to teach that belief system as well (Arash, Tehran).

No. you can never separate language from culture. Definitely it comes with the culture that the language comes from (Sara, Tehran).

Again I have to go back to the cultural items because definitely when you are teaching American books you are going to get American culture in them (Ibrahim, Khartoum).

If someone is learning a language, he or she is getting another culture. When you are learning about language, you are learning about another country. In Iran having a boyfriend or a girlfriend is something decried and it is against the law, it is against the religion. So when you start teaching it, you must ask about blind date, boyfriend, girlfriend, and ex-boyfriend. It is a change in culture, you are also teaching that. So definitely it isn’t value-free (Mohammad, Khartoum).
To recap, this question elicited responses echoing what critical educators believe, namely that ELT is highly charged with hidden agenda but once more the main difference is that almost all the respondents hold the implicit belief that teaching those hidden agendas is part and parcel of ELT whereas critical educators explicitly hold the belief that ELT doesn’t necessarily have to be embedded in those hidden agendas.

**4.6. How did English become an international language?**

Unlike their counterparts in Khartoum, most EFL teachers in Tehran hold a dehistoricized view of the spread of English. The dominant perception is that technology, the media, and easiness of learning account for the internationalization of English language. Even when the role of power and domination is acknowledged, it is somehow perceived to be less significant than other factors. Below are some responses to demonstrate this point:

- Because of technology, media, internet, and satellite (Shirin, Tehran)
- Different things especially new technologies such as internet and also satellite (Hamid, Tehran)
- I have no idea. I think it is the easiest one in my opinion or maybe it was exported when Europeans left to America. They somehow spread it around the world and they colonized different countries. (Sara, Tehran)
- I have read something about how it spread but now I don’t remember. In my opinion, it is easy and I love it. Maybe it can be for political reasons or may be some conquerors. (Mostafa, Tehran)

These views indicate that the history of how English language became what it is today is a matter of indifference to them. However, Ali seems to have a good grasp of the way in which English has gained its lingua franca status. Once more, he shares this view with his counterparts in Khartoum.

- What made it international, I think, was and has been more a matter of power and domination, regardless of the fact that we need a language to be a common means of communication throughout the world. English became international since powerful people at a certain time in our contemporary history used it and wanted others to use it. There might be other reasons as well such as its relative easiness to learn, but political reasons override others. (Ali, Tehran)
- American dominance and British Dominance by the exploitation of human resources (Ahemd, Khartoum)
- British and American colonization (Omar, Khartoum)
One plausible explanation for why EFL teachers in Khartoum are well aware of the history of the spread of English is the British colonization of some African countries including Sudan. However, there seems to be a general sense in which the global spread of English is seen as inevitable, natural, and independent of any historical trajectory. For instance, according to some EFL teachers in Tehran, English language is endowed with the quality of being easy to pick up compared to other languages.

These findings offer deeper insights into the ways in which culture teaching is structured in EFL contexts. The main insight has to do with the fact that the mainstream approach to teaching culture aims at legitimizing, naturalizing, and ultimately perpetuating the existing capitalist social order. This is done primarily by getting the dominated to internalize certain categories of thoughts held by the dominant whereby the dominated become complicit in their own domination (Gramsci, 1971). Within ELT, this translates into infusing language teaching and learning with inner circle ethos which is extension of capitalist ethos. As a consequence and as with every aspect of life under capitalism, there is a terrible disjunction between such practices and the realities of English as a global language. This anachronism is particularly pronounced when it comes to culture teaching and practices. To put it differently, despite the fact that English is recognized as a lingua franca, teaching the “target culture” is still perceived to be necessary as indicated by the respondents in this study. The relevance of the “target culture” in our globalized world isn’t questioned. In this connection, Birch and Liyanage stated that “the relevance of British culture to a Thai businessman (Expanding Circle) negotiating in English with an Indian trader (Outer Circle) is almost non-existent” (Birch and Liyanage, 2004, p. 94). In this regard, it should be noted that the ratio of non-native speakers to native-speakers is 1:3 (Crystal, 2003).

Another misleading perception of culture held by the participants in this study has to do with its monolithic nature. This way of looking at culture masks the power relations embedded in any class-divided society with the result that the culture of the dominant class rides roughshod over the cultures of the dominated. Incidentally, the few EFL teachers who are concerned about safeguarding their “culture” from the culturally intrusive materials of ELT are themselves gatekeepers of the dominant culture in their own class-structured societies. For instance, while Sudan is characterized by an amazing cultural diversity, EFL teachers in Khartoum tend to think of Sudan as having a uniform culture (Islamic, Arabic) which they seem a bit anxious to shield from what they think is the bad influence of the target culture of English language. So, EFL teachers can end up wittingly or unwittingly becoming self-appointed guardians of the status quo.
Another interesting finding is the way in which English language is fetishized especially by most EFL teachers in Tehran. They seem to think that English has spread worldwide because of some intrinsic qualities peculiar to English language. This perception smacks of ideological mystification where reality is distorted to mask it. Even when the recognition of the colonial history behind the spread of English slowly dawns upon them, it is seen as inevitable. What’s more, there is a sense that how English spread is irrelevant; as a result, they seem unconcerned about this question.

Having said that, the ideologically-laden ELT practices are not entirely unchecked. There seems to be spotted resistance when it comes to teaching cultural content related to English language. This is especially true in Khartoum where teachers, for the most part, appear to be charier of teaching elements of the target culture if they happen to be intrusively at variance with their local culture. Still, this resistance isn’t strong enough to constitute a counterweight to the mainstream pedagogical practices.

5. Conclusion
The main focus of this cross-cultural study was on the way EFL teachers in Khartoum and Tehran view culture teaching and practices.

The main finding indicates that the way in which culture teaching is conceptualized and practiced is out of sync with the realities of English as a global language. Similarly, the persistence of such ELT practices is reflective of a nested totality of socio-economic, historical, and political relations which is maintained and reproduced by a subtle process of legitimation, depoliticization, and dehistoricization. This can be clearly seen in the mainstream approach which is notorious for its consumerist-tourist orientation in terms of its cultural content, teaching methodology, absence of serious issues, and its attempt at masquerading as apolitical.

The most immediate and general implication of this finding is that a radical reconfiguration of culture teaching is essential in order to contribute to transforming our world which is hovering on the brink of total annihilation. This can be done by incorporating a cultural content that would challenge the existing status quo and at the same time offer a vision of a better world. This approach has the merit of counteracting the insidious mainstream ideology. For instance, instead of the trivial cultural content of mainstream English textbooks which ultimately reinforces the existing social order such as a reading titled “shop till you drop” in Interchange for elementary level, we can choose a reading that
promotes ethical consumption by spotlighting sweatshops. The idea is to come up with a cultural curriculum and pedagogy that would offer a totally new perspective on every aspect of our life. In a nutshell, we can teach for the society in which we live or we can teach for the one we want to see. We don't have a third option.

References


