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# L2 Writing Assessment in the Greek School of Foreign Languages

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**Abstract**—In the past two decades, there has been an increased interest in the assessment of L2 writing since the results of such evaluations are used for a variety of administrative, instructional and research purposes. One of the primary issues pertaining the assessment of writing quality is the type of scoring procedure which will be used; admittedly a subject of a great deal of research and discussion in the language testing literature. The aim of the present paper is firstly, to briefly describe the type of scoring used in the Greek School of Foreign Languages for assessing L2 writing performance and secondly, to calculate the inter-rater reliability of five written samples. The results obtained indicate quite high correlations, thus demonstrating the evaluators' uniformity in the application of assessment criteria.

**Index Terms**—L2 writing assessment, scoring procedure, inter-rater reliability

## I. INTRODUCTION

In the last twenty years there have been developments in testing reflected in the publications now on the market (Bachman, 1990; Fulcher, 2010; Fulcher and Davidson, 2007; O'Sullivan, 2011) and by the arrival of journals such as *Language Testing* and *Assessing Writing*. Irrespectively of the theoretical approach adopted by each scholar, there is a common consensus that testing is not situated solely within the classroom but should be viewed as a social phenomenon, thus being placed in a larger educational context. Guidance on how to conduct assessment and to build good knowledge tests implies knowledge of the larger socio-cultural context of both language learners and institutions. Of the many issues involved in language testing, and in particular, second-language assessment, reliability has been of particular concern to both language testers and teachers.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A fundamental concept in language testing is reliability in the sense that in order for a test to achieve its intended purpose, the test results must be reliable (Fulcher 1997, 1999). According to Jones (1979) one factor that significantly influences reliability in a performance test is the consistency of ratings. In fact, four types of reliability have been proposed: (1) inter-examiner reliability, (2) intra-examiner reliability, (3) inter-rater reliability, and (4) intra-rater reliability. This section focuses on the issue of inter-rater reliability. According to McNamara (1996) the issue of reliability tends to be more complicated because of the subjectivity of human raters in assessing a particular test. In other words, no matter how unequivocal the set of criteria by which the test is to be judged, it could be the case that there are differences or even disagreements in the ratings allotted to the same set of tests by a group of human raters. In fact, Hamp-Lyons (1990) argues that the reliability of rating largely depends on the rater's attitudes and conceptions. In this respect, inter-rater reliability is meant to refer to the consistency between two or more raters who assess the same language test (Lombard et al. 2005; Gamaroff, 2000). Thus, inter-rater reliability enables the raters to standardize their scoring and to maintain a check on the level of consistency of their marking. It should be noted that Tinsley and Weiss (2000, p.98) prefer the term 'inter-rater agreement' but here, the term inter-rater reliability will be used referring to its widely accepted sense, that is, the correlation between two rating sets. In this sense, rater-reliability is calculated by finding the correlation between two or more raters as will be subsequently discussed.

## III. METHODOLOGY

Being a Department of the University of Athens, the School of Foreign Languages adheres to the regulations imposed by the University. In particular, the School of Foreign Languages can only accept adult learners. Given that, it is assumed that foreign language learners are, in principle, perceptually, cognitively, linguistically and socially matured through their L1.

With respect to scoring procedures, a holistic rating is adopted based on a numerical scale ranging from 0-10. Its ultimate aim is to assess the overall proficiency level reflected in a given sample of student writing and it is generally considered a reliable scoring method, provided guidelines pertaining to rater training and rating administration are faithfully adhered to. As Perkins (1983) argues holistic scoring is the most reliable when the construct assessed is overall writing proficiency (p.652). Holistic scoring rubrics consist of 10 levels in the School of Foreign Languages

with marks 0-2 given to off topic essays, 3-4 to minimal evidence of proficiency, 5 to some evidence of proficiency, 6-7 to developing proficiency, 8 to proficient, 9 to very proficient and 10 to outstanding performance.

Along with the abovementioned scoring range, the School of Foreign Languages makes use of rubrics in order to analyze students' competency in certain features of language use and composition skills, such as content, organization, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics. As far as content is concerned, attention is drawn to the following aspects, namely, (a) the main idea is adequately developed, (b) relevant supporting details are provided and (c) there is sufficient knowledge of the subject matter. With respect to organization, the following parameters are taken into consideration: (a) there is no choppy or abrupt expression of ideas, (b) there is logical sequencing, (c) cohesiveness, (d) a clear and succinct articulation of the main points and supporting details, and (e) ideas are not presented in a confusing way. Now turning to vocabulary, teachers are encouraged to look for: (a) correct and effective use of words in a given context, (b) advance use of vocabulary, and (c) appropriate use of register whereas when it comes to grammar, correct use of tense, number, word order, articles, pronouns, prepositions and complex constructions as well as absence of grammatical errors is highly valued. Lastly, mechanics refer to the adherence of spelling, punctuation and capitalization conventions, correct use of paragraphing and legible handwriting.

#### IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Having outlined the rubrics on which L2 writing assessment is based on in the Greek School of Foreign Languages, I will now proceed with the calculation of the inter-rater reliability of the writing test in question. In particular, the following writing test was given to 12 adult students, 5 male and 7 female, of English proficiency level. Assessors were asked to put emphasis on the use - correct or incorrect - of the Future tenses since the below topic invites the use of such tenses.

##### **Essay Topic**

Will our lives be better or worse in 50 years from now?  
(300-350 words).

For the purposes of the present study five randomly chosen essays amounting at least 40% of the total number of essays were selected as a representative sample as can be seen below:

##### **Sample essay of the first student**

I think that scientists will find cures for many diseases. Maybe the doctors will cure AIDS. With technology the food will be biological. So the food will be more health. Also, the quantity of food will be more and different. Researchers estimate that there will be another 2.5 billion in the planet in fifty years or so. Thus, we will need to provide food for them. It could be the case that new technologies governments will have in order to produce foods. Moreover, the foods we eat will have a different format. Many people talk on artificial meat, which looks and feel like meat but it is not meat from an animal but from stem cells. We may even be eating artificial hamburger in a few years for all we know. To make things even more complicate, we may even have to experient eat insects, such as spiders, wasps, worms, ants, grasshoppers and beetles. Scientists will have invented environmentally – friendly cars, so the pollution levels will have decreased. The communication will be very simple through the internet. We can call America from Greece cheaper and faster. Also through the Internet will know our relationships. All these can make people lives longer.

However, the pessimistic people said that people life was worst in 50 years from now. They said that normal cities become too crowded so we will live in cities under the sea. The water there will not be more because we will destroy forests cycle. The human relationships will be gone because all day we will play in internet and will not read books. We will not want to meet other people. We will be afraid of meeting new people. We will not have friends and our life will be miserable. We will work very hard in order to make ends meeting but our quality of our live will not necessarily be better. The relationships in our work environment will be hostile and very competition. We will not be able to trust our colleagues because we will not believe that they are saying the truth. As a result, we will feel lonely and isolate, and even sometimes secluded from the rest of the world.

##### **Sample essay of the second student**

I think people will be living longer because scientists will have found cures for many diseases like cancer. Also, children will be coming to the world healthy because scientists will modify the genes. Furthermore, I think in 50 years from now robots will be doing homework. In my view, the way of education will be changed a lot and children will be studying through the internet, due to will lose human contact. School will not have the format that has it in 50 years from now. There will be no more textbooks, paper, pens, or pencils and there will be e-book only for students to read. There will be no need to have teachers since lessons will be made through the internet. In this way, school will not exist but there will be e-class for potential students. The education system will have advance significantly so as to be able to help people of all age and learning abilities to knowledges acquire in every field of study. People will be able to do research and universities will open to everyone. Public education will not be a dream but a reality.

However, according to scientists, pollution levels in cities will increase and normal cities will become too crowded. As a result people will construct cities below sea. On the other hand climate will be changed all over the world and there won't be rainforests. Moreover, global warm will have melted Antarctica ice. In addition to that, people may be of danger because of depletion of the ozone layer. Deaths from air pollution will be up and life of quality will be down. Unless we change the way we consume water and energy, there will be huge problem to face in the near future. There will be a



greatest demand for other and extra resources because there will be two billion people more in our planet in 50 years from now. How are we going to cope at such immense numbers? The answer to that question is not easier one to give nor a straightforward but I guess one first step that could make things better is people's awareness of the dangers that lie ahead of us.

#### **Sample essay of the third student**

I think that in fifty years from now, the image of our planet, will be quite different of how we know it. Trying to conceptualize Earth in 50 years from now, I imagine people living in cities under the sea because normal cities will have become too crowded. Also, I think that pollution levels in cities will have decreased since people will drive environmentally-friendly cars. Cars may even drive themselves in smart highways. Companies will have developed technology to such an extent so that car accidents will have being significantly reduced. Moreover, cars will be smaller in size but more effectively manipulated since they will have brains. In addition to that fuel economy will have increased as vehicles will be less thirsty for petrol. It could be the case that we may have the luxury to talk to our electrified car which will be able to do much more than just provide us with simple driving instructions. For example, you may not need to learn how to park your car, because parking will have become an automated task inserted in the "brain" of your car. Furthermore, the quality of our lives will significantly improve because scientists will have found cures for many diseases.

However, no matter how optimistic somebody is, we cannot ignore some serious emerging problems as the years go by. The scary thing about all this technological advancement is that people may not even have the money to afford a car, let alone a high-tech car. Moreover, people will be too concerned with how many Facebook friends they have, instead of creating new friends and socializing in real-life contexts instead of internet ones. Values such as truth, friendship, love and freedom will have acquired a different meaning and nothing will be the same in the lives of young people who struggle to find their way in their society. Moreover, I cannot stop thinking that we will have burnt all the forests to construct more and more cities. Our food will have a different format and generally our planet will lose its natural habitat and will become more artificial. I believe that we must show our love to our planet as it is, before it is too late. Quality of life is not solely associated with material goods but there are other things, much simpler and down to earth, that can help us improve our lives. We are the ones that decide what is important for us. A smile, a friendly handshake, a promise that is kept and a small favour that is made are only a few to mention.

#### **Sample essay of the fourth student**

I think that in 50 years from now many things will be change, as the example the way of living, will be different. Nowadays cities will be becoming too crowded, young people will leave from the small town and search for better live will go to big cities. The relationships also will change dramatically because the technology and the fast rhythms won't help, they won't have free time for seeing and meeting new friends. Every kind of contact will be made through the Internet. Facebook will have a different format and there will be no need to meet someone outside. Every form of socializing will be made through Facebook. People will be isolated and scared and there will be no quality in relationship because there will not be any real-life relationship among people. We will become of our fellowmates even more suspicious and will be afraid to communicate to other people because we will not know their intentions. As a result, we will spend more time alone watching T.V. and doing nothing productive.

However, I believe that scientists find cures for many diseases, so people will live longer. Also, scientists invent environmental – friendly cars, thing that will help to keep the cities cleanest. Cars will have a brain. We will not have to drive our car because cars will be able to drive themselves. We will not have to learn how to park our car because cars will be automated and will do the parking by themselves. Also, we will not need to have any fuel because cars will be electrical. There will be no car accidents because people will have become more skilled drivers. They will be more careful and concerned about other people's lives. They will take a great care with pedestrians and pets as well.

#### **Sample essay of the fifth student**

I think that in 50 years from now, people will live in cities under the sea, as normal cities will have become too crowded. In addition to that, they will have invented environmentally-friendly cars, so pollution levels in cities will have decreased. More importantly, people will have a better quality of life because machines will do all the hard work since technology will have significantly improved. It may be the case that computers will outperform human beings. Of course, computers have a long way to go to match human strengths but a considerable progress has been made in the processing power and memory capacity of the computers. Humanlike robots will have probably appeared, thus implementing a new way of life. Computers may even outperform human beings in most of their activities. Advancing computer performance will increase steadily and machines will begin to do well in various areas. In addition to that, I think that people will live longer in 50 years from now because scientists will have found cures for many diseases. In particular, scientists will be able to do experiments with human embryonic stem cells and find cures for many serious medical conditions such as cancer. Stem cell-based human therapies will have become a routine process and people will not be troubled by illnesses that seemed to have the cost the lives of many people in the past.

However, I also believe that there will be no more rainforests because we will have destroyed them all. Even though forests still cover 35 percent of the world's land area, the quality of land may have suffered such severe damage in the future so that there will be no forests. The most dramatic impact of this deforestation will be the loss of habitat for thousands of species. Another side-effect will be the climate change. Forest soils will quickly dry out if they are not

protected by trees and forest lands will be transformed into deserts. Furthermore, people will have become isolated since the only form of communication will be the internet. The end-result will be many socially-isolated people that are afraid to go out in the public and attempt social interactions. Consequently, they will become emotionally-isolated people that may have psychological disorders leading to an unhappy and miserable way of life.

In spite of the above shortcomings, I tend to believe that our lives all in all will be better in 50 years from now for the simple reason that we will know how to handle good and bad things in a better way.

The aforementioned 5 written samples were assessed by five English language instructors, teaching in the School of Foreign Languages. All of them had a B.A. in English Language and Literature from the University of Athens and three of them had an M.A. in Applied Linguistics from a U.K. University whereas the other two had an M.A. in TESOL again from a U.K. University. It should be mentioned that the raters were explicitly instructed not to signal mistakes in the essay papers to be marked. Hence, there were no identifying marks on the papers in order to ensure the maximum objectivity by leaving the raters completely uninfluenced. The results obtained are shown in Table 1 below:

TABLE 1:  
ASSESSMENT OF FIVE WRITTEN SAMPLES

	Rater 1	Rater 2	Rater 3	Rater 4	Rater 5
Target Student 1	6	7	7	6	6
Target Student 2	7	8	7	7	6
Target Student 3	8	8	9	10	9
Target Student 4	5	5	6	6	5
Target Student 5	9	9	9	10	10

To have confidence in the ratings, we need information on inter-rater reliability. Since the students' final score is the combination or average of the ratings, reliability depends on the number of raters. According to Hatch and Lazaraton (1991) to compute inter-rater reliability for more than two raters, all the ratings (producing a Pearson correlation matrix) must be firstly correlated and then an average of all the correlation coefficients must be derived (p.533). Given the above, to calculate the inter-rater reliability for a set of ratings made by 5 different raters we must firstly calculate ten correlations: the correlations between Rater 1 and Rater 2, Rater 1 and Rater 3, Rater 1 and Rater 4, Rater 1 and Rater 5, Rater 2 and Rater 3, Rater 2 and Rater 4, Rater 2 and Rater 5, Rater 3 and Rater 4, Rater 3 and Rater 5, Rater 4 and Rater 5. The general formula for calculating the correlation coefficient is the Pearson Product-moment correlation:

$$r_{xy} = \frac{\Sigma XY - (\Sigma X \Sigma Y) / n}{\sqrt{[\Sigma X^2 - (\Sigma X)^2 / n] [\Sigma Y^2 - (\Sigma Y)^2 / n]}}$$

where X represents the ratings of the first rater, Y represents the rating of the second rater, and n equals the number of target students rated by each rater (5 in our case). The symbol  $\Sigma$  indicates that you need to sum the relevant values. Thus,  $\Sigma X$  indicates that you need to sum the values of X, and  $\Sigma XY$  indicates that you need to sum the values of X multiplied by Y (Macleannan, 1993). Hence, by substituting these specific ratings into the general formula for a correlation, we come up with the following Pearson correlation matrix:

TABLE 2:  
PEARSON CORRELATION FOR RATERS

R1	R2	R3	R4	R5
R1	.93	.94	.52	.94
R2		.83	.42	.80
R3			.54	.97
R4				.54
R5				

Now, using these correlations, we can calculate inter-rater reliability using the Spearman-Brown formula:

$$r_a = \frac{nr_{AB}}{1 + (n-1)r_{AB}}$$

where  $r_{ab}$  is equal to the average correlation between the ratings made by each rater. The average for these correlations would be:

$$r_{ab} = \frac{7.43}{10}$$

$$r_{ab} = .743$$

The inter-rater reliability is:

$$r_a = \frac{(5)(.743)}{1 + [(5-1)(.743)]}$$

$$r_a = \frac{3.715}{1 + (4)(.743)}$$

$$r_a = \frac{3.715}{1 + 2.972}$$

$$r_a = \frac{3.715}{3.972}$$

$$r_a = .93$$

Thus, the overall inter-rater agreement for the five markers is **.93**. According to Landis and Koch (1977) values less than 0.00 indicate poor agreement, values between 0.00 and 0.20 indicate slight agreement, values between 0.21 and 0.40 indicate fair agreement, values between 0.41 and 0.60 indicate moderate agreement, values between 0.61 and 0.80 indicate substantial agreement, and values between 0.81 and 1.00 indicate almost-perfect agreement. Thus, a value of 0.80 and above is almost perfect. Consequently, this is a very satisfactory value which leads us to infer that the reliability is very high as well as the level of rater agreement. The main factors that have contributed to the test's reliability are first and foremost, the fact that the aim of the writing assessment was straightforward, namely, judges were asked to assess students' use of Future tenses, and secondly, there was a clear and economical scoring scale as well as rubrics to safely guide assessors in their marking of the essays in question. Thus, clarity of instructions and a clear, unambiguous marking scheme are essential steps in ironing out differences in teacher interpretation of the assessment criteria applied to a given test.

## V. CONCLUSION

In this paper, an attempt was made to calculate the inter-rater reliability of 5 written samples of proficiency-level students attending the Greek School of Foreign Languages. Results have shown a very satisfactory level of inter-rater agreement between the five judges. Given these results, it can be concluded, than on a broader research front, similar, longer-scale studies can offer useful insights into the writing construct, with the identification and development of criteria which are both useful and relevant for the assessment of both L1 and L2 writing.

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# Vocabulary Learning Strategies of the Advanced Students

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**Abstract**—The purpose of this article is to present the results of the research conducted on 102 students of English philology on the Pedagogical University of Cracow, Poland. It focuses on the vocabulary learning strategies used by the advanced students of English seen as the successful language learners. The author of this article tries to discover and systematize the strategies used especially by this group – the group which successfully deals with countless number of new vocabulary items on the daily basis. Precisely, the aim of the following article is to present and analyze the findings of the survey conducted in order to specify which vocabulary learning strategies are used by the advanced students and to discover whether the kind of strategies is related to proficiency. What is more, the author suggests how the data gathered during this research may be helpful when choosing strategies which are presented to students of lower levels. The first part of the paper presents the theoretical background to the topic of vocabulary learning strategies, focusing on their kinds and usage. The following part of the article presents the design of the study i.e. the subjects of the research are described, the research questions are provided and the structure of the questionnaire is outlined. Then the research findings are presented. The issues raised in the research questions are addressed and some teaching implications are offered.

**Index Terms**—vocabulary learning, learning strategies, vocabulary learning strategies, vocabulary sources, vocabulary acquisition, advanced language learners, university students

## I. INTRODUCTION

*Vocabulary acquisition is increasingly viewed as crucial to language acquisition* (Uberman, 1998, p.20). It is generally believed that *if language structures make up the skeleton of language, then it is vocabulary that provides the vital organ and flesh* (Harmer, 1997, p.153). No wonder that the researchers have been constantly trying to discover the most effective ways in which new vocabulary items can be acquired in a quick and pleasant way...

When looking at these findings, one has to remember about the specificity of university education. The university students are supposed to be ready for independent education. What is more, after many years of language learning they for sure developed their personal array of strategies. They are mature users of language, knowing their preferences and learning style. Using advanced students' experience and expertise in the field of vocabulary learning may save a lot of time and effort for their younger and less proficient colleagues.

## II. THEORY OF VOCABULARY LEARNING STRATEGIES

Learning strategies can be used for a variety of purposes. One of these purposes is vocabulary learning. *Appreciation of the importance of both these areas* (of vocabulary and of learning strategies) *has led to considerable research in each, yet the place where they intersect – vocabulary learning strategies – has attracted a noticeable lack of attention* (Schmitt, 1997, p.199). Schmitt provides an overview of the rise of importance of this type of strategies and enumerates those few researchers who are interested in this particular topic. He underlines that *few individual vocabulary strategies have been researched in any depth, the main exceptions being guessing from context* (Huckin, Haynes, and Coady, 1993) *and certain mnemonics like the Keyword Method* (Pressley, Levin, and Miller, 1982; Pressley et al., 1982a) (in Schmitt, 1997). Although the area of vocabulary learning strategies has not been explored enough, there are some findings which can be used as a scaffolding for further research.

### A. The Place of Learning Strategies in Vocabulary Acquisition

Vocabulary learning can be viewed as a process of sub-tasks (Gu, 2003). A number of different vocabulary learning strategies can be used by learners to complete these tasks. Gu (2003) enumerates, inter alia, guessing the meaning of a word, looking it up in the dictionary, taking notes, rote repetition, using the word actively... *Each of these task stages demands metacognitive judgment, choice, and deployment of cognitive strategies for vocabulary learning. And each strategy a learner uses will determine to a large extent how and how well a new word is learned* (Gu, 2003).

Research (by Coady (1997), Oxford (1990), Scarella (1994), and Nation (2001) in Mercer, 2008) indicates that vocabulary learning can be enhanced when a student's attention is directed to vocabulary strategies. What is more, many learners use vocabulary learning strategies. Chamot (1987 in Schmitt, 1997) proved in his research that learners

reported more strategy use for vocabulary learning than for any other learning activity, including oral presentation, listening comprehension, and social communication.

### *B. A Taxonomy of Vocabulary Learning Strategies*

There have been a number of attempts to develop a **taxonomy of vocabulary learning strategies**. Below one can find some of the most complete and useful ones.

Gu and Johnson (1996 in Nation, 2001) developed such taxonomy through their extensive research in Chinese classrooms. They provided a list of vocabulary learning strategies, which is based on a division into:

- beliefs about vocabulary learning,
- metacognitive regulation,
- guessing strategies,
- dictionary strategies,
- note-taking strategies,
- memory, rehearsal strategies,
- memory encoding strategies,
- activation strategies.

Gu (2003), in his more recent article, names two important factors which can be used for the division of vocabulary learning strategies, namely task and person. **Task-dependent vocabulary learning strategies** are those which are applied by students depending on a kind of sub-task. Among those strategies, Gu (2003) lists different strategies used by students, for example, **guessing, dictionary strategies, note-taking, rote rehearsal...** What is more, he also states that there are four main fields of interest when it comes to **processing of a word**, namely memory, form, meaning and use. He also underlines the importance of **context**. Strategies belonging to each of this field will be now discussed more precisely...

Memory strategies, or **mnemonics**, have received by far the most attention. Gu (2003) even claims that this interest has turned into classic case of overkill. It is believed that mnemonic devices work well because they boost our memory and, as we all know, *vocabulary learning is essentially a memory issue* (Gu, 2003). Despite all the praise, mnemonics have also their shortcomings which are enumerated by Gu (2003):

- mnemonic devices mainly aim for the retention of paired-associates. *And the vocabulary of an L2 is far more than a collection of L1-L2 word pairs* (Richards, 1976);
- mnemonic approach to vocabulary underlines one-to-one relationship between form and meaning, forgetting about multiple dimensions of meanings;

Generally speaking, *learners of a foreign language should be explicitly warned that mnemonic devices are only meant to complement rather than replace other approaches to vocabulary learning* (Cohen, 1987). As Carter (1987, p. 188) rightly contends, *too great a focus on learning vocabulary as discrete items may well lead to neglect of the skill aspect of vocabulary in natural discourse* (ibid).

**Form** is another field of interest when it comes to vocabulary. What is crucial here is the usage of so called **word formation strategy**.

Then comes **focus on meaning** and a theory related to this particular field, namely the concept of semantic networks. **Semantic network** is understood as the *mental organization of the lexicon whereby words and concepts that share some meaning are related both hierarchically and laterally* (Gleason and Ratner, 2005). There are some strategies which are based on this idea of a network of semantic associations.

The last but not least field of interest mentioned by Gu (2003) is **context**. The previous strategies are focused on various types of vocabulary encoding and treat vocabulary as a collection of discrete items. However, *while these strategies constitute a considerable part of the vocabulary learning process, a vocabulary development agenda that includes mainly these strategies might well lead to a dangerously simplistic conception of vocabulary amongst undiscerning beginners* (ibid). That is why it is important to look at vocabulary more holistically. Arnaud and Savignon (1997, in Gu, 2003) *note two kinds of strategies associated with complex lexical units: awareness strategies and retention strategies*.

The second basic kind of division mentioned earlier includes **person-dependent vocabulary learning strategies**. *Whether and how a learner evaluates the task requirement and whether and how a cognitive strategy is deployed are often dependent more on the learner than on the task* (Gu, 2003). It is obvious that there are individual differences which influence the choice of strategies, for example motivation, self-efficacy, gender, learning background, and learning styles.

Then, Schmitt (1997) categorized vocabulary learning strategies into six groups with 58 individual strategies in total. His taxonomy is based on Oxford's division into social (SOC), memory (MEM), cognitive (COG), meta-cognitive (MET), compensation (COM), and affective.

To sum up, one can easily see that the taxonomies of vocabulary learning strategies draw on the findings from the field of learner's strategy use, understood more broadly and concerning all aspects of language, not only vocabulary. Still, Brown and Payne (1994 in Hatch and Brown, 1995) offered a taxonomy of vocabulary learning strategies which successfully joins both division into numerous strategy kinds, and which concerns the process of vocabulary acquisition. The author of this article wants to present their taxonomy as the summary of what has been said before...

The vocabulary strategies fall into five essential steps:

- 1) **Having sources for encountering new words,**
- 2) **Getting a clear image, either visual or auditory or both, for the form of the new words,**
- 3) **Learning the meaning of words,**
- 4) **Making a strong memory connection between the forms and meanings of the words,**
- 5) **Using the words.**

Each step is characterised by the use of specific vocabulary learning strategies. The first stage involves **encountering new words**. *As far as incidental learning of vocabulary goes, this step is obviously the most vital. Because the incidental learning of vocabulary must occur if second language learners are to approach a vocabulary that compares with that of native speakers, this step is crucial* (Hatch and Brown, 1995, p. 374). The number of words that passes this step may vary depending on the natural learner interest, motivation, need, context and **level of proficiency**. The strategies used during this stage involve e.g.:

- √ Reading books;
- √ Listening to TV and radio;
- √ Reading newspapers and magazines;
- √ Talking with other users of the language;
- √ Using traditional materials (textbooks, word lists, dictionaries)...

*The second step essential to vocabulary learning appears to be **the getting of a clear image – visual or auditory or both – of the form of the vocabulary item***. Strategies here include, among others:

- √ Forming associations (e.g. between L1 and L2 words, between L2 and L2 words, between L2 and L3 words);
- √ Using sound symbols;
- √ Using phonological cues, stress...

The next stage, the one which is the one most often associated with vocabulary learning, is **getting the word meaning**. *Although the depth of definition needed may vary and the sources from which meaning can be extracted may be quite different, all learners must get the meaning of words in some manner, or the words can never be considered truly learned* (Hatch and Brown, 1995, p. 386). According to Hatch and Brown (1995), one can include here for example:

- √ Asking others about the word meaning (other students, native speakers, teachers);
- √ Mind mapping;
- √ Using context (situational, discourse, specific context e.g. a text);
- √ Using dictionaries...

Once **the meaning and form of a word** is clear, both aspects must be **consolidated in memory**. As it has been already said, this group of strategies (called mnemonics) is especially widely used by second language learners. Hatch and Brown (1995) quote here Oxford (1990) and her division of memory strategies, which has been already discussed. ***Which method learners use for this step does not seem to be as crucial as they do it. The more words learners can get through this step, the more words they will know overall.***

The final step in vocabulary acquisition involves **using the word**. This step is necessary not only in order to boost students' receptive knowledge, but also in order to increase their self-confidence and to give them opportunity to test their knowledge of collocations, syntactic restrictions and register appropriateness. The strategies used here should include both **testing**, but also **stress-free activities** allowing for the using of a word without *undesired consequences* i.e. bad marks (Hatch and Brown, 1995, p. 392).

Summing up, *although there is a broad range of activities, strategies, or techniques that individuals use at each step, the necessity of the steps seems more constant. Learners need all five in order to have a full knowledge of the words they want to learn (ibid).*

Once the theoretical backgrounds of this article have been discussed, the author is going to focus on the research which she has conducted in the field of vocabulary learning strategies.

### III. RESEARCH DESIGN

The subjects of the survey were the students of English philology on the Pedagogical University of Cracow, Poland. All of them attended full-time studies. Out of 102 students, 48 were the students of the first year of B.A. studies, 31 of the third year of B.A. studies, and 22 represent the second year of M.A. studies. These students were given a questionnaire designed in order to find out the answers to the following research questions:

1. Which vocabulary learning strategies do students use?
2. Do students on different levels differ in the kind of vocabulary learning strategies they claim to use?

The questionnaire was developed on the basis of the taxonomy of learning strategies by Oxford (1990) and on five steps in learning vocabulary described by Hatch and Brown (1995).

The questionnaire consisted of 13 questions. First question was open and involved giving a definition of learning strategies, the rest was half-open – there were options provided, but the students were also given the freedom of adding their own options. The next three questions concerned the source of new vocabulary items, whereas in the question number 7 students were required to specify the way in which they discover the meaning of new vocabulary items. Then

the questionnaire focused on memory strategies in relation to spelling, pronunciation and meaning (questions 5, 6, 8), and moved to affective (question 9), cognitive (question 10), compensation (question 11), metacognitive (question 12) and social (question 13) strategies used for vocabulary acquisition.

The language used in the questionnaire was subjects' mother tongue (Polish). This was an intentional move ensuring the total students' understanding of both questions and provided options. What is more, the questionnaire was written in a clear and simple manner in order to exclude the possibility of misunderstanding.

#### IV. RESEARCH FINDINGS

Before presenting the analysis of the data gathered during the research, it should be emphasized that all the students who took part in the research were then studying to become English teachers. Thus they constitute a perfect group for this type of research – as motivated and dedicated students of English, they, for sure, gained the most from the strategy training they received. That is why, the data which was gathered and the conclusions which can be drawn on its basis will be more useful for the teachers of the less advanced students for whom the level obtained by the subjects of this research is still the thing of the future...

##### THE USE OF VOCABULARY LEARNING STRATEGIES IN THE CASE OF THE ADVANCED STUDENTS OF ENGLISH.

The data gathered during the research enables the author of this article to state which types of vocabulary learning strategies are used by students on different levels of proficiency.

After the thorough analysis, the following conclusions may be drawn:

√ **The advanced students use diverse and multiple sources of new words.**

First of all, the students were asked about their sources of new vocabulary items. Without looking for the opportunity to encounter new words, students cannot broaden their personal array of vocabulary effectively. Therefore, the author of this thesis treats the ways in which students find new words as vocabulary learning strategies.

On average, the students declared that they use over 6 different vocabulary sources. Therefore, it can be stated that advanced students of English make use of multiple sources when broadening their personal mental lexicon. Obviously, new vocabulary items can be spotted in a wide range of contexts. It has been proved (Takac, 2009) that the role of the vocabulary context in initial steps of learning is limited, but its significance grows as the learner's proficiency expands. The relationship between the number of vocabulary sources and the level of proficiency may be easily explained – a learner must be provided with comprehensible input in order to acquire language; therefore, more advanced students when encountering a variety of vocabulary sources on the daily basis (TV, songs etc.) use a lot of them as their linguistic knowledge enables them to make use of the majority of these sources.

√ **The Internet as the most popular source of new vocabulary.**

Living in the era of the World Wide Web, one cannot be surprised finding out that the Internet turned out to be the most popular source of new words. When it comes to modern technologies, there were also some students who wrote about computer games as a source of vocabulary.

These results are especially important for contemporary teachers – modern technologies are becoming more and more popular, and thus they must have their place in each language classroom. Students must be able to use the Internet for educational purposes, including vocabulary learning, so they have to be trained to do it properly. Without this type of course, the computer may become the enemy, whereas it should be students' best friend. This type of training would allow students to develop a group of vocabulary learning strategies useful during e-learning sessions. Technology-based learning, which constitutes learning via electronic technologies, including the Internet, *holds the promise of substantially transforming the way learning takes place because of its numerous advantages*, e.g. its great accessibility, low costs, game-like character or providing students with hands-on opportunities to learn (Koller, Harvey, Magnotta, 2010, p. 5).

√ **Traditional sources of vocabulary still popular among advanced students of English.**

On the other hand, the students still enumerate their teachers and lecturers among the most popular sources of vocabulary knowledge. Also other traditional sources (like *English books, dictionaries, vocabulary books and materials* and *TV/radio*) are still widely used. On the contrary, the least attractive options included *Native speakers* and *Other students*. Interestingly, these two options got especially low percentage in the case of the first year students. This may result from the fact that the students of the first year simply know each other less, and thus they cooperate less often. In the case of the native speakers seen as vocabulary source, this disproportion can suggest that the students of the first year may have less opportunities to meet natives in comparison to their older colleagues. What is more, the low popularity of this option may also be seen as the reflection of Polish mindset. Poland has extremely high score when it comes to uncertainty avoidance on Hofstede's scale. Polish people usually think that what is different is dangerous. That is why, Polish students may be reluctant to communicate with foreigners at the beginning of their linguistic education. Changing this state of affairs would involve a difficult campaign to get rid of stereotypical ways of thinking, which are very often subconscious. The first step in this battle should consist in realising these personal convictions.

As it can be easily seen from the data presented above, advanced students have to be provided with multiple sources of vocabulary because, first of all, they use a lot of them, and what is more, they may have different needs in this respect. A contemporary teacher has to remember about the educational challenges issued by the modern technologies



and try to implement these new vocabulary sources during his/her lessons. Still, the traditional and well-tried sources of vocabulary cannot be forgotten. A modern vocabulary teaching session should constitute a well-balanced mixture of the old and the new.

√ **The students, regardless of their level of proficiency, use similar, but diversified strategies to get the meaning of a word.**

Also when it comes to the strategies used to get the meaning of a new word, the students use miscellaneous strategies depending on the learning context. The most popular strategy involved *checking the meaning in the dictionary*. Then the next choices included more time-consuming strategies, namely *using context* and *using personal knowledge concerning word parts*. The popularity of dictionaries can easily be explained – finding the meaning in a dictionary is the easiest and the quickest way to discover the meaning. No wonder, that busy and sometimes overworked university students turn to this method. Still, one has to remember that the more effort the student puts in the discovery of a word meaning and the more time he/she spends dealing and having contact with a new word, the greater the chance that the word will be memorized. Thus, using the dictionary is not always the best option.

Another interesting point is that the students are quite reluctant to ask others for help in order to discover the meaning of a vocabulary item – option *I ask somebody who is better informed or more competent* was one of the least popular for all three groups. This may be once more the result of Polish mindset. According to Hofstede's social dimensions, Poland is a masculine country in which people are ego-oriented and individualistic. Asking others for help may be seen as face threatening. A lot of Poles can be characterized as overachievers. In our culture it is the best student who sets the norms, thus it is not profitable to admit that somebody can be better informed or more competent. So here strategy training would include changing national stereotypes – students should know that asking for help is not a shame. Teachers should also show their students that they themselves are not omniscient and that learning from others can be a very effective way of self-development.

√ **Students on the higher levels of proficiency use fewer and fewer kinds of different strategies, but they use similar strategies.**

When comparing the number of different strategies kinds used by the students on different levels of proficiency, one general trend is visible regardless of the subcategory. It is visible that students of the higher levels of proficiency use fewer kinds of vocabulary learning strategies when compared to their colleagues on lower levels.

There are two possible explanations for this state of affairs:

- **more advanced students need a given group of strategies less often, thus they need fewer kinds of strategies from this group.**

This may be related to the growing level of proficiency – the students know the language better and that is why they do not need as many kinds of strategies as they used to.

- **more advanced students successfully eliminate strategies which are not effective and they are left with the best working ones.**

What is also important, when talking about teaching implications, is that the advanced students **use very similar kinds of strategies, regardless of the subcategory**. One has to remember that the subjects of this research are all successful language learners who worked their way through piles of vocabulary lists and who successfully acquired a lot of them. Therefore, one can assume that the strategies which are popular and still used by the advanced students are the ones which are the most effective from a given category and therefore, they should be presented to the students of the lower levels at first. Having in mind the above mentioned conclusions, the author of this thesis is going to look at different types of vocabulary learning strategies and name the ones which work the best. It can be treated as advice for the teachers of the lower levels who would like to start their strategy training with implementing the strategies which will probably be their students' favourites in the future.

- **Memory vocabulary learning strategies used for memorising the spelling and pronunciation of a new vocabulary item.**

The most popular kinds of learning strategies for memorizing spelling and pronunciation included those consisting in **creating mental linkages, using imagination** and **mechanical repetition/rewriting**. Having this in mind, students should be encouraged to try to find a link between the spelling and their knowledge/pronunciation of a word, and to rewrite a given word many times.

- **Memory vocabulary learning strategies used for memorising the meaning of a new vocabulary item.**

Once more **creating mental linkages** (e.g. Polish/English associations) and **using mechanical strategies** turned out to be the most effective. Additionally, **using context** seems to be helpful for the majority when it comes to vocabulary memorisation. Thus, students may be asked to write sentences, paragraphs or texts with new words.

What is also interesting when it comes to this type of strategies is that the students use quite a lot of different memory strategies for memorizing meaning, especially when compared to the strategies used for memorising spelling and pronunciation. This tendency is visible for all three groups which took part in the research. This may suggest that the meaning of a word is the most problematic aspect for memorising (so the process of meaning memorisation must be facilitated by the greater number of different memory strategies). Therefore, teachers should help their students in this area especially, by providing them with thorough and well-organised strategy training.

- **Affective strategies.**

The data may suggest that with the passing time students either get used to the stress of perspective vocabulary testing, or, as it has been already stated, they know better which strategies work for them. Advanced students of English know how to handle negative emotions and know how to motivate themselves. Using this knowledge, the teachers may advise less advanced students to **listen to music, try to think positively, reward themselves and to use checklists in order to organise work**. As one can easily see, the most popular affective strategies include those used for lowering anxiety, those for encouraging yourself and the ones consisting in taking your emotional temperature. So all kinds of affective strategies included by Oxford in her taxonomy are useful and should be presented to students during strategy training.

#### - Cognitive strategies.

Cognitive strategies constitute yet another subcategory of vocabulary learning strategies where one can observe decrease in the number which goes together with the raising level of proficiency. The most effective vocabulary strategies include unsurprisingly **creating structure for input and output** (underlining, highlighting) and practicing (systematic repetition).

#### - Metacognitive strategies.

The biggest decline in the number of kinds was observed for metacognitive strategies. The difference was quite significant. Still, even for the last group, the number of strategy kinds is quite big when compared to other strategies. So, one can assume that these strategies are quite useful for students. When it comes to the effectively, the most useful metacognitive vocabulary strategies are mostly the ones used for **planning learning process**. Thus, teachers cannot forget about this aspect during strategy training.

The constant drop in the number of kinds of strategies was not observed in the case of compensation and social strategies. The explanation of this fact and some additional interesting observations made in this field are presented below.

#### - Compensation strategies.

The students from all groups use very similar compensation strategies, and, what is interesting, they use quite a lot of different kinds of them. One cannot observe any significant decline in this field. It suggests that students on all levels of proficiency, including very advanced ones, have some problems with vocabulary use, and all need compensation strategies to deal with these problems. On the other hand, the big diversity and popularity of different compensation strategies may suggest just the opposite – the students do not use them often, as they are still testing the ones which work for them. Still, the ones which can be presented to less advanced students as the most useful include **guessing intelligently** (using both linguistic and non-linguistic features), and **avoiding, both problematic topics, and vocabulary items** (e.g. using less precise items or synonyms instead). Teachers should remember about the second type of strategies when teaching vocabulary – the data suggests that students often try to choose topics which are safe for them, thus it is the job of the teacher to spot the problematic areas and help students to develop vocabulary from a given field.

#### - Social strategies.

The data gathered in the field of social vocabulary strategies suggests that students use a wide collection of social strategies when learning new vocabulary items. Another interesting point is that, in contrast to other groups, the fifth year students rarely *cooperate with other students in order to develop their vocabulary*. It may mean that with passing time and growing experience, students become more independent and self-sufficient. Thus, when working with less advanced and younger students, teachers should assist them more in the case of vocabulary development, but at the same time should help them to develop autonomy in this field.

Additionally, **it has been observed that cognitive vocabulary learning strategies are the most diversified in the case of the advanced users of English**. Then compensation and metacognitive strategies followed. On the other hand, affective vocabulary strategies are the least diversified.

As it has been already stated, it may suggest that the students simply need a given group of strategies (cognitive) more than another, and thus they use a wider array of strategies from this group. On the other hand, one can also assume that the students may use these strategies rarely and that is why they do not know which of them are the most effective. Having these two possibilities in mind, a teacher cannot forget about any group of strategies when training his/her students. It is the job of a teacher to make students of lower levels familiar with as many strategies as possible. Knowing a bigger array of learning strategies, students will be able to choose their personal strategies more effectively. Still, the data gathered during this research may be helpful when choosing strategies which are presented to students of lower levels. Using advanced students' experience and expertise in the field of vocabulary learning may save a lot of time and effort for their younger and less proficient colleagues.

## V. CONCLUSIONS

The results of the research which has been presented in this article indicate that advanced students use similar kind of vocabulary learning strategies when learning new vocabulary items. Then it has been shown that, together with the growing level of proficiency, students use less and less kinds of strategies. The strategies which are still used by the advanced students (treated as the successful ones) may be considered to be the most effective.

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# EFL Students' Judgments of English Idiom Familiarity and Transparency

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**Abstract**—This study investigates how L2 learners judge the familiarity and transparency of English idioms and whether these judgments would be associated with comprehension. It compares the performance of 90 undergraduate (Level 1 and Level 4) EFL students on tasks measuring idiom familiarity, transparency and comprehension. Results showed that the Level 4 students rated the idioms higher in familiarity and comprehended them with greater accuracy than Level 1 students did. However, students in the two groups performed similarly on the idiom transparency task.

**Index Terms**—idiom familiarity, transparency, idiom comprehension

## I. INTRODUCTION

Teaching vocabulary was not a central goal of second language English instruction during the very active decades of the mid-twentieth century; however, this view has been challenged since the 1970s. Considerable emphasis and attention have been directed to vocabulary and vocabulary studies since that time. Multi-word expressions, including idioms, have gained more attention as well. They have been approached and investigated from different perspectives, ranging from form and idiom structure to metaphoricity and idiom meaning. Mantyla (2004) used five categories to organize the approaches linguists have used to study idioms: the structure of idioms, idiom processing, metaphoricity of idioms, idiom teaching and learning, and functions of idioms. This diversity of approaches indicates that the field has been quite active in the past several decades.

Idioms, such as *pull someone's leg* and *shoot the breeze* are figurative expressions whose meanings are not always determined by the literal definitions of their constituents. An idiom's meaning is usually different from the sum of the literal meanings of its components. For example, the literal interpretation of the idiom *I was pulling his leg* would be something like "something like jerking on someone's ankle". The phrase, however, means "I was teasing someone." Similarly, *shooting the breeze*, which means "talking with no purpose," has no relationship to the meanings of the phrase's composing parts. Idioms are common in both spoken and written language; for example, 6% to 10% of sentences in students' literature books designed for 8-14 year-old students contained an idiom (Nippold, 1991).

Idiom studies have a long tradition in the former Soviet Union and in Russia, but in the West idioms have not attracted great attention recently, although some studies were published in the 1960s and 1970s. In spite of the increased interest in idioms over the past several decades, scholars have not been able to agree on a definition of the term. Researchers agree that idioms are very difficult to characterize, since it is impossible to define them in an indisputable way. To make the matter even more complicated, one must also distinguish idioms from idiomaticity.

According to Lazar, Warr-Leeper, Nicholson & Johnson (1989), 5% to 20% of classroom teachers' utterances directed to 5-14 year-old students contain at least one idiom. This shows that it is necessary for children, adolescents and adults to be able to interpret idioms correctly.

Given the pervasiveness of these expressions, it is important that young people understand their meanings. Developmental studies of idiom understanding throughout childhood (e.g. Cacciari & Levorato 1989; Gibbs, 1987, 1991; Nippold & Rudzinski, 1993, Nippold & Taylor, 1995), adolescence (e.g. Nippold & Martin, 1989; Qualls, O'Brien, Blood, & Hammer, 2003; Nippold, Taylor, & Baker, 1996), and adulthood (e.g. Brasseur & Jimenez, 1989; (Nippold & Duthie, 2003) have shown a gradual improvement in idiom understanding that begins early in childhood and continues throughout adolescence and adulthood. Some of these studies mention that even a 5 year-old child can understand some figurative expressions (Gibbs, 1987). Other studies have proposed that idiom processing develops later. Nippold and Rudzinski (1993) and Nippold & Taylor (1995) found that there was a positive correlation between transparency and idiom comprehension when participants were 14 and 17 years old.

Researchers agree that the accuracy of idiom comprehension increases during late childhood and adolescence and improves in adulthood. Nippold (1991) claimed that idiom acquisition is a continuous process with no specific developmental point when idioms are completely mastered. Nippold and Martin (1989) and Prinz (1983) pointed out that the ability of idiom comprehension is still incomplete when learners are 18 years old. Brasseur and Jimenez (1989) indicated that 51% of their 18-21 year-old subjects could correctly interpret at least 13 out of 20 target idioms.

Most of these studies, as Chan and Marinellie (2008) stated, investigated individuals' understanding of idioms based on the interpretations and explanation they provide (e.g. Brasseur & Jimenez, 1989; Nippold & Martin, 1989; Nippold & Rudzinski, 1993). Other studies investigated idiom understanding through the use of categories, that is, whether

learners interpret idioms literally, idiomatically, or with the help of relevant information (e.g. Ackerman, 1982; Cacciari & Levorato 1989; Gibbs, 1987, 1991). Their results show that young children give more literal interpretation than others of all ages, while adults' idiomatic interpretation improves as age increases. Other studies such as Nippold and Martin, (1989) found that when the process of idiom comprehension is concerned, better performance is associated with academic achievement and intelligence.

Previous developmental research has focused on various factors affecting the comprehension and the interpretation of idioms such as context, idiom familiarity and idiom transparency. Presenting idioms in supportive narrative contexts improves idiom comprehension, as compared with presenting them in isolation or in non-supportive contexts (Ackerman, 1982; Cacciari & Levorato, 1989; Gibbs, 1991; Levorato & Cacciari, 1995). Context facilitates interpretation of idioms since it provides the necessary semantic information the learner needs.

Familiarity and transparency are two important factors that have been used to describe characteristics of idioms. They may influence the difficulty a learner encounters in comprehending an idiom. Familiarity has been defined as how frequently an individual encounters an idiom. For example, *have a soft spot*, is a high-familiarity idiom which is used very often in the English language, but *take a powder* is a low-familiarity idiom which is used rarely (Nippold & Taylor, 2002). Although idioms are considered a common part of figurative language, there are differences in the idioms' frequency of occurrence. The "language experience hypothesis" of figurative language development claims that development of figurative language depends on the amount of meaningful exposure one has to non-literal expressions (Ortony, Turner, & Larson-Shapiro, 1985). This means that idioms which occur more often are probably learned earlier than less common idioms. In other words, frequency of exposure plays an important role in learning an idiom's meaning. This hypothesis "argues for a more gradual and protracted course of development that begins in early childhood, continuing through the school-age and adolescent years" (Nippold, Taylor, & Baker, 1996, p. 445).

Transparency is particularly concerned with the relatedness between the literal and figurative meanings of an idiom. In transparent idioms, the literal and figurative meanings are closely related. In opaque idioms, the two types of meanings are unrelated. In other words, the idiomatic meaning may be more or less directly linked to the literal one. For example, in *go by the book*, the figurative meaning – to follow the directions exactly – is closely related to the literal meaning, whereas in *keep your shirt on* the figurative meaning –remain calm – is unrelated to the literal meaning –to continue wearing one's shirt. Nippold and Rudzinski (1993) proposed the "Metasemantic Hypothesis" to account for the discrepancy in difficulty between transparent and opaque idioms. Nippold and Rudzinski claim, with their hypothesis, that complex semantic units are learned through an active analysis of the words composing them. In other words, idioms are learned when one puts forth effort to infer the non-literal meaning from the literal one. So, for the learner to fully understand the meaning of an idiom, he/she has to actively analyze it. According to this view, high-transparency idioms are easier to understand than low-transparency idioms.

#### Idiom Transparency and Idiom Familiarity

Studies examining the role of familiarity in idiom comprehension show contradictory findings. Levorato & Cacciari (1992) investigated the relationship between idiom familiarity and idiom comprehension in children aged 7 and 9. One hundred fifty-two teachers judged how frequently 80 children were exposed to 85 idioms. Most and least familiar idioms were used in a forced-choice comprehension task in which children selected the best interpretation of each one. Their results show that familiarity plays a minor role in older children's idiom comprehension: it is significant with 7 year-old children, but not with 9-year-olds.

Nippold & Rudzinski (1993) studied the effects of both familiarity and transparency in idiom explanation. They established levels of familiarity and transparency for a number of idioms based on adolescents' and adults' judgments. They also studied the development of idiom explanation in children and adolescents, using an explanation task. Results showed that performance improved gradually as the participant's age increased, that high-familiarity idioms were easier to explain than others, and that easier-to-explain idioms tended to be more transparent.

Nippold and Taylor (1995) studied the relationship of idiom transparency and idiom familiarity to idiom understanding in context, using a multiple-choice task. They found that there was a gradual improvement in idiom understanding during late childhood and adolescence. The study provides support for the language experience hypothesis and the metasemantic hypothesis.

In a cross-cultural study, Nippold, Taylor, & Baker (1996) examined the development of idiom understanding in Australian youth and the relationship of idiom familiarity to idiom understanding in that population. They compared the performance of Australian youth to that of American youth in Nippold and Taylor's (1995) research. Fifty Australian children in the fifth grade and fifty in the eighth grade had a forced-choice task to examine their understanding of 24 different idioms. Results showed that idiom understanding is related to idiom familiarity. More common idioms were learned more easily and earlier than less common ones. Thus, idiom understanding develops in a similar manner in Australians and Americans: it improves during late childhood and early adolescence, remaining incomplete at the age of 13.

Qualls and Harris (1999), in a conceptual replication of Nippold and Taylor's 1995 study, tested language experience hypothesis by examining the effect of familiarity on idiom comprehension of African American and European American fifth graders. Results lent additional support to the language experience hypothesis, as there was a significant

effect for moderate-low familiarity idioms, whereas high-moderate and high-low familiarity idioms did not distinguish the groups.

In a later study, Nippold, Moran, and Schwarz (2001) investigated idiom understanding and the role of idiom familiarity in conjunction with preadolescents' differences in language-based academic abilities (reading and listening comprehension). Results of an idiom comprehension task showed that idiom understanding was closely associated with students' familiarity with idioms and their skills in reading and listening comprehension. Moreover, students who scored higher in the idiom comprehension task outperformed their classmates with lower scores on all measures: idiom familiarity, reading comprehension, and listening comprehension.

The little different results in the studies seem to be due to a number of variables such as the age of the participants and the types of tasks they had. In some studies, explanations tasks which are suited for metasemantic knowledge have been used (Nippold and Rudzinski, 1993) while forced-choice tasks, which are more suited to test idiom comprehension, have been used in other studies (Levorato and Cacciari, 1992; Nippold and Taylor, 1995).

All of the aforementioned studies on English language idiom comprehension have concentrated on native speakers. There are very few studies on idiom comprehension by foreign or second language learners of English. This could be due to the lack of attention vocabulary has received as a focus for research in the past. Moreover, attention has shifted only recently from single words to multi-word expressions. Kellerman (1977) was one of the first to study non-native speakers' recognition of English idioms. Then Irujo (1986a, 1986b) studied Venezuelan students' acquisition of English idioms. Arnaud and Savignon (1997) investigated opaque idioms which had no similar equivalent in the learners' native language.

Even though idioms are an important feature in language, the effect of English idioms on second language learners has not been studied widely, and few studies focus on the way foreign or second language learners comprehend English idioms (Mantyla, 2004). Most of the existing studies dealt with the types of idioms that should be taught to learners of English, whether the mother tongue had an effect on idiom recognition, and the role of familiarity, transparency, and contextual characteristics on idiom comprehension, resulting in suggestions on how to teach idioms more effectively.

One of the few studies on characteristics of English idioms and their effects on comprehension and interpretation by native and non-native speakers was done by Mantyla (2004). In order to examine how different characteristics of idioms affected subjects' interpretations and how non-native speakers recognized English idioms, 180 Finnish university students completed a three-part questionnaire, in which the first section dealt with the acceptability of idioms, the second concerned the appropriateness of idioms in different contexts, and the third offered multiple-choice items, asking participants to choose the correct meaning for idioms. Results showed that idioms with identical equivalents in Finnish were easier for these subjects to interpret. Native speakers of English considered the meanings as more acceptable or less acceptable whereas there was some variation among the responses of non-native speakers. Non-native speakers recognized idioms much less easily than native speakers of English.

Kainulainen (2006) replicated Mantyla's study to investigate the effects of the students' backgrounds on idiom comprehension. A group of 115 Finnish third grade students in the senior year of secondary school completed a questionnaire in two sections: a background section which asked students about how much they were involved with the English language outside school, and a forced multiple-choice test of 20 English idioms presented within a brief context to how they could be used. Results showed that Finnish third-grade students comprehended idioms quite well, answering about 71% of the items correctly. Results were not in accordance with previous studies: "The degree of transparency did not significantly help the comprehension process and even though Finnish equivalents assisted understanding, the participants also considered some idioms easy that were opaque without any corresponding expressions in Finnish" (p. 83).

One of the few researchers to investigate idiom familiarity and transparency was Laval (2003). She investigated the role of contextual characteristics and linguistic conventions in the comprehension of idiomatic expressions by 6- and 9-year-old French-speaking second language learners. She found that context had a substantial impact on idiom comprehension and that linguistic conventions had an effect in children aged 9 and was particularly strong in adults. She also found that the role of familiarity also affected results in the 9-year-old subjects and the adults.

In summary, Idioms are an interesting phenomenon in languages, and often lack equivalents in other languages. Thus, idioms can be very difficult for second language learners. There is clearly a need to study idioms from the point of view of second language learning, since most of the studies on English idioms have concentrated on the ways native speakers understand them. Most of the related empirical studies investigated the effects of familiarity, transparency, and context on idiom comprehension by native speakers. Very few studies have focused on idioms in foreign language learning and even fewer have considered EFL/ESL students. The present study is an attempt to shed light on English idiom comprehension by foreign language learners. The purpose of the present study is to determine how L2 learners judge the familiarity and transparency of English idioms. The study also seeks to determine whether these judgments will be associated with comprehension. It compares the performance of Level 1 and Level 4 undergraduate EFL students on tasks measuring idiom familiarity, transparency and comprehension.

## II. METHOD

### *Participants*

A total of 90 male students from the English Department at Umm Al-Qura University in Saudi Arabia participated in this study. Forty-five Level 1 and forty-five Level 4 undergraduate students were selected randomly. All were native speakers of Arabic and learners of English as a foreign language.

#### **Materials**

To ensure the validity of the experiment, a set of 20 English idioms was collected from published studies and various reference books on English idioms (Nippold & Rudzinski, 1993; Nippold & Taylor, 2002; *Cambridge International Dictionary of Idioms*; *The Oxford Dictionary of Idioms*; *Essential American Idioms*). Each idiom was a 4-5 word verb phrase (e.g. *Keep your nose clean*, *Let your hair down*, *Bring the house down*). Two English professors of translation judged these idioms as varied in familiarity. Moreover, these experts reported that 10 of the idioms were transparent and 10 were opaque.

#### **Procedure**

Testing was conducted in classrooms. The judgment tasks were identical to those ones used by Nippold and Taylor (2002). Three tasks were administered in the following order: Familiarity Judgment task, Idiom Comprehension Task, and Transparency Judgment task. The tasks were administered in this sequence for two reasons. First, the Familiarity judgment task asked the participants if they had heard or read the idioms before. If the participants completed this task after the idiom comprehension task, then their judgments would not have been accurate. Second, the transparency judgment task had to occur after the comprehension task because it presented the literal and non-literal meanings of the idioms. All testing was completed during one session of about 80 minutes. A description of each task follows.

#### **Idiom Familiarity Task**

Participants were given a booklet containing the 20 idioms. They were asked to indicate how often they had heard or read each idiom before. A 5-point scale was used in which each number was associated with a descriptive term (e.g. 3 = a few times). Participants were asked to circle the number and the term that best expressed the number of times they had heard or read the idiom. The highest score possible for this task was 100 (20 idioms X 5 for the maximum rating). The lower the score, the greater the subject's familiarity. An example of this task appears below:

I have heard or read this idiom: *Bring the house down*:

1 = many times    2 = several times    3 = a few times    4 = once    5 = never

#### **Idiom Comprehension task**

This task is similar to the one used by Nippold and Taylor (2002). It examined the participants' understanding of the 20 idioms they rated previously for familiarity. Participants were given booklets including the 20 idioms (each booklet presented the idioms in a distinct random order). Each idiom was presented in a brief context that provided support for the non-literal interpretation of the idiom. Each contextualized passage was followed by a question asking the meaning of the idiom, with four possible interpretations. Subjects were asked to select the best interpretation of the idiom. While all four options were related to the context, only one offered a correct interpretation. The highest possible score in this task was 20 points. The following is an example of an item in this task:

Jack, Michael and Jerry just finished final exams after a long semester. They have not gone out as a group for a while. Michael said, "Why don't we all get together and *paint the town red* tonight?". What does it mean to [paint the town red]?

- a. To celebrate
- b. To paint the house
- c. To buy paintings
- d. To avoid problems

#### **Transparency Judgment Task**

In this task, each subject was given a booklet containing the 20 idioms in a distinct random order. Each idiom was followed by the literal and non-literal meanings. Participants were asked to judge how closely they believed both meanings were related, using a 3-point scale (1 = closely related    2 = somewhat related    3 = not related). Both meanings were taken from the reference books mentioned above. One idiom was presented as follows:

*Turn the other cheek*

Literal meaning: To turn your face to the other side

Non-literal meaning: To stay calm

The meanings are:

- 1 = closely related
- 2 = somewhat related
- 3 = not related

### III. RESULTS

Table 1 reports the performance of Level 1 and Level 4 students on the three experimental tasks. It contains the mean raw scores, standard deviations, and the ranges obtained by the students.

TABLE 1  
MEAN SCORES, STANDARD DEVIATION, AND RANGE BY EACH GROUP

	Level 1	Level 4
Familiarity Judgment Task (Maximum 100)		
M	79.60	70.86
SD	10.86	13.92
Range	60-99	38-94
Transparency Judgment Task (Maximum 60)		
M	46.02	46.00
SD	5.46	7.07
Range	34-57	24-56
Idiom Comprehension Task (Maximum 20)		
M	6.82	13.77
SD	2.91	2.99
Range	2-16	6-19

The table shows that the Level 4 students rated the idioms higher in familiarity and comprehended them with greater accuracy than the Level 1 students did. However, performance on the idiom transparency task was close in the two groups. An Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted to analyze the data collected; results for the familiarity, transparency and comprehension tests follow.

TABLE 2  
ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE (FAMILIARITY JUDGMENT TASK)  
SCORE (OUT OF 100)

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1716.100	1	1716.100	11.005	.001
Within Groups	13722.000	88	155.932		
Total	15438.100	89			

Table 2 reports an  $F$  of 11.005, which with 1 and 88 degrees of freedom is statistically significant at the .000 level ( $P < 0.05$ ). These figures indicate that the difference across the independent variable category is significant at a very low probability. Therefore, we can feel comfortable in rejecting the "Null Hypothesis" of no difference between the two groups of students. The difference between the two groups is also statistically significant for the familiarity judgment task. Eta Squared ( $E^2$ ), the correlation ratio, measures the strength of the relationship between dependent variables and the independent variables. In this case, as seen in Table 2,  $E^2$  is 0.11 for the Familiarity Judgment Task. This means that the difference between Level 1 and Level 4 students explains about 11 percent of the variation in scores for the familiarity judgment task. We could say that this relationship is weak but statistically significant.

TABLE 3  
ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE (TRANSPARENCY JUDGMENT TASK)  
SCORE (OUT OF 60)

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.011	1	.011	.000	.987
Within Groups	3514.978	88	39.943		
Total	3514.989	89			

As a result of the tiny differences between the means of Level 1 and Level 4 students for the transparency judgment task in Table 1, The ANOVA reports an  $F$  of .000, which with 1 and 88 degrees of freedom is not statistically significant ( $P > 0.05$ ). The high  $P$  value in Table 3 indicates that we accept the "Null Hypothesis" of no difference between the two groups of students in the transparency judgment task.

TABLE 4  
ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE (IDIOM COMPREHENSION TASK)  
SCORE (OUT OF 20)

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1088.544	1	1088.544	124.671	.000
Within Groups	768.356	88	8.731		
Total	1856.900	89			

With  $F(1, 88) = 2.890$ ,  $P = 0.000$  ( $P < 0.05$ ). Therefore, we can comfortably reject the "Null Hypothesis" of no difference between the two groups of students for the idiom comprehension task. Based on Table 4 above,  $E^2$  is 0.58 indicating that the students' level (1 or 4) explains about 58 percent of the variation in number of idioms comprehended. We could say that this relationship is strong.



TABLE 5  
LIST OF IDIOMS WITH MEAN FAMILIARITY, TRANSPARENCY, AND COMPREHENSION RATINGS AND SCORES, BY COURSE LEVEL

		Familiarity		Transparency		Comprehension	
		Level 1	Level 4	Level 1	Level 4	Level 1	Level 4
1	Go by the book	3.31	3.57	2.51	2.31	0.48	0.88
2	Go against the grain	4.53	4.48	2.55	2.08	0.33	0.48
3	Turn the other cheek	4	4.17	2.37	2.44	0.15	0.73
4	Put one's foot down	3.84	3.84	2.4	2.42	0.24	0.73
5	Skate on thin ice	4.53	4.57	2.33	2.28	0.35	0.64
6	Bring the house down	4.02	3.53	2.66	2.73	0.37	0.6
7	Put their heads together	4	3.17	2	2.02	0.37	0.48
8	Read between the lines	2.48	1.6	1.8	1.82	0.44	0.86
9	Cross swords with someone	3.4	4.24	2.42	2.28	0.31	0.62
10	Keep your shirt on	3.83	3.55	2.53	2.68	0.31	0.73
11	Give me a hand	3.11	1.68	1.82	1.82	0.71	0.97
12	Beat around the bush	4.53	4.15	2.53	2.75	0.26	0.17
13	Keep an eye on	3.66	1.97	2.06	1.35	0.13	0.57
14	Let your hair down	4.2	4.06	2.42	2.6	0.31	0.64
15	Make yourself at home	3.15	2.48	1.75	1.95	0.42	0.95
16	Paper over the cracks	4.55	4.62	2.66	2.73	0.2	0.24
17	Take someone under your wing	4.51	3.57	1.84	1.88	0.37	0.84
18	Talk through one's hat	4.55	4.48	2.17	2.53	0.35	0.73
19	Keep your nose clean	3.73	3.46	2.46	2.64	0.33	0.93
20	Paint the town red	4.73	4.42	2.75	2.55	0.31	0.93
M		3.93	3.58	2.30	2.29	0.33	0.68
SD		0.61	0.95	0.31	0.38	0.12	0.22
Range		2.48- 4.73	1.68-4.62	1.8-2.75	1.35-2.75	0.13-0.71	0.17-0.97

• amiliarity: 1= many times, 2= several times, 3=a few times, 4=once, 5= never  
 • Transparency: 1= closely related, 2= somewhat related, 3=not related.

Table 5 shows a list of the 20 idioms with their familiarity and transparency ratings, and the comprehension scores for both student groups. Level 1 students had a mean of 3.93 for familiarity and 2.30 for transparency, whereas Level 4 students scored 3.58 and 2.29 for familiarity and transparency ratings, respectively. Since low numbers reflect greater familiarity and transparency, these mean scores represents moderate familiarity and transparency levels for both groups. The table also indicates that Level 4 students comprehended idioms better than Level 1 students did.

In order to examine the association between familiarity, transparency, and comprehension, the five easiest and the five most difficult idioms were identified for each group according to the results of the comprehension task. The easiest idioms for Level 1 students were *Go by the book*, *Bring the house down*, *Read between the lines*, *Give me a hand*, and *Make yourself at home*. The most difficult expressions were *Turn the other cheek*, *Put one's foot down*, *Beat around the bush*, *Keep an eye on*, and *Paper over the cracks*. The easiest idioms for Level 4 students were *Go by the book*, *Give me a hand*, *Make yourself at home*, *Keep your nose clean*, and *Paint the town red*. The most difficult ones were *Go against the grain*, *Put their heads together*, *Beat around the bush*, *Keep an eye on*, and *Paper over the cracks*.

For each participant, a raw score was assigned indicating the total number of comprehended expressions (1x5 = 5 possible per set), the total points given for rating idiom familiarity (5x5 = 25 possible per set), and the total points given for rating idiom transparency (3x5 = 15 possible per set). Table 6 displays these results.

TABLE 6  
MEAN FAMILIARITY, TRANSPARENCY, AND COMPREHENSION RATINGS AND SCORES FOR THE FIVE EASIEST AND FIVE MOST DIFFICULT IDIOMS, BY LEVEL

	Familiarity		Transparency		Comprehension	
	Easiest	Most Difficult	Easiest	Most Difficult	Easiest	Most Difficult
Level 1						
Mean	15.91	20.68	10.62	12.13	2.42	1.00
S. D.	4.47	3.31	1.93	1.84	1.27	1.06
Range	9-25	13-25	6-15	8-15	0-5	0-3
Level 4						
Mean	15.58	18.42	11.33	10.96	4.64	2.00
S. D.	4.50	3.57	2.50	1.71	0.64	1.18
Range	6-25	8-25	5-14	7-14	2-5	0-5

T-tests show that for Level 1 students, the easiest idioms were significantly more familiar ( $t = - 7.969, p < .000$ ) and transparent ( $t = - 4.460, p < .000$ ) than the most difficult ones. For Level 4 students, the easiest idioms were also significantly more familiar ( $t = - 4.737, p < .000$ ) than the most difficult ones. However, the two sets of idioms did not differ for transparency ratings by these Level 4 students ( $t = 1.272, p > .05$ ).

IV. DISCUSSION

This study was designed to investigate the difference between Level 1 and Level 4 EFL students asked to judge the familiarity and transparency of 20 English idioms. The subjects' ability to comprehend the 20 idioms they rated for

familiarity and transparency was also examined. Results showed that Level 1 students were less familiar and had more difficulty with comprehension of idioms than Level 4 students. However, all subjects, regardless of their level, did not differ in their ability to rate transparency.

The finding that Level 4 students showed greater familiarity is expected, given the fact that their age, level of literacy, and amount of education are higher compared to the Level 1 students. This result is not surprising; it is consistent with prior research where similar results were found for the same reasons (Nippold & Martin, 1989; Nippold & Rudzinski, 1993). Level 4 students have been engaged in more tasks requiring reading and inferring meanings of words and expressions.

Although Level 1 students showed less familiarity with idioms than Level 4 students did, in both levels students rated the idioms as less familiar than expected. The high numbers in the familiarity task indicate lower familiarity. It shows that students' exposure to idiom expressions is insufficient. Since they are all EFL students, and like most second/foreign language learners, they focus first on the literal meanings of words while building a basic knowledge of vocabulary. They have less opportunity to focus on idioms. This issue must be taken into consideration by EFL course designers and teachers. Course designers need to present idioms intensively as ESL/EFL students need greater amount of exposure to non-literal language. Teachers might consider using readings to introduce new idioms. Teachers might also think about using classroom activities to practice these expressions and train learners to use idioms in their spoken and written English.

The first-level students' transparency judgments did not differ from those of the fourth-level second Language students. For the first-level students, the easiest idioms were also more familiar and transparent than the most difficult expressions. For the fourth-level Learners, the easiest idioms were more familiar than the most difficult ones, but the two types did not differ in transparency. This result indicates that all subjects approach the task similarly and suggests that transparency, unlike familiarity which shows age-related changes, is a fixed property of idioms (Nippold & Taylor, 2002). This result is not unexpected as the differences between transparent and opaque idioms are less apparent with a forced choice task (Gibbs, 1987). It indicates that both groups of students have almost the same knowledge of idioms. Since their knowledge of idioms is similar, there seems to be little likelihood for students of their group to infer the non-literal meaning from the literal meaning of certain expressions (Nippold & Rudzinski, 1993). Therefore, they are less likely to observe transparency. It seems that all students are in an early stage of the process of acquiring idiom interpretation. Their incomplete knowledge of the non-literal meanings of idioms led to higher ratings (lower accuracy) in idiom transparency.

As predicted, Level 4 students outperformed Level 1 students in the idiom comprehension task. The lowest number of comprehended idioms by Level 4 students was 6, contrasted with a low of 2 for total idioms comprehended by Level 1 students. The maximum number of comprehended idioms by Level 4 students was 19, with up to 16 idioms comprehended by Level 1 students. This result was expected, since Level 4 students have three more years of exposure to the English language and have developed more strategies to handle such tasks. Therefore, exposure to vocabulary in context through reading yielded greater comprehension accuracy.

After identifying the five easiest and most difficult idioms for each group, it appears that the easiest idioms for Level 1 students were significantly more familiar and transparent than the most difficult ones. For Level 4 students, the easiest idioms were more familiar than the most difficult ones. This result confirms that familiarity and transparency are important indicators of idiom comprehension. They provide further support for the two hypotheses mentioned earlier: "language experience" and the "metasemantic hypothesis".

## V. CONCLUSION

The current study takes a further step toward studying judgments of idiom familiarity and transparency. The aim of this research was to examine how ESL/EFL students rate idiom familiarity, transparency, and comprehension. Data were collected from 90 participants studying in the English Language Department, Umm Al-Qura University. Participants were enrolled in two levels of English Grammar; first and fourth. Three tasks were administered in the following order: a Familiarity Judgment Task, an Idiom Comprehension Task, and a Transparency Judgment Task. Results showed that the Level 4 students rated the idioms higher in familiarity and comprehended them with greater accuracy than Level 1 students did. However, students in the two groups performed similarly on the idiom transparency task. To further examine the association between familiarity, transparency, and comprehension, the five easiest and the five most difficult idioms were identified for each group. Results showed that for Level 1 students, the easiest idioms were significantly more familiar and transparent than the most difficult ones. For Level 4 students, the easiest idioms were significantly more familiar than the most difficult ones, but the two sets of idioms did not differ in transparency. This evidence appears to support the "language experience hypothesis" and the "metasemantic hypothesis".

The findings in this study suggest a number of implications that need to be taken into consideration. Teachers have to provide students with more assignments and exercises that involve inferring idiom meanings and using these expressions in meaningful contexts. Future research investigating idiom familiarity and transparency of Saudi students will need to address questions about transparency and the factors affecting students' transparency ratings. Since this study was conducted on male learners only, further research might be conducted on female Saudi learners as well. It is difficult to determine the degree to which the brief context and alternatives provided in this multiple choice task

affected comprehension. Further research is needed to examine their impact, since the effects of methodological choices like these on results cannot be overestimated. Moreover, further study is needed to examine the effects of student' background and involvement with the language on idiom comprehension.

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# The Comparison of English Learning between Two Ethnic Groups

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**Abstract**—This purpose of the study was to explore English learning in parental influences and learning motivation between Taiwanese and multiracial children in southern Taiwan. There were 459 fifth and sixth elementary school students herein; there were 390 Taiwanese children and there were 69 multiracial children. There were six research questions here, and the main research instrument was questionnaire. According to results, Taiwanese children had stronger motivation learning English than multiracial children did. Secondly, parents' expectations and English learning of Taiwanese children had higher value than multiracial children's. The result indicated that Taiwanese children had higher motivation and expectations of parents than multiracial children did. Therefore, the researcher suggested that multiracial children should be considered about their learning process and thoughts. Multiracial children's English learning was improved and they would be willing to learn English because they were understood.

**Index Terms**—Taiwanese children, multiracial children, English learning motivation, foreign parents, parents' involvement

## I. INTRODUCTION

Marriages between Taiwanese and foreigners increased annually before 2002. The highest percentage reached approximately 31.86% in 2003. But, multi-national marriages began to decrease gradually in 2004. However, many foreigners had still come to Taiwan to get married in recent years. Their children grew up, and educated in Taiwanese school. The number of multiracial children had increased in Taiwan based on data from the Ministry of Education. The number of multiracial children was 26,627 in 2003, and 133,112 in 2009 based on the elementary school enrollment in Taiwan (Ministry of Education, 2010); the rise was fast. Therefore, people paid more attention on these parents who were from different cultural backgrounds in recent years. Based on the aforementioned situation, the Ministry of Education (2010), paid more attention to strengthen the literacy and communication skills for foreign spouses in Taiwan because of the increasing multiracial population in elementary and junior high schools. Hence, a succession of educational support could gradually immerse foreign spouses into Taiwanese society. The progress of foreign mothers' Chinese literacy could then help their multiracial children's learning and had a positive effect on their schoolwork. Cronnell (1985) mentioned that incorrect speaking might affect learning, similar to writing. The speaking of non-standard Mandarin by multiracial children's foreign parents might affect their language learning before entering into school.

English learning was very important because of the global trend. English learning in Taiwan started from the fifth grade in elementary school since 2001, and then from the third grade since 2005. Elementary school students were expected to understand 300 words in oral achievement and 180 words in spelling achievement from 1,200 English words of a basic vocabulary base (Ministry of Education, 2006). English learning played an important role in the elementary schools in Taiwan. However, according to Kao's (2006) and Yang's (2009) studies, multiracial children had a lot of difficulties in English learning. The multiracial children could not handle their regular subjects and another language.

## II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Some studies had suggested that multiracial children had learning difficulty with the English learning process (Cheng, 2008; Chiang, 2008; Kao, 2005). Kao's (2005) research on three English learning ethnic groups indicated that multiracial children were lower achievers. Cheng (2008) and Chiang (2008), from research on the Chinese spoken by children with Vietnamese mothers, demonstrated that some speaking problems were apparent. Different learning environments also led to different learning outcomes.

Above all, these researchers revealed a distinction of English learning between urban and rural areas. Multiracial children had many English learning problems especially experienced by multiracial children. The aforementioned researchers focused on first through third grade elementary school students. The researcher wanted to delve deeply into the English learning situations and perspectives of multiracial higher-grade elementary school students.

### III. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. Is there any significant difference between Taiwanese children and multiracial children in terms of their motivation?
2. What is the relationship between parental expectations and children's English performance?

### IV. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

#### A. *Multiracial Taiwanese Children's Learning*

One foreign spouse, Jin-Hui, Lin, mentioned that "our children are not what TV news report. They are not backward children. They are clever and cute so don't treat us unfairly, please." (Huang, 2005). Conversely, some or most people might still treat multiracial children based on different stereotypes.

According to the Ministry of Education (2010), because of the increasing multiracial population in elementary schools and junior high schools, the government proceeded to strengthen foreign spouses' literacy and communication ability in Taiwan. Hence, a succession of educational opportunities could help foreign spouses to gradually immerse in Taiwanese society, and then the Chinese literacy progress of foreign mothers could effectively help to enhance multiracial children's learning outcome. It also indicated that there might be some problems in multiracial children's learning. In the studies by Chung and Wang (2004) and Chung, Wang and Chen (2006), the same problem was identified, that the performance of multiracial children's native language learning was not equal to that of Taiwanese children before entering elementary schools. In Tsai's study (2006), multiracial children performed more poorly in their study domains than Taiwanese children did. Tsai mentioned that multiracial children whose mothers could speak more fluent Chinese or always tutored their children and helped them with schoolwork, performed better than multiracial children whose mother could not speak fluent Chinese or seldom tutored children and helped them with schoolwork. That was why the government needed to create activities that could increase foreign spouses' literacy and communication ability; this policy might also enhance multiracial children's learning progress through their mother's indirect help.

Regarding the abovementioned different backgrounds, cultural and language factors caused foreign spouses some problems in tutoring or communicating with their children in Mandarin Chinese when helping them with their schoolwork. Chung et al. (2004) also claimed that foreign spouses could not participate in children's schoolwork due to limited Chinese literacy. Meanwhile, multiracial children's Chinese literacy still remained inadequate; therefore, their literacy still needed to be strengthened before entering elementary school.

Conversely, some studies indicated that no significant difference in learning outcomes existed among whole children (Hsieh, 2004; Hsieh, 2008). Hsieh (2004) revealed that multiracial children performed well in their schoolwork, and that their Chinese language skills were better than those of math. Hsieh (2008) also showed that although multiracial children were poor at algebra, they were not as poor at other aspects of math. This was surprising as people generally thought that multiracial children might not be good at schoolwork because they could be influenced by their foreign mothers. However, multiracial children still could do well in Chinese and math. Moreover, these studies were not focused on multiracial children's English learning.

In Taiwan, English is a Foreign Language (EFL). Different literacy backgrounds between parents and children might influence children's learning. Possibly, insufficient native language acquisition affected learning other languages. Studies also indicated that multiracial children performed poorly in English learning (Kao, 2006; Yang, 2009). In Kao's research (2006), there was a serious problem in multiracial children's English learning in rural areas. Therefore, not only background, but also environment, affected multiracial children's English learning. Yang (2009) explored the notion that multiracial children demonstrated achievement in English; they and Taiwanese children exhibited the same attitudes. Nevertheless, multiracial children's attitudes did not reflect on their English performance. Taiwanese children performed relatively well in English learning but had the same attitude as multiracial children.

The aforementioned studies revealed that whether multiracial children's learning was adequate or not, their education still deserved care and must be strengthened. Otherwise, different learning outcomes among multiracial children would persist. Location, gender and growth background were factors influencing learning.

#### B. *Motivation in the Learning Process*

Rifai (2010) mentioned that learners could try to gain knowledge of the second language because of their own motivation; there were several factors like parents, friends, social environments, etc, that might directly or indirectly influence learners' learning. Lau (2009) explained that when children were young, their thoughts were bright and positive. However, more and more they would understand what they might encounter in school and life, and their thoughts also changed gradually. Teenagers had already encountered problems in school and life, social pressures. The different ages caused different changes in motivation. Obviously, the environment really influenced the motivation-change of age differences. Young learners gradually understood whatever situation they encountered. Therefore, different factors created diverse motivation in learning variation. Integrative motivation and instrumental motivation were usually discussed in relation to language learning. Rifai (2010) also explained that the instrumental motivation meant that learners studied languages as tools to accomplish their goals for succeeding in tests or work,

external enforcement; integrative motivation meant that learners were willing to connect with, or had curiosity about, others, wanting to be immersed in different environments and to communicate with a variety of people. Instrumental motivation referred to students' studying because of an external enforcement, like passing tests.

Several studies mentioned that integrative motivation was stronger than instrumental motivation based on Gardner's study. However, Mori (2004) indicated that the research showed that instrumental motivation was helpful to gain proficiency information, while integrative motivation was not. Schmidt, Boraie and Kassabgy's study indicated that the language Egyptian learners who used in the classroom learning environment could not be suitable for Gardner's Model. ESL and EFL involved totally different social environments. ESL learning could occur inside and outside the classroom, while EFL learning occurred in the classroom. ESL learners had the chance to interact with others who also spoke English outside the classroom, in addition to the classroom, as they needed to be able to communicate with people in English. Nevertheless, EFL learners studied foreign languages because of the educational policy of the government. Learners did not need to use foreign languages outside the classroom because they still used their mother tongue. Clément, Dörnyei and Noels (1994) found that learners' motivation needed to relate to where they lived, or their language learning would only be academic. The social viewpoints provided a kind of criterion on what ways learners should study in order to receive high scores. In Taiwan, students only learned to receive better scores on tests, called high achievement. For this reason, learners might study foreign languages in the classroom for tests. Outside of a formal study environment, learners still used their native language. Wu and Wu (2008) mentioned that English as a Foreign Language (EFL) was regarded as the one curriculum at school for test study purposes, but not for life using purpose in most of Asia, like Taiwan. Thus, learners faced the learning environment at the moment and they also were influenced by learning motivation. In the EFL environment, foreign languages seemed to be regarded as instrument tools for the future life in Taiwan, and the advantages included having a good job, excellent scores on tests, etc, instrumental motivation. Verma (2005) commented that instrumental motivation offered skilled English people the chance to get many business positions, but it was just not at all helpful in learners' learning process. English used for jobs was a motivation to learn a foreign language. Although integrative motivation was a factor in second language learning, it was not absolutely required in foreign language learning. However, the instrumental motivation could be a strong learning factor when learners had a clear goal as mentioned above.

The people around the world who learned languages as L2 learning in foreign language environments aimed at becoming capable of communicating with others who spoke different languages; therefore, integrative motivation was not just for fitting into the society, but also as a tool for communication, which was why the Gardnerian conclusion was questioned (Kormos and Csizér, 2008). Although integrative motivation was a crucial element in learning a second language, English was indeed regarded as offering the ability to communicate with people who spoke different first languages around the world. English learning was not only for surviving environments but also to communicate with people. Based on different environments between ESL and EFL, intrinsic motivation stimulated learners to confront problems or to catch their interests related to learning foreign languages, and this would motivate their learning attitude, which differed from extrinsic motivation (Kang, 2000).

Intrinsic motivation was linked to learners' minds to study foreign languages, but extrinsic motivation forced learners' behavior: to study foreign language from outside factors (Horn, 1991; Joosten, Bundy, & Einfeld, 2009). Rewards could stimulate learners' motivation (Elbel & Horton, 1983; Horn, 1991). EFL learners acquired foreign languages in class through the instructor's activities, and these game activities motivated learners competitively. Elbel & Horton (1983) mentioned that based on current research, prizes could not substitute for worth or rank of activities in the learning process. The prize factor could not be a principal for learning activities. Rewards were just a tool to make learners gain language knowledge effectively, so instructors needed to emphasize how to lead learners and what learners gained from activities. Moreover, Lumsden (1994) also remarked that teachers played important roles in learners' learning process, as in using interesting activities and in motivating learners' psychologically and educationally to satisfy learners' requirements.

Teachers at school should not be neglected because they were children's second educators after parents. In the long-term education process, teachers, at least, were children's mentor for knowledge-learning. In Kang's (2000) study, in regard to extrinsic motivation, learners' achievement might be influenced by educators' attitude; i.e., exterior factors stimulated learners' motivation. Thus, exterior factors affected learners' motivation during their learning process. Learners could be forced to learn by the external pressure of their teachers or school policy. As mentioned above, instructors or policy-makers needed to be careful about motivating learners' thirst for knowledge.

Wigflod (1994), citing Nicholls' suggestion, stated that motivation and appreciation of school affected the achievements of young learners. As children grew older, they gradually changed their perspectives. Wigflod also mentioned that children's ages would make their production and decision in regards to different activities change, because each child had obtained a variety of learning process as they grew up. This offered an opportunity for teachers and family members to increase learners' (children's) intrinsic motivation in the learning process while their minds gradually matured. The personal characteristics or thoughts also influenced their learning progress. Horn (1991) suggested that intrinsic motivation would be influenced by good feedback, an external force. Intrinsic motivation concerned a person's inside motive force to learn. It was different from extrinsic motivation in which motivation was an external source. Seven & Engin's (2008) research pointed out that a strong sense of right attitude related to reading, was

a strong factor stemming from intrinsic motivation. The relationship between reader and contexts, how much readers were interested in contexts, the number of times and the quantities readers read were influenced by intrinsic motivation. Accordingly, when EFL young learners were motivated by external factors and internal-arousing factors, and they could learn effectively. Long-term learning and life-time learning might result.

### C. Parental Involvement in Children's Learning Process

Researches proven that parents' and family members' involvement in children's learning process could be key factors (Gonzalez-DeHass, Willems, & Holbein, 2005; Peña, 2000; Tice, 1998); their actions or verbal behaviors influenced children directly or indirectly. Relatively, parents' role was very important in their children's educational process. Unfortunately, there were some cases in which the children might not be brought up by parents, and raisers could be grandparents or close relatives. However, these people role-play as parents and therefore affected children (learners). Sattes (1989) commented that not only parents, but also educators and people around children influenced children's learning before entering elementary schools; the advantages in children's learning process were maintained after senior high school. That above pointed out that it was advantageous toward children's schoolwork when parents were serious about their children education. What is more, children's success or failure in scholastic achievement could be influenced by parents' efforts and involvement. Some research indicated that parents who were serious and in children's schoolwork benefited children's learning (Sattes, 1989). In Asia, people generally equated success with the schoolwork with the future success; i.e., studying well and getting great scores were emphasized in children's learning, especially while children were under twelve-years of age. Tam & Chan (2009) noted that some studies showed that children's learning process was directly related to Chinese parents' interference, as revealed in some research on children's education and parents' consideration. Apparently, parents' intervention was connected with the learning outcome and growth; when children knew that someone kept an eye on them, they would be cautious in dealing with their schoolwork in order to avoid reproach from parents. Children understood consciously that parents participated in their schoolwork and parents recognized the mistakes made working on homework. A series of involvement actions were used to strengthen children's learning skills.

In Jones' (2009) study, the disadvantaged socio-economic family might not be able to participate in and support their children's school life, a situation which educators must accept. The parents' status influenced their ability to assist children's assignments (Tam and Chan 2009). Maybe these lower status parents needed to work more, lacked the time to take care of schoolwork, or their knowledge background was insufficient to enhance their children's learning quality. Nevertheless, parents were able to express strong emotion and positive attitude on the learning outcome. Gonzalez-DeHass, Willems, & Holbein (2005) mentioned that children's educational achievement and positive attitudes toward schools would be strengthened by parents' assistance. Children's strong motivation for learning was influenced and strengthened from parents' affective support. All involved behavior was good for help in the learning process, and this behavior would affect children's intrinsic development in a positive way. Learners' ability and motivation correlated with influences on children's education and the accomplishment of parents (Gonzalez-DeHass, Willems, & Holbein, 2005). Accordingly, children's evolution was influenced toward successful learning by parents' positive involvement.

Cooperative action was much better than individual action; hence, parental involvement was needed to assist their children with schoolwork. Cooperation between parents and school was the one factor in the learning process. Carison (1991) mentioned that there could be some interaction shared between parents and schools which could make parents' participation in children's learning goals come true. The common goals of parents and schools could help them make plans effectively for children. Parents knew there were ideas from schools that strengthened children's learning and school personnel showed parents their educational plans. Children's school learning could not be devoid of parental participation at all (Carison, 1991). As a result, cooperation could be carried out, and the schools could also show parents how they could help to each other. Peña (2000) said that educators needed to understand their viewpoints to become a team. The study revealed that the plan could be done well when the parents were involved; parents' participation inspired children to participate in class. Studies proved that parental involvement had its function in children's learning. Schools also needed to provide timely assistance to parents so that they and the educators could cooperate in completing a whole learning process on the part of children. Corporation of schools and parents would greatly improve the children's education.

## V. METHODS AND PROCEDURES

The participants were higher-grade elementary school students in southern Taiwan. The questionnaire method was used to explore research questions. A total of 459 fifth and sixth grade elementary school students comprising 390 Taiwanese children and 69 multiracial children participated in this research.

**Instrumentation Used for the Study**—The questionnaire was the main instrument in this research. The complete questionnaire comprised three parts: background information, learning motivation and parental involvement.

### A. Background Information

Eight questions were asked for the basic background information of participants. In this part, the participants filled all the items. Moreover, this part would not be scored.

### B. Learning Motivation

There were thirty-nine items in the part two of the questionnaire, and it was divided into two categories including learning attitude and learning motivation. Items 1 to 23 were under the motivation category (intrinsic domain for items 1 to 15 and extrinsic domain for items 16 to 23). Items 24 to 39 were under the attitude category. These questions related to students' English learning situation at school and at home. Scores in the part two were based on a five-point Likert Scale equated with a score. Each response was to measure frequency: (a) strongly agree = 5, (b) agree = 4, (c) neutral = 3, (d) disagree = 2 and (e) strongly disagree = 1.

### C. Parental Involvement

In the part of three of this questionnaire, it focused on parental influence as well as parental involvement. There were 20 questions regarding students' English learning situation related to parental involvement at school and at home. Scores in the part three were based on a five-point Likert Scale equated with a score. Each response was to measure frequency: (a) always = 5, (b) usually = 4, (c) sometimes = 3, (d) seldom = 2 and (e) never = 1.

**Procedure of the Study**—Contact, instruments, and data collection were discussed here. The final step was data analyses.

#### A. Contact

The researcher went to some elementary schools in Ping-Tung County, and met each main director of the schools. The purpose of this research was to explain to each director. Then, each of them allowed the researcher to conduct research at the respective schools.

#### B. Instruments

The researcher gave each director of participating schools the questionnaires. The researcher interpreted what the directors needed to be aware of during the questionnaire-filling process. In addition, the English teacher might help participants complete the questionnaire when participants had questions about some items. After that, the questionnaire was administered at each participating school and the researcher was told that the data of completing the questionnaire.

#### C. Data Collecting

The researcher went to school to collect all the questionnaires. The researcher also ensured that all the data were collected. Finally, the researcher appreciated the assistance of all the participating schools.

**Data Analysis**—The data analyses employ the SPSS system to calculate the statistics. The mean and the standard deviation (SD) calculation were used for research questions one to determine whether or not they were statistically significant. In addition, correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) was used for research questions two. This calculation was for determining the relation between parental expectations and children's English education outcome.

## VI. RESULTS

There are two research questions: "Is there any significant difference between Taiwanese children and multiracial children in terms of their motivation?" "What is the relationship between parental expectations of children's English performance?"

### A. Research Question 1: Is there any significant difference between Taiwanese children and multiracial children in terms of their motivation?

TABLE 1  
MEANS FOR INTRINSIC AND EXTRINSIC MOTIVATION AT SCHOOL AND AT HOME (N = 459)

Category	Item	Whole group	Taiwanese children	Multiracial children
		Mean	Mean	Mean
Intrinsic	1-15	3.40	3.42	3.33
Extrinsic	16-23	3.71	3.72	3.62
Intrinsic toward school	1-7	3.48	3.50	3.36
Intrinsic toward home	8-15	3.40	3.42	3.24
Extrinsic toward school	16-20	3.716	3.734	3.61
Extrinsic toward home	21-23	3.706	3.716	3.65

Table 1 showed the means for intrinsic and extrinsic motivation of English learning at school and at home. The difference of the mean between these two groups was significantly higher for Taiwanese children comparing to multiracial children. Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation scores for Taiwanese children were higher in regard to school and home.

For whole group, extrinsic motivation was higher than intrinsic motivation; intrinsic motivation for school learning situation was higher than intrinsic motivation for home; and extrinsic motivation for school learning situation was higher than extrinsic motivation for home learning.

For Taiwanese children, extrinsic motivation was higher than intrinsic motivation; intrinsic motivation for school learning situation was higher than intrinsic motivation for home learning situation; and extrinsic motivation for school learning situation was higher than extrinsic motivation for home learning situation.

For multiracial children, extrinsic motivation was higher than intrinsic motivation; intrinsic motivation for school



learning situation was higher than intrinsic motivation for home learning situation; and extrinsic motivation for home learning situation was higher than extrinsic motivation for school learning situation.

For whole group and the two different groups, their extrinsic motivation was stronger than intrinsic motivation. According to the results, external influences played an important role in these children’s English learning.

TABLE 2  
THE TOP FIVE MOTIVATION QUESTIONS AMONG TAIWANESE CHILDREN (N=390)

Rank	Item	Statement	Mean	orientation
1	19	My teacher assigns me English homework, so I have to hand it in in time.	4.05	Ex*
2	4	I can finish homework in time after school.	3.97	In**
3	3	I think learning English is helpful for me.	3.96	In
4	23	To get a better job in the future, I need to learn English.	3.80	Ex
5	16	All I want to do is get good scores in English.	3.79	Ex

Note. \*Extrinsic motivation \*\*Intrinsic motivation

TABLE 3.  
THE TOP FIVE MOTIVATION QUESTIONS AMONG MULTIRACIAL CHILDREN (N=69)

Rank	Item	Statement	Mean	orientation
1	19	My teacher assigns me English homework, so I have to hand it in in time.	3.96	Ex*
2	3	I think learning English is helpful for me.	3.86	In**
3	20	I can’t fall behind my classmates in English, so I try harder to learn it.	3.74	Ex
4	23	To get a better job in the future, I need to learn English.	3.72	Ex
5	4	I can finish my homework in time after school.	3.71	In

Note. \*Extrinsic motivation \*\*Intrinsic motivation

Two motivation items were the same for their English learning between these two groups based on Tables 2 and 3. They were item 19, rank one, and item 23, rank four, respectively. English teachers had an important impact on children’s English learning. Learning English was crucial for what they could do in the future; this influenced them. Furthermore, although items 3 and 4 were in different ranks, they were also in the top five. These two questions were about intrinsic motivation. Taiwanese children were more compliant about completing their homework than multiracial children were. Items 16 and 20 involved different motivation for English learning for these two groups. Taiwanese children’s item 20 was in rank six, and multiracial children’s item 16 was in rank twelve. Most of items were in the top five but the mean of Taiwanese children was indeed higher than that of the multiracial children.

**B. Research Question 2: What is the relationship between parental expectations of children’s English performance?**

TABLE 4  
CORRELATION COEFFICIENT AMONG TAIWANESE AND MULTIRACIAL PARENTAL EXPECTATIONS (N = 459)

	Taiwanese children (N = 390)			Multiracial children (N = 69)		
	r	p	r <sup>2</sup>	r	p	r <sup>2</sup>
Expectations and English learning	.762	.000*	.581	.642	.000*	.412

Note. \*p < .05

According to Table 4, The second research question explored the influences of parental expectations on children’s English learning. For Taiwanese children,  $r = .762$ , (sig) = .000 < .05, so it was a positive relationship. For  $r^2$  58% of the children variance predicted that Taiwanese children did what their parents expected on English learning. For multiracial children,  $r = .642$ , (sig) = .000 < .05, so it was a positive relationship. For  $r^2$  41% of the children variance predicted that multiracial children did what their parents expected on English learning.

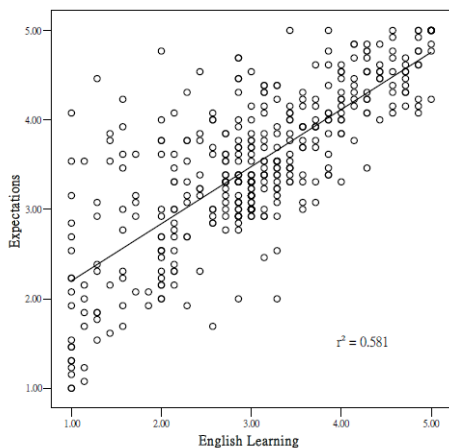


Figure 1. The r square between expectations and English Learning among Taiwanese children.

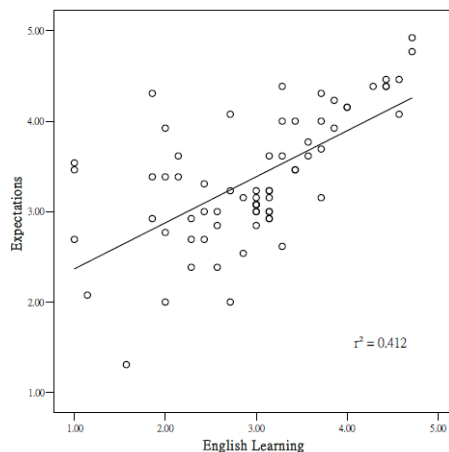


Figure 2. The r square between expectations and English Learning among multiracial children.

According to Fig. 1,  $r^2$  was 0.581, and approximately 58% percentage of Taiwanese children might follow this prediction, which was that these children would do something for their English learning when their parents had higher expectations concerning their children's learning process.

According to Fig. 2,  $r^2$  was 0.412, and approximately 41% of multiracial children might follow this prediction, which was that these children would do something for their English learning when their parents had higher expectations concerning their children's learning process.

Based on Figs. 1 and 2,  $r^2$  of Taiwanese children obtained a higher value than multiracial children did because the relationship between parental expectations of children's English education in regard to Taiwanese children and the results were much stronger than those for multiracial children. It seemed that Taiwanese children's parents made a lot of effort for their children.

## VII. CONCLUSIONS

According to answers of research questions, there were two main results here. Firstly, these two groups' extrinsic motivation was higher than intrinsic motivation. There were similar motivation question ranks between these two groups, but Taiwanese children got higher mean in all motivation questions than multiracial children did. This result indicated that Taiwanese children had stronger motivation learning English than Taiwanese children did. These two groups might be influenced by different environments. What Clément, Dörnyei, and Noels (1994) mentioned was that learners' motivation needed to relate to where they live or their language learning was only academically-related (Clément, Dörnyei and Noels, 1994). Although multiracial children live in Taiwan, foreign parents might influence them indirectly. Secondly, parents' expectations and English learning of Taiwanese children had higher value than multiracial children's. Parents still played an important role in their children's learning. Parents' words and deeds influenced their children directly or indirectly. Tam & Chan (2009) mentioned that some studies showed that children's learning process related to Chinese parents' interference, and these facts were revealed in research on children's education and parents' consideration. When parents gave their children high support and consideration, children did their best in regard to learning. Taiwanese children's and multiracial children's viewpoints were revealed herein. English learning was not only carried out in public and private schools, but also in cram schools in Taiwan. Motivation differs because of individual characteristics, family background, race, etc. Thus, learners might reach their goals if motivation was properly handled.

This research was based on a questionnaire instrument. All of the information was obtained by Taiwanese and multiracial children filling in blanks of questionnaire while they read every sentence statement. Learners included Taiwanese and multiracial children who participated in this research. Participants filled in blanks from every statement of the questionnaire. Therefore, the interview could be added to this research in order to gain more information. Thoughts of these two groups might be brought out from the deep interview process to make connections between the results of the questionnaire and interview. Scores of participants also could be referred. Family members were not included here because their thoughts were information, too. Schools included teachers and school members. Taiwanese and multiracial children were the main subjects. Teachers or school members who could complete the questionnaire of notions among these two groups also participated in the research. The interviews might be added, too. The district was limited to Ping-Tung County. People in different districts may have different views. The age range was between eleven to twelve years old and participants were fifth-grade and sixth-grade Taiwanese and multiracial children. Psychological growth could lead to different results. The influence of gender was the one factor omitted here; different genders might have different ways of doing things because of general social reactions, psychology, environment, peer influences, etc. Family members were not included here yet their views might provide information, too. The abovementioned pointed hinder the generalizability of the results

Parent backgrounds were different in the multiracial children group. This was important since different backgrounds might influence their thoughts. Language structure, culture background, and pattern of thoughts might be diverse because of people having lived in different countries. Plus, foreign parents could mix primary backgrounds with Taiwan backgrounds, making for a different pattern. Maybe multiracial children had different ideas from Taiwanese children, but their ideas needed to be respected, too. Besides, multiracial children's idea could be creative for education-promoting because pedagogies would better suit every unique child to gain knowledge. Deep interviews or open-ended questions could provide more information outside of the questions and make children's ideas or foreign parents' thoughts clearer. This is important with the increasing ethnicity in Taiwan.

In home environments, foreign parents have special identities in Taiwan. They came from different cultural backgrounds. Their children might also be affected by their foreign parents. However, the family could provide appropriate or even necessary assistance. For example, let multiracial children understand that they were not different. Only their parents came from different countries. This attitude would inspire them learn about a variety of cultures. The real assistance of family was the basic element for multiracial children because they still went back their home towns. Therefore, the deep research might explore the home environments of the participants. Neighbors were counted into the research because they were sometimes involved in the multiracial children's life. These people could also answer the questionnaire. Furthermore, interviews and surrounding observations were explored to collect information regarding

differences and similarities between Taiwanese children and multiracial children.

In school environments, students knew that multiracial children were different from themselves. Teachers might instruct all students that there were no differences because everyone lived here and studied here. There should be an effort in learning about other cultures. The immersion environments supplied a proper education. Moreover, in the school assembly, the school sometimes provided guidance on multicultural issues. So, teachers and the school itself cooperated together. Therefore, the deep research might explore school environments where these participants learned together. Teachers and school members were in one part of the research. Teachers and staffs were interviewed about children learning and performance. Classroom observations were used to include practical research to analyze the results.

In the national environment, the government was the policy-maker and its decision would influence what and how people thought of multicultural children. Maybe people still believed that foreign parents were foreigners in Taiwan because of their lack of knowledge toward the different cultural background of the parents. Up to the present, a number of people regarded these foreign parents as outsiders, especially foreigners from Southeast Asia. Southeast Asians were thought to have a son to carry on the family name in order to keep the family alive. In addition, Southeast Asian children were considered backward because their parents came from educationally backward countries. These parents experienced language problems during conversations with their children. Hence, multiracial children had learning problems because their learning development was not sufficient. Government needed to do help for foreign parents accommodate to Taiwan culture and to learn Mandarin and Taiwanese. Similarly, government also needed to guide Taiwan people to accept different external culture. Internal and external culture backgrounds might help all groups to understand and respect each other. Therefore, the deep research might explore the thoughts of people throughout the country in order to help steer the government in the right direction.

According to the results, multiracial children's performance was lower than Taiwanese children's. Their motivation led to much lower scores than Taiwanese children. Parents' expectations developed different degrees in English learning. Taiwanese children's parents had higher expectations that led to higher learning attitude and motivation. These two groups had different expectations toward English teachers' instructions. However, open-ended questions and interviews could be used here in order to collect deep information and made connections with the results of this research. Age, gender, and districts were divided into specific research in order to collect detailed data. Schools, family, and the whole of society could work together to help people from different cultural backgrounds. When every one could understand each other deeply, the general public was able to know how to help foreigners. Therefore, the general public would not regard foreigners as outsiders, but as part of the society.

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# Learner Involvement in Language Development: From Course Design to Performance Assessment

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**Abstract**—The mismatch between teaching and learning is believed to be one of the factors that militate against the effectiveness of instruction. Such a contention has led language teaching specialists to call for a learner-centered approach to bridge the gap between teaching and learning. In this approach, the students are expected to shoulder the responsibility of their own learning through participation at all levels of the teaching-learning process, from planning the program to assessment of performance. This article provides some ideas and practical classroom techniques and procedures that can foster learner involvement at all stages of language teaching from course design to performance assessment. These techniques and procedures are presented direct involvement (learner-centered) and indirect involvement (learning-centered). The former include course evaluation, essay writing and error correction; the latter include form-focused instruction: giving linguistic explanations in teaching grammar and error correction.

**Index Terms**—learner involvement in language development

## I. INTRODUCTION

Our language teaching approaches, methods and techniques become more effective as we know more about the learners and their needs and their learning strategies, styles and preferences. The teaching methods and classroom techniques should be informed by knowledge about the learning process. Effective teaching methods and techniques can, in turn, result in effective learning. Thus, the processes feed into each other. Over three decades ago, researchers (e.g. Naiman, Frolich and Todesco, 1978) stressed that language teaching methods are rendered ineffective by not involving the learners, directly or indirectly, in the teaching-learning process.

The essence of the learner-centered approach to language teaching and learning is to let the students take the responsibility of their own learning and to allow them to have the choice of what to learn and how and when to learn it, (see e.g. Ali, 2000; Baeten et al, 2010; Blumberg, 2008; Liu et al, 2006; Sarigoz, 2008; Schuh, 2004; Thanasoulas, 2000). Such an approach is also referred to as ‘student-centered’ and ‘child-centered’. Learner-centeredness entails having the learners participate and play a central role in classroom activities under the teacher’s guidance. As Mahmoud (forthcoming) says, “certain aspects of planning and teaching are beyond the discretion of the teacher, especially in formal classroom language learning situations.” For instance, in the Arab countries where English is taught as a foreign language (EFL), decisions related to language planning and language policy – which foreign language(s) should be taught, which variety of the language should be taught and at which educational level – are made by the ministries of education in general education and by the colleges and universities in higher education institutions. In such situations where most, if not all, of the teaching-learning elements are pre-arranged, the teachers are left only with the classroom techniques and activities at their disposal. In his classroom-oriented action study, Mahmoud (ibid) shows how learner-centeredness can be achieved in teaching translation and in checking reading comprehension. In teaching translation, students can be involved at all stages of the process through group and whole-class discussion of each other’s translations. First they translate the text individually then discuss their translations in pairs or small groups to produce one version to be discussed by the whole class under the teacher’s guidance. Here are the steps:

Step 1: Students read the passage and find the meanings of the new words and expressions individually or in pairs and groups.

Step 2: Students translate the text individually then in small groups and produce one final version to be presented to the whole class for discussion.

Step 3: The whole class discuss each group’s translation one at a time under the teacher’s guidance.

In checking comprehension, students are asked to translate an English text into Arabic (the first language). The teacher translates the incorrectly translated parts back into English and uses the back-translations to develop True/False questions and multiple-choice distracters. The following are the steps:

Step 1: Students read the passage and translate it into their first language as a comprehension check.

Step 2: The teacher lists the incorrectly translated parts and translates them back into the foreign language.

Step 3: The back-translated words and sentences are used to develop True/False and multiple-choice questions.

Thus, Mahmoud talks about two types of learner-involvement: direct involvement where students translate and discuss their translations in small groups and as a whole class (i.e. learner-centered) and indirect involvement where the back-translations of the students’ incorrect translated words and sentences are used to develop objective reading

comprehension questions. He refers to this latter type of involvement as 'learning-centered' because it is based on the students' learning and communication strategy of reliance on previous linguistic knowledge.

The purpose of this article is to take Mahmoud's (ibid) study a step further by discussing how learner-centeredness can be achieved at all stages of the language teaching process from course design to performance assessment through direct (learner-centered) and indirect (learning-centered) involvement of the students. More specifically, this paper shows how the students can be directly involved in course panning through course evaluation and at all stages of essay writing from the choice of topics to error correction. It also shows the students can be indirectly involved in form-focused instruction. The techniques and procedures described in this study are based on more than ten years of actual classroom teaching (2000-2012) at sultan Qaboos University, Oman, where EFL is taught to students majoring in three separate strands: Education, Literature and Translation. These students study post-intermediate and advanced courses in EFL skills (reading, writing, listening, speaking and grammar) in the first two years (four semesters). They are divided into groups of 15-20 male and female students and taught each skill as a separate course, (two two-hour sessions per week). The students usually spend a foundation year at the language center where they study intermediate level EFL courses. Assertions about the effectiveness of techniques presented in this article are based on the positive evaluations (80% - 100% favorable) that the courses consistently obtain at the end of each semester. The course evaluation tool is an online questionnaire designed by the University. It includes an objective section consisting of 16 multiple-choice items and a subjective section composed of three open-ended questions, (see Appendix).

## II. DIRECT INVOLVEMENT

### Course Evaluation

According to Nunan (1995, p. 136), the first step towards learner-centeredness is to make the students aware of the objectives, content and materials of the course. In higher education institutions, this is usually done by giving the students a detailed outline of each course. As Nunan (1995, p. 144) says, "In some foreign language contexts, the notion of student choice may be relatively unfamiliar or even alien. In such a case, it is preferable to engage the learners in a relatively modest level of decision making." In some institutions, students are directly involved in decision making with regard to course design and teaching techniques through course and teaching evaluation conducted at the end of each semester. In some universities and high institutes, an evaluation tool is developed and used to solicit students' feedback on the content of each course and all aspects of teaching including assessment. The survey may consist of objective questions or open-ended ones or both. The most important step in the evaluation is how the data are utilized, if at all, after they are analyzed and returned to the course instructors. In fact, some teachers do not even care to look at these evaluations either because they believe that the students are not in a position to undertake such a task or because they believe that a negative evaluation will not jeopardize their survival in the institution. This indifference on the part of the instructors has detrimental consequences. Without such feedback from the learners, it might be difficult for the teacher to get to know what is effective and, therefore, can be retained and what needs to be abandoned or modified. If batches of learners systematically point out some drawbacks in the teaching or assessment techniques or in the teaching materials, adherence to these techniques and materials defeats the purpose of the practice. The students do not take the course evaluation seriously if their suggestions and comments are not taken into account. They either ignore it completely or do it as an abominable chore without even reading the items of the questionnaire. Thus, the students are denied the opportunity to participate in decision making regarding the content and materials of the course and the teaching and assessment procedures. Incorporation of the students' ideas and suggestions may guarantee their involvement in the teaching-learning process and help the teachers in their endeavor to attain perfection.

### Essay Writing

This section discusses two learner-centered activities in a writing course for the second-year university English majors. In this course, students are required to write 700-1000-word argumentative essays. The course builds on previous courses covering paragraph writing using various writing modes (i.e. narration, description, analysis, comparison & contrast, definition, etc.). The first two or three weeks (4-6 two-hour sessions) are devoted to preparatory work on:

- (1) choosing an argumentative topic.
- (2) writing a good thesis statement with a clear topic and controlling idea.
- (3) the basic concepts and principles of argumentation.

Meanwhile, each student is asked to prepare a list of at least five argumentative topics of their own choice. The instructor then merges the same or similar topics and compiles a list of the most common topics. The second step is to present these topics for class debate. In a two-hour session, the instructor introduces the topic that the students want to discuss most and asks them to form teams based on their opinion about the issue, (i.e. with, against, undecided). The remaining class time (about 90-100 minutes) is spent on preparation and presentation of arguments by each team. The teams also refute opposing views. This debate helps students:

- (1) apply the rules and principles of argumentation.
- (2) argue with actual, rather than hypothetical, opposing side.
- (3) consider and refute counter-arguments which they would not otherwise anticipate.
- (4) write the essay with a real audience in mind, rather than writing to the teacher.

The students are given the opportunity to organize and moderate the debate by themselves if they want. One or two students take charge each time. They introduce the topic, divide the class into groups, distribute participation turns, oversee proper application of the rules and principles of argumentation and make concluding remarks. The debate helps in brain-storming, critical thinking and in practicing speaking, note-taking and conversation skills. The essay is then written as a homework assignment. Thus, all of the preparatory stages of writing (choice of topic, brain-storming, audience, etc.) are learner-centered whether the students participate individually or in group. The writing stage is, of course, learner-centered since it is free writing where the student chooses:

- (1) the major and minor supporting points.
- (2) the opposing views that need to be refuted.
- (3) the writing modes to be used to develop the essay.

For the purpose of the final examination, the students also write a number of reading-based essays where they read and respond to argumentative articles. Here again, the whole process is learner-centered. After reading the text, which is an individual activity, the students work together in groups and employ social strategies (asking questions and cooperating with each other) in order to:

- (1) find the meanings of the words and expressions that they do not know.
- (2) find the main points used to support the thesis and examine them critically.
- (3) see how the writer refutes the opposing views and examine the refutations critically.
- (4) debate the issue and add any other supporting or opposing views not in the article.

As in speaking-based writing, students write the essay as a homework assignment where they respond to the article showing their position based on the debate.

#### **Error Correction**

Related to writing is the issue of provision of feedback. Feedback is any response to the learner's use - comprehension or production - of the target language whether that response is positive or negative, verbal or written, direct or indirect. Like grammar instruction, it is believed to enhance accuracy and accelerate the learning process, (see also James, 1998). Feedback is given also because students expect it and ask for it (Chandler, 2004). With regard to the provision of negative or corrective feedback (i.e. error correction), "learner-centeredness entails giving the students the opportunity to correct their own errors". (Mahmoud, 2011, p. 10). Ellis (2009, p. 7) agrees with Lyster (2004) and Ferris (2006) when he says "there is evidence to suggest that prodding the learner to self-correct is effective in promoting acquisition." Most of the direct techniques used in correcting students' written work can be described as learner-centered since the learners have to figure out the correct forms by themselves. Such techniques include:

- (1) mere indication of the location of the deviation by, for instance, underling it.
- (2) using correction codes or symbols to show the type of the deviation.
- (3) giving linguistic explanations that can help the student arrive at the correct form.

However, mere indication of the location of the incorrect part may not be helpful since it does not show the type of the deviation; the student may not know what is wrong with the underlined part, (Is it grammar, vocabulary, spelling, etc.?). Using correction codes can solve this problem; it is also more economical than giving linguistic explanations, especially in large classes, (see Mahmoud, 2000). Indirect techniques such as exposure to the language through listening and reading and recasting the incorrect part are considered learner-centered in the sense that the task of noticing the correct form is left to the learner. Providing the correct form directly is, by definition, teacher-centered; it deprives the learner of the opportunity to self-correct or even to notice the correct form as in indirect correction. Learner-centeredness can be realized by having the students correct themselves individually, in pairs, or in group and by giving the opportunity to choose the technique of correction they prefer. From personal experience and from informal discussions with some university writing instructors, students prefer correction codes most probably because of their cognitive maturity and relatively high level of proficiency in the language. We also observed that students prefer to work individually at first and then get together to discuss and correct the remaining errors in pairs and groups; they refer to the instructor for verification. In cooperative work, a student learns not only from his errors but from those of his classmates, (for other benefits of self-correction see e.g. Mahmoud, 2000).

### III. INDIRECT INVOLVEMENT

#### **Grammar Instruction**

The teaching of grammar is as old as language teaching and it is still believed to be an important component of language pedagogy, (see e.g. Erlam et al, 2009; Nassaji et al, 2004). The role of grammar in language development is supported theoretically (see e.g. Ellis, 1987; James, 1986) and empirically (see e.g. Harley, 1989; Scott, 1990). In foreign language teaching contexts, grammar instruction can be a short cut to the learning of forms and structures. According to Widdowson (1990, p. 162), "the whole point of language pedagogy is that it is a way of short circuiting the slow process of natural discovery." Grammar instruction can accelerate the process by supporting the learner's natural rule-discovery procedure, that is, it can aid the hypothesis formation and verification process. It adds to, confirms or modifies the tentative rules that the learners discover by themselves, (see also Mahmoud, 1997). Acknowledging the role grammar instruction in language learning, the focus of debate has shifted to the issue of the kind of grammar to be taught and how best it can be taught. It is generally agreed that the kind of grammar to be taught is the one that is

simplified and presented in a way that it can easily be digested by the learners (i.e. pedagogical grammar). However, an important difference between many pedagogical grammars and the learners' rule-discovery procedure is that the former contain relatively elaborate analyses and metalinguistic terms observed in reference grammars. The learners' rule-discovery process does not operate on the basis of such metalanguage and analysis. As Ellis (1990, p. 186) says, "it is important to recognize that explicit knowledge does not require metalingual expertise." In the same vein, McLaughlin (1987, p. 30) states, "People have rules of language use in their heads but these rules are not those of the grammarian." James (1998, p. 264) also agrees that pedagogical grammars are not accessible to the learners because "they are too closely related to the linguists' grammars they are derived from." Reduction of analysis while retaining the metalanguage may result in pedagogical grammar but not learners' grammar. One main objection to the use of metalinguistic terms in grammar instruction is that they have nothing to do with the way whereby people actually process language as we see in the above quotations from Ellis (ibid) and McLaughlin (ibid). The ultimate goal of language teaching is to enable students to 'learn' the language, not to describe it. Information about how language is learned appears to be more important to the teacher and the learner than telling them about the details of how language works. Thus, one way of achieving learning-centeredness in grammar instruction is to approximate the learner's natural hypothesis formation process by reducing the analysis and metalanguage to the absolute minimum. From personal experience, a teacher may not need more than eight basic terms: verb, adverb, noun, pronoun, adjective, preposition, subject and object. In situations where the learners have a common native language learned in a formal classroom context (e.g. modern standard Arabic), existence of one-to-one equivalents of these terms will be an advantage.

#### **Provision of Negative Feedback**

From the types of errors that language learners commit, it is clear that the hypothesis formation process draws upon previous linguistic knowledge. Learners rely on their first language and what they know from the target language (i.e. their interlanguage) as a compensatory strategy. Here comes in the strategy of association and reliance what is known to learn the unknown. Interlingual and intralingual association (i.e. linguistic transfer) is a psycho-cognitive strategy employed to fill in the gaps in the target language knowledge and facilitate both learning and communication. Based on this strategy, grammar and vocabulary instruction can be learning-centered through simplified contrastive comparisons. Approximation of the learner's hypothesis formation process can be realized not only by reducing metalanguage and analysis but also by comparing and contrasting grammatical forms and structure and lexical items interlingually and intralingually. For instance, when explaining the use of the English definite article, cognitively mature students who share the same first language might benefit from a brief comparison between their L1 and English. Such an interlingual comparison can make the students aware of cases of possible positive and negative transfer, something which they naturally - consciously or subconsciously - do in their attempt to learn or use another language.

The teachers who choose to give linguistic explanations as a technique of providing corrective feedback might also employ such simple and brief interlingual and intralingual contrastive comparisons. For instance, addition of the definite article '*the*' to the abstract noun '*life*' is a common error made by Arab learners of English even at the university level. The error is most probably due to reliance on Arabic as a source of hypothesis formation (i.e. interlingual transfer). Hence, a brief comparison between English and Arabic might be effective. In case of ambiguous errors – those which could be attributed to both L1 and L2 – the teacher needs to make interlingual as well as intralingual comparisons since the same error could be committed by two or more students for different reasons, (see also Mahmoud, 2011). It could also be made by one and the same student for different reasons at different stages in his language development. To make grammar instruction and error correction learning-centered and learner-centering at the same time, the students can be directly involved in making such comparisons with the teacher's guidance. In other words, the students can verbalize their hypothesis formation process and get their associations verified. When teaching vocabulary, a target lexical item can be compared with a synonym, an antonym, a derivative, a synform, or L1 equivalent, (for more information and examples see Mahmoud, 2011).

#### **IV. CONCLUSION**

Based on practical classroom EFL teaching experience, this article shows how learner-centeredness can be achieved in course design, free writing and form-focused instruction. Such an approach is believed to bridge the gap between teaching techniques and learning strategies. Students can be directly involved in course design through end-of-semester course evaluation. This procedure helps the teacher to address the learners' needs and preferences. The article also presents classroom techniques and procedures that can involve the students directly through group and whole-class participation (i.e. learner-centered) and indirectly through strategy-based teaching (i.e. learning-centered). Students can be directly involved at all stages of process-oriented free writing from the selection of the topic and brain storming through debates and in error correction through the use of correction symbols. Students can also be indirectly involved in the teaching-learning process when grammar instruction and provision of corrective feedback is based on their learning and communication strategies. Linguistic explanations in grammar and vocabulary instruction and in error correction can approximate the natural hypothesis formation process where the students rely on previous linguistic knowledge to facilitate the task of learning and using another language. Since the assertions of the effectiveness of the learner-centered and learning-centered techniques described in this paper are based on students' evaluations of the



courses, further systematic studies are needed to verify the effectiveness of these techniques compared to the traditional teacher-centered techniques.

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# Use of Technology in Classroom for Professional Development

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**Abstract**—Technology has modified the method of learning and teaching .Many learning theories can be used to apply and integrate this technology more effectively. There is a close relationship between technology and constructivism has got a close relationship. The implementation of each of these has merits for the other. Learning happens in situations, while technology focuses on the settings and programs which make learners be involved in. The latest efforts have been done to incorporate technology in classrooms based on the constructivist structure context. This paper aims at investigating. (a) benefits of the incorporation of technology into the classroom (b) successful technology integration into the classroom (c) factors contributing to teachers' use of technology (d) The application of learning theory by teachers to make technology more efficient (e) learning with technology: constructivist perspective and (f) constructivism as a framework for educational technology. This paper explains that if technology on its own can make the progress of education more efficient or not and if the existence of a complete instructional theory for technology is serious for indicating its positive effect on the learner is an important issue.

**Index Terms**—technology, constructivism, learning theory, teachers, professional development

## I. INTRODUCTION

Although technology opens up novel chances for the appearance of the issues like styles of learning, student-oriented education and stimulates deeper levels of thinking, the teachers' mind-sets and beliefs, it often impedes the teachers to manage to incorporate the technology with their course designs and syllabus completely. Being such an uncertainty causes that technology is applied as an alternate for other tools in the traditional type of teaching instead of using new kinds and approaches to education (Judson, 2006). Many factors urge teachers to use computer technology in their classrooms. These factors include computer self-efficacy, personal technology use, positive teacher attitudes and beliefs towards technology and access to professional development in the computer technology area. All of these are significant in motivating teachers to use technology. Nevertheless, using technology in the classrooms as a means of instruction would be useful by the teachers if they are supported by appropriate educational theories and models.

Many researchers have investigated the effect of constructivism on classroom practices to know how technology usage and application in the classrooms can potentially increase the process of teaching and learning (Richards, 1998; Brush & Saye, 2009). There is a close relationship between technologies and constructivism, the implementation of each one benefiting the other.

According to Schunk (2000) constructivism is a 'philosophical and psychological approach' which is built upon 'social cognitive' proposes that individuals, conducts and atmosphere are in a mutual interaction. States that learning happens in situations where learners form what they have learnt mostly and consider it as a task of their experience in situations.

Technology is the means and atmospheres that engage students. Constructivism and technology both center on the formation of learning situations and atmospheres. The learning settings are like atmospheres where tools of knowledge-building are provided to produce and influence the art of understanding though which students have a team work and support one another as they utilize different tools and learning resources in their search for learning aims and activities for solving problems. The learning settings are like atmospheres where tools of knowledge-building are provided to produce and influence the art of understanding though which students have a team work and support one another as they utilize different tools and learning resources in their search for learning aims and activities for solving problems (Hannfin & Hill, 2002).

In this paper, the researchers explain the benefits of the incorporation of technology into the classroom, elaborate successful technology integration into the classroom, discuss factors contributing to teachers' use of technology, state

teacher's use of learning theories, examine constructivist perspective, and investigate constructivism as a structure of educational technology.

## II. BENEFITS OF THE INCORPORATION OF TECHNOLOGY INTO THE CLASSROOM

Several researchers have performed studies in an attempt to find out if the incorporation of technology into the classroom helps students, and if so, what factors contribute to a positive outcome (Dawson, Cavanaugh & Ritzhaupt, 2008). These researchers have looked at individual pieces such as the effects of specific software use with reading and mathematics curriculum, while other research focuses on the overall impact of installing and using computer-based technology in the classrooms. The important thought to keep in mind is that the interest of researchers on the effects of technology on education has been flourishing in the past years giving teachers the ability to explore these new waters and adapt their teaching accordingly. There is enough variety among recent authors to warrant the making of generalizations that can be applied to any current classroom situation. One of these generalizations states that the introduction of technology into the classroom environment exerts a change in the way students learn.

For the most part, the changes take on a positive direction by creating a learning atmosphere centered on the student rather than the teacher. This is because replacement of the traditional seat-work to some extent traditional seat-work with the use of computers as learning tools. Instead of the static teacher-centered environment where the students act as receivers of information from a single source, the classroom becomes an active setting full of meaningful activity where the student is made responsible for his or her learning. The students are engaged in meaningful activities such as problem-based learning projects, browsing the Internet in search of information for a report, or the preparation of presentation assignments. Software and hardware become tools used by the student to create a product to be presented to teachers and fellow students so that they may review, learn, or critique in a collaborative manner (Dawson, Cavanaugh & Ritzhaupt, 2008).

All of these factors create an increase in student interest and engagement with the subject being studied, and high student attention to independent research. The teacher takes the role of a facilitator who directs students to an achievable goal. Teachers work with students in such a way that there is an increase in critical thinking skills and the use of the computer as a learning tool. They make practical choices of tools and media that will shape the way students learn, express themselves and perform (Drayton, Falk, Hobbs, Hammerman, & Stroud, 2010).

Another positive and desirable effect of bringing technology into the classroom is the increase in collaboration among teachers and students. This expanded interaction is manifested through the frequent trading of computer skills, shared tips about technology, and the role of the student as a tutor. By allowing students to become assistants in the instruction process their self-worth and confidence increase. They are granted the opportunity to reinforce ideas and skills already learned. These are competencies that are not necessarily shared only with other students. In fact, often the student is able to help the teacher on technology tips that the student has had the time to master while the teacher works on directing the instruction as a whole (Mouza, 2008). This adds to the learner's increase in meaningful use of technology and collaborative participation. The forgoing description of the computer-based classroom represents an authentic learning experience that fosters student responsibility. Teachers report that the introduction of systems such as the Internet and e-mail encourages student-directed learning and the acquisition of responsible behaviours (Drayton, Falk, Hobbs, Hammerman, & Stroud, 2010).

This is due in part to the fact that students do not need to rely on the teacher to locate new sources of information and they can use email to place their homework and projects on a location that is available at all times. In addition, the independent use of the Internet gives the student a certain amount of self-direction.

Once they have received general parameters for working on a specific project, the students can determine the route for achieving the goal presented by the teacher. Another benefit of the computer-based classroom is the increase in student motivation. Research data demonstrate that students in a classroom with laptops are enthusiastic about having the technology and find learning environment more enjoyable than students who do not work with laptops. These students often go beyond the requirements set forth for any given assignment and show increased academic engagement. Increase in motivation leads to the creation of sophisticated activities such as different types of written expressions, multimedia products, and the analysis of data. A sense of pride and empowerment becomes characteristic of the participants (Mouza, 2008).

All the benefits of technology presented so far converge on student achievement on subject areas and evaluations. How do students in computer-based classrooms perform and score on tests? Research has concluded that when students are engaged in technology-immersed classrooms, there is a gain in achievement in all subject areas (Wenglinsky, 1998; Means, 2010; Shapely, Maloney, & Caranikas-Walker, 2010).

Wenglinsky (1998) came to this conclusion that using computers in mathematics by eighth grade students was significantly related to academic achievement and the social environment of the school. However, he stipulated that greater student scores might be achieved when students use computers to apply higher-order skills such as solving simulations rather than drill and practice exercises.

Shapely, Maloney, and Caranikas-Walker (2010) report on an extensive study performed on 21 treatment schools. The purpose of the research was to evaluate technology immersion in these middle schools and the corresponding effects on test scores and data was collected for four years.

The use of technology in the classroom correlated with test scores but the result was positive only in schools where the immersion program was implemented with higher level of fidelity. Thus, the actual implementation of the program was a predictor in the test. Schools that implemented the program first enabled their students to reach higher test scores. The authors acknowledge that positive attitude towards the utilization of technology in classrooms will draw the greatest advantage.

Computer use in the classroom correlates to improved achievement on the part of the student but Means (2010) cautions that technology alone is not a cure for poor scores. She reports on a research project that sought to find out what elements of technology use in the classroom truly affect student scores.

The process included thirteen schools that had adopted reading and mathematics software to complement their core curriculum. Seven schools had achieved high scores in both reading and mathematics, while the other six had scored poorly. The data collected during this study concluded that the software itself was not responsible for higher or lower achievement. Instead, elements such as a reliable educational look, main support, teacher cooperation, and pleasing on-site technical backups were essential for achieving an acceptable learning experience and competent test scores. In addition, Means suggests that the data confirms that classroom management and weekly review of software reports for all students are major assets of a successful program using reading and mathematics software (Means, 2010).

### III. SUCCESSFUL TECHNOLOGY INTEGRATION INTO THE CLASSROOM

Gorder (2008) stated that successful technology integration is what makes a difference in reforming a classroom. Integrating technology is not easy, it is a three step process that involves the teacher learning the technology and using the technology in teaching and learning so that student learning is enhanced.

Effective technology integration can be affected by certain factors. Hew (2007) identified six factors that affect successful technology integration. They are lack of resources, lack of specific knowledge and skills, institutional structures, teacher attitudes and beliefs toward technology, and types of assessment and subject culture. The changes in computer-based technologies over the last ten years have been incredible and it is difficult for schools and universities to stay in step with the current industry norms. Computers that were top of the line five years ago are horribly outdated today. Updating computer resources is extremely expensive and combined with the budget constraints that schools and universities are now facing with and it is no wonder that many institutions lack current technological resources.

Time is another resource that is severely lacking. Unfortunately, teachers are finding a decreasing amount of time allowed for preparation while responsibilities increase. This occurs in spite of the fact that technology integration is demanding more time, including searches for appropriate websites, preparing PowerPoint presentations, downloading videos, and more. Therefore, teachers need more time to prepare and they are required to be on-site to provide technical support in order to offer a quick and adequate response when computers fail (Hew, 2007).

According to Hew (2007) teachers need specific technological information and know-how for the purpose of using computer-based technologies in teaching? It is not enough for specialized progress to stress on the method of operating a specific program but additionally there needs to be guidance in how to use the program to increase student learning. Emphasis also needs to be placed on classroom management as it relates to computer-based technologies. Additional rules and procedures need to be incorporated once computers, printers, and other electronics are added to the classroom mix.

Institutional factors such as lack of planning on the part of the administrators further hinder technology integration according to Hew (2007). For instance, there was a certain administrator who proudly announced at a staff meeting that the school had recently acquired two computers that could be checked out for classroom use. There was no mention of who could instruct the teachers on how to use them or even what were the computer capabilities. A better mode of introduction could have been for the administrator to plan ahead and serve as a role model by demonstrating the use of a computer at the staff meeting. Teacher attitudes and beliefs are another factor on the road to successful technology integration. Teachers should be exposed to research that focuses on technology integration benefits. If a teacher views computer-based technology as another form of babysitting, he or she will use it that way. Conversely if teachers believe that integrating technology enhances student learning they will find ways to use this technology in their classrooms.

What can schools and universities do in order to integrate technology successfully. Hew (2007) has some suggestions. Institutions' administrators and teachers need to join together to implement a technology plan that considers integration strategies along with purchasing decisions. Professional development needs to be at the forefront in order to assure student learning and to change the attitudes and beliefs of teachers unfamiliar with the benefits that technology has to offer. And finally, the technology plan must be closely aligned with the curriculum standards. Teachers need to know what instructional approach is the most effective when integrating computer-based technologies in the classroom.

### IV. FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO TEACHERS' USE OF TECHNOLOGY

In this section, the researchers review the elements that affect teachers use of technology in the classes. They also try to find the relationship between technology use and teaching performances. The introducing technology in the design and syllabus of classes is remarkable, particularly, by considering the effect of computers and internet it has on the new generation of learners who enter the educational system. According to Oblinger (2003), 'the

millennial generation' or the students who were born after 1982, is different from their former generation in noticeable features. The new ones incline to approach towards group activity and are interested to new technologies. They are actively fascinated by playing online video-games and chatting. This is what is opposite to the traditional lecture style that the older generation of the teachers believes in most classrooms. The method of learning for the new generation is centered on group work, empirical and multitasking activities, and using the technology. For the new generation of learners, technology is regarded as an integral part of their daily lives in their environments. Younger learners are more apt to the higher extent of contact to technology and internet usage which leads to many differences between learners learning methods and the teachers' knowledge and aptitude to use technology (Oblinger, 2003).

Students who were involved in the program of teacher training were not enough in the exposure of technology integration as a part of the program for teacher training, but they showed a positive outlook to teaching while using technology Brown and Warschauer (2006) came to the point that university lecturers or instructors need to upgrade their skillfulness in technology to the level they can mingle the new technology in their teaching to promote their students' thinking skills to a higher level. The Using technology to advance learning in a higher level can only happen when the teachers who teach in classrooms are trained to comprise new technologies and mix them carefully with their curricula (Brown & Warschauer, 2006). Brown and Warschauer (2006) advocate the blending of learning about technology with teaching methodology and assigning advisors who are proficient in technology for teachers to develop teachers' skills of technology during their teaching practicum.

A variety of factors affect teachers who use technology in their classrooms Both in their pre-service training program, their personal lives and while they do the teaching as their profession that have influenced them to do so. Taking technology courses in the teachers' undergraduate program is one of the influential factors in teacher technology use. Given teachers are appropriately trained to use technology before entering a real situation setting for teaching, i.e. classroom, their effectiveness will raise, and they are more likely to use technology in the classrooms. Some studies have demonstrated that those teachers who have participated the pre-service training programs and educational technology courses with the emphasis on the using technology skills as a part of their lesson plan, can improve their effectiveness and self-efficacy in their pre-service technology skills (Koh & Frick, 2009).

There is a positive relationship between a teacher's computer self-efficacy and technology integration in the classroom (Koh & Frick, 2009). In a study conducted by Hernandez-Ramos (2005) he notes that since technology is frequently used by youth these days, sometimes student knowledge of technology can trump teacher knowledge. In these cases the teachers' roles as the skillful and students' as the amateur can often be exchanged and may cause that some teachers feel uncomfortable by this condition, because most of the teachers tend to have mastery over the students in using technology in their classrooms. Based on a survey, 55% of teachers stated that they strongly agree with this statement that "A teacher's proficiency with computers will affect his or her willingness to integrate technology into the curriculum" (Hernandez-Ramos, 2005, p. 47).

According to Wozney (et.al, 2006), if the teachers outside the classrooms use computer, it can be an indicator of a teacher's use of technology in the classroom. In a study conducted by Hernandez-Ramos (2005), teachers were asked about the time they had spent with their personal computers. The teachers showed that they have used a mixture of eleven kinds of software use. They also were asked to evaluate and mark their knowledge of each one. The findings of this study proved that those teachers who had a good command of knowledge on these eleven software usage, allowed their students to use computers one day more in a week compared to the teachers who were not enough skilled on average. The findings of this study also indicated that given the teachers use the computers at home more often, they are at ease with using computers in the classroom. The teachers' positive beliefs and outlooks to computers causes that they apply technology efficiently in the classroom (Christensen, 2009). Some of these positive beliefs and outlooks spark the expectation that the teachers will be able to apply the technology effectively and use of technology in the classrooms will also benefit students' learning better (Wozney et al., 2006).

Other important factors that help teachers use technology in teaching include modeling by colleagues, expectations by the administration of academic institutions, positive experiences with computers in teaching, and teacher beliefs and attitudes about technology in teaching. Researchers have shown that a key factor in encouraging teachers to introduce and sustain the use of multimedia in classroom instruction is modeling (Alvine, 2000; Becker, 2000; Bowman, 2000; Bullock, 2004; Aust et al., 2005). In research with high school teachers engaged in professional development for technology integration in the United States, Bullock (2004) found that lack of modeling by the mentor teacher was a disabler while modeling concrete uses of technology in specific subject areas and grade levels was found to be an enabler. In addition to effective mentoring, encouragement, and modeling, Bullock found that clear expectations, easy access to technology and technical support, and positive experiences with computers in classroom settings facilitated the necessary skill development for teachers to use technology on a regular basis.

Adamy and Heinecke's research found that three important factors that need to be operational: (a) access to hardware, software, and technical support; (b) teacher educators' relationships with key technical players; and (c) positive institutional attitudes toward technology use emphasizing the institutional context in which technology novelty occurs Adamy and Heinecke (2005) suggest that technology integration is a social process that must be equipped with organizational institutional support to be successful. Another factor contributing to teachers' use of multimedia is an attitude toward educational technology. Howland and Wedman (2004) surveyed pre-service secondary level teachers

learning to use technology in their classrooms. Instead of viewing technology as a collection of skills to be acquired, the ideology of life-long learning emerged with pre-service teachers developing self-concepts of themselves as technology users. Bowman (2000) declares that most teachers who use multimedia understand that technology does not replace good teaching; instead it opens new horizons for discovery and exploration. Furthermore, teachers should not attempt to use technology for technology's sake; for example, implementing computers in classroom settings for repetitive drills which are devoid of contextual grounding.

Another contributing factor for teachers' use of multimedia is promoted by Alvine (2000) who emphasizes the view that technology should be a tool for learning content, instead of making technology the content. Alvine (2000) endorses the need for teachers to rethink uses of technology. Further, Alvine (2000) suggests that we can model an orientation toward embracing the new and being careful in our critical review of its impact on the teaching and learning. Most teachers would agree, as Alvine (2000) suggests, that the classroom needs to be a human community that prepares students to live in the real world which is becoming increasingly technology-based. It is necessary to rethink the length of time it takes for teachers to become accomplished in using computers in classroom instruction (Sheingold & Hadley, 1990). Sheingold and Hadley stipulated that it takes five to six years of collaboration with colleagues in a functional technological environment to achieve the integrated use of multimedia curriculum. Thompson (1999) supported this position and noted that the used technologies in teaching are not impartial applications that easily direct the student; rather the tools of educational technology are the inventions of social shaping per se and are shown in the reproduction of social knowledge and equalities.

Dupin-Bryant (2004) asserts the view that teachers who are using instructional technology in classroom settings need high-level support from experts to keep hardware running and to learn various software programs. Peer mentoring, peer workshops, electronic message boards can inspire and support teachers involved in multimedia curriculum development. Teaching styles, like learning styles, are highly personal and influenced by intrinsic and extrinsic factors (Machnaik, 2002; Burnston, 2003). A re-visioning of educational goals is one of the needed organizational and/or systemic changes required (Dillon & Morris, 1996). Carroll, Rosson, Dunlap, and Isenhour (2005) studied human-computer interactions and affirmed that the sovereignty culture has come under stress in the past ten years giving way to a culture of collaboration. The research by Carroll et al.(2005), marked knowledge sharing in three levels of knowledge sharing which involved: (a) tangible resources (websites, lab equipment); (b) plans and objectives (lesson plans, worksheet templates); and (c) prototypes (online reports, project summaries, and photos). This collaborative model, facilitating the functional use of technology in education, is in direct contrast to the isolation typical of traditional teachers who manage their own resources and rarely share their pedagogical practices.

With respect to teachers' personal factors, it is concluded that teachers' perspectives and understandings of technology utilization influence their technology utilization in teaching (Cuban, Kirkpatrick, & Peck, 2001; Zhao & Cziko, 2001; Parks et al., 2003; Chen, 2004; Judson, 2006; Wozney, Venkatesh, & Abrami, 2006; Dudeney & Hockly, 2007; Liu & Huo, 2007; Park & Son, 2009). For instance, if teachers think that technology can be a menace to their traditional method of teaching, i.e. teacher-oriented method in which they have been trained for long years, they refuse to accept technology utilization (Liu & Huo, 2007). Likewise, if teachers accept this revolution of educational technology little by little or an instrumentalist view of change, they will accept to use technology but for the purpose of teaching preparation and communication (Cuban, Kirkpatrick, & Peck, 2001).

In a study on the discrepancy between teachers' presumptions and actions in technology integration in Taiwan, Chen (2004) found that reasons for the inconsistency include teachers' restricted or inappropriate theoretical perception on student-centered teaching and technology integration or know how to transfer theoretical concepts on technology integration into practice, e.g., how to plan technology-based learning practices that would simplify and ease students' active knowledge building; and teachers' other conflicting beliefs such as the conflict between the pressure to cover content due to the test-driven culture and the need to allow students to explore content through technology.

Teachers' technology use is also proved to be in relation to their expectation of success and understood worth of technology. Wozney, Venkatesh, and Abrami (2006) discovered that teachers who believed they are skilful enough to use computers successfully and who worth the results related with their integration happened to be considered as high technology users' spectrum. In a similar study of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teacher's using technology in their classes in Korea, Park and Son's (2009) study showed that internal matters like teachers' lack of enough skill in computer knowledge and their perspectives about computer assisted language learning has had a drastic affect on their decision on how to use technology in education. Besides teacher perspectives and understandings in this regards, Wozney, Venkatesh, and Abrami (2006) also showed that personal utilization of computers by teachers outside their classes was the most important index for their technology use inside the classrooms. That is, teachers' access to computers outside of teaching has a positive influence on their computer use in the classroom. Hence, to know about teachers' practices in using technology in their teaching, it is vital to study their supposed value of technology and their competence and proficiency in technology along with their outside-classroom use of technology. Another personal and important factor includes the relationship between teachers' educational activities (for example, their teaching methods) and use of technology.

In a similar study done by Wozney, Venkatesh, and Abrami (2006) in the province of Quebec, Canada, 2213 teachers' were asked about their opinions about using technology in the classes. The findings of this study reported that

teachers who more welcome student-oriented methods are more often expected to incorporate computer technologies and they consider it as a more complicated phase of incorporating computers in the classrooms. Unlike to these findings, several studies (Chen, 2004; Judson, 2006) have suggested that there is a distinction between teachers' stated teaching methods and their use of technology in the classrooms. In a study on 47 teachers in the U.S, Dexter, Anderson, and Becker (1999) reported that teachers who used more student-centered progressive teaching activities, did not view technology as a catalyst for change in their educational activities. Likewise, Chen (2004) discovered high degree of harmony on student-centered concepts among the studied Taiwanese teachers, but subjects' teaching remained teacher-oriented and lecture-based and for them utilizing technology was to back such a teaching. The opposing findings from different countries and contexts put forward more research is needed to investigate the relationship between teachers' educational thoughts, perspectives and technology use.

#### V. TEACHERS' USE OF LEARNING THEORY MAKES TECHNOLOGY MORE EFFECTIVE

Neither using technology nor a learning theory independently makes a productive class. To have a methodology for technology-based learning technology need to be supported by a learning theory (Muniandy, Mohammad & Fong, 2007). In most of the classes today, teaching happens based on old theories of learning where technology is utilized only as an instrument in changing traditional tools. For example teachers use PowerPoint slides in the classroom instead of writing on the board or using written texts and passing them out in the classrooms. This question is raised that can technology per se make the classrooms more efficient or is a model or teaching theory to incorporate technology effectively needed? Do we have to have a proper theory of learning as a framework in which our teaching result (learner) can be more innovative and fruitful? (Rakes, Fields & Cox, 2006). The results of this research show that teachers cannot depend on technology tools or learning theory by themselves. To have a prolific classroom atmosphere these two variables should be combined to make the class atmosphere prolific that do technology tools become better if supported by learning theories?

#### VI. LEARNING WITH TECHNOLOGY: CONSTRUCTIVE PERSPECTIVE

Jonassen and Reeves (1996) differentiate between learning from and learning with computers. Many recent studies and development on technologies took the increased learning into account that were possible to be obtained while computers had a significant position in delivering content and making learning chances to assist learners make meaning and promote a thought. In such circumstances, teachers played a very moderate role. Jonassen (1991) proposes that the if the use of technologies is opportunistic and successful in classrooms and the learning achieved with the aid of technology, then result would be the existence of a setting in where learning is supported and scaffolds by technology not being 'the object or derivative of learning'. As McClintock (1992) put forward, in a constructivist-learning situation, technology plays a decisive role in everyday activities but does not become the means of teaching, in a constructivist-learning method (Jonassen, Peck & Wilson, (1999).

According to Lajoie and Derry (1993), the technological utilization which support learning in such ways are mostly explained as cognitive tools and more studies are now proving the merits to be obtained from such utilizations. Cognitive tools explain such utilizations as (a) calculators, (b) databases, (c) spreadsheets, (d) communications software, (e) semantic network tools, and (f) knowledge construction tools. The decisive trait of cognitive tools does not exist in the information and knowledge that they have, but the kinds of student activities and involvements that they support and promote. Cognitive tools still need the learned teachers to plan and monitor the learning activity, but they perform to increase and hand out the cognitive tasks through their tools and learning atmospheres that have been "adapted or developed to function as intellectual partners with the learner in order to engage and facilitate critical thinking and higher-order learning" (p. 11). As the author noted, the role of a mind-tool is to broaden the students' cognitive functioning while they are learning and to take on the students on tasks while making knowledge that they have not managed to acquire otherwise. Mind-tools make the students capable of becoming critical thinkers. By making use of cognitive tools, learners are also engaged in knowledge creation rather than knowledge reproduction. Learners utilize the available software to use technology to both make and show knowledge.

Computers manage successfully to increase learners' problem-solving skills by utilizing project-based learning (PBL) practices; since they are employed in a setting where people are drawn to cooperate naturally as a result of their cultural opportunities. Tretten and Zachariou (1995) carried out an evaluation of PBL in four elementary schools by administering teacher questionnaires and interviews, and a study of parents. The cognizant stated that PBL had a range of positive advantages for learners like as views to learning, work habits problem-solving abilities and confidence. Ryba and Brown (2000), concluded that teachers' ideas on themselves and their roles in the classroom, and their attitude of teaching had a key position in forming the characteristics of their computer use. The teachers who monitored learner-oriented classrooms and real learning activities as a key to the success of their students were more probable to utilize the technology on an ongoing basis. Means and Olson (1997) found that technology enlarged the intricacy with which learners could deal successfully and made multiple roles and tasks, causing to student specialization. It led in profound exploration of a limited number of views and related facts around genuine and demanding activities. They mention that when learners utilize technology as an instrument or support for making relationships with others, they

play an active role not a passive one of the information receiver conveyed by a teacher, course book, or broadcast. The learners are actively choosing about how to produce, get change, or show information.

Hypermedia let users to go into virtual settings that contain text, sound, visual images, animation, and video. Riddle (1995) investigated that students using hypermedia indicated that augmented aptitude to transfer insight and individuality, larger explanatory details, and unique viewpoints. In the USA, The Challenge 2000 Multimedia Project baked by multimedia gives students chances to use technology effectively in the designing, progress, and staging their assignments. Students who participated in this project obtained better results compared to students who gained mastery on content, addresses sensitivity and sound plan design (Thomas, 2000).

#### VII. CONSTRUCTIVISM AS A FRAMEWORK FOR EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY

As Judson (2006) reported in his paper that there is a relation between teachers who use constructive teaching methodology and technology utilization in the classroom. According to facts, constructivist teachers tend to use technology in their classrooms and incorporate technology to their courses more frequently than the teachers who follow other learning doctrines. The correlation between teachers with learner-oriented ideas about teaching and the frequency of their using technology as method of enhancing learners' learning is positive. The relationship between technology utilization and constructivist teaching activities seem to create the best usages of technology tools to ease the lesson design. Rather than being restricted as a part of the existing traditional approach, by using constructivist theory, technology appears to change every dimension of teaching or instruction. From course planning to the ways of delivery and even evaluation (Rakes, Fields & Cox, 2006). The tendency not to utilize technology in learning settings, but to let the technology to change the teaching methodology is not regular among the teachers nowadays. The teachers' inclinations to apply the constructivist teaching methods enhance the probability that teachers' use incorporates technology in the classrooms (Rakes, Fields & Cox, 2006).

In a study conducted by Hernandez-Ramos (2005), the participants of the study who were teachers in the Silicon Valley in California were asked about the factors affected their use of technology in the classroom. Results of the study proved that there are three main factors affected teachers' technology incorporation practices: 1) if teachers had been prone to technology in their teacher training programs, technology was utilized more often by both teachers and learners than in other classes. 2) The teachers who had an understanding of software usages used technology more often in their classes. 3) Teachers believing in constructivism used technology more often in their classrooms. Their students also used technology more often than those teachers and students who did not utilize technology. Constructivist teachers use their teaching methodology inspiring from the old Chinese saying: "Tell me and I will forget; show me, and I may remember; involve me and I will understand". This statement stresses that students' engagement in the learning is the best strategy.

Constructivist teachers support their students' use of technology as it helps them make their own perception of information by integrating real experiences into task-based learning settings. Boethel & Dimock (1999) contended that when teachers mix technology constructivist learning situations, learners' accomplishments is absolutely tightly wedged in (Hernandez-Ramos, 2005). Hernandez-Ramos followed constructive beliefs to design his study. Then he made a scale based on that. By using this scale, he compared teacher groups who gave the "yes" answer to the question "Have you ever created technology-based projects for students?" with those who answered "no". Teachers who showed that they "integrate technology into their lessons whenever possible" marked notably higher on the constructivist belief scale than their colleagues who did not. Findings showed a positive relationship between the teachers who utilized technology more frequently (4-5 days per week) in their classes and constructivist beliefs.

#### VIII. CONCLUSION

Just adding a technology tool to a traditional teaching approach does not produce more effective instruction and make the process harder and more complex without providing much benefit. In order for technology to be used effectively in the classroom, teachers have to make sure that they are using it as part of an approach that involves the students in the activity. Constructivist approaches which highlight learner-oriented learning have supported for a long period that students are required to be engaged in the process of acquiring knowledge and have looked for methods for teachers to become upholders in process of learning rather than as persons who solely prescribe information his approach appears to have a good correspondence the utilization of technology which are developed nowadays. Utilizing technology does not necessarily mean that one should firmly be a supporter of constructivism, since it is essentially not persuasive for the group of teachers who still believe in traditional methods of teaching, and these two approaches are inclined to enhance the other and give the best results from both utilization and a theoretical approach. The technology utilized in the classrooms based on the constructivist method, students are engaged in activities that they can structure the instruction to satisfy various levels and methods of learning. They also can extend the variety of resources which are presented to students. This allows the technology to be more than one method of offering information. Technology then becomes the method through which information is depicted and realized. Technology is regarded as a part of theory of learning and it is viewed more than a tool; it becomes the methodology framework. For the people who are seeking for approaches to increase their constructivist approach to teaching, technology presents them the capability to advocate all



of the core themes of the constructive theory and technology. As technology assists the teachers to plan their teaching materials in a way that supports their theoretical approach, they get less reluctant to utilize technology. The better application is that both constructivist theory and technology are integrated in the classrooms effectively, since it prepares the tools which are vital for teachers to plan a teaching model that satisfies the requirements of a learner-oriented spotlight.

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# A Case Study of Exploring Viability of Task-based Instruction on College English Teaching in Big-sized Class

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**Abstract**—Task-based instruction has received more pedagogic attention since it was proposed in 1980s. Many studies are found on its characteristics, procedures, and task design. Rather, little research is found to explore its applicability in big-sized classes which averagely are made of more than 50 students. The present study was undertaken to investigate viability of applying Task-based instruction into big-sized language classrooms. Pre-and-post written tests, oral tests, and interviews were administered for data collections. Three main findings from the case study are reported: a). the experimental group is likely to have presented significantly better learning attainments while comparing with the control group; b) the experimental group seems to have showed significantly better oral English performance than the control group; c) the experimental group tends to have presented more active and motivated learning than the control group based on data collected from individual interviews. To conclude, the present study has shed light on potentials and practicability of Task-based approach in big-sized classrooms in relation to the participants' learning attainments, oral performance and observed motivated learning motivation in the context of study English as a foreign language (EFL).

**Index Terms**—task-based instruction, big-sized classes, learning attainments, oral performance, observed learning motivation, EFL

## I. INTRODUCTION

Task-based language teaching and learning (hereafter TBTL) proposed and developed mainly based on research into second language acquisition has received the most pedagogic attention in the field of second/foreign language pedagogy since 1980s. The tenet of TBTL is a pedagogical shift from teacher-oriented to more learner-oriented teaching (East, 2012). Within the context of second/foreign language pedagogy, research foci of TBTL are most devoted to identifying task features and task difficulty, categorizing task types and analyzing task design, interpreting task varieties, and its pedagogic implications (Careless, 2002; Edwards and Willis, 2005; Ellis, 2003; East, 2012; Izadpandah, 2010; Leaver and Willis, 2004; Littlewood, 2004; Nunan, 1989, 2004, 2005; Skehan, 1996, 1998; Van den Branden, 2006; Willis, 1996; Willis and Willis, 2001, 2007). Although benefits/advantages of task-based instruction are substantially supported from a theoretical perspective (East, 2012), yet research evidence supporting to the viability of TBTL remains limited from classroom-based teaching in various pedagogic contexts. That is to say, more classroom-based research is a need to report applicability, viability, and even challenges of implementing TBTL in real teaching practices in any EFL contexts where English is particularly taught and learned as a foreign language (hereafter EFL), and where English language teaching is likely to take place in big-sized language classrooms where, in particular, there are more than 50 students. The paper, therefore, is to report one case study undertaken to explore applicability and practicability of implementing TBTL into College Teaching in big-sized class in the Chinese EFL context in Taiwan.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The section is to briefly review definitions, components and qualities of tasks, features and paradigm of task-based language teaching and learning, and previous studies on task-based instruction in Taiwan's EFL context.

### A. Tasks: Definitions, Components and Qualities

In research literature, a 'task' denotes various definitions. Long (1985) defines a 'task' to mean any activity in everyday. He writes:

[A task is] a piece of work undertaken for oneself or for others freely or for some reward. Thus, examples of tasks include painting a fence, dressing a child, filling out a form, buying a pair of shoes, making an airline reservation, borrowing a library book, taking a driving test, typing a letter, weighing a patient, sorting letters, taking a hotel

reservation, writing a cheque, finding a street destination and helping someone across a road. In other words, by 'task' is meant the hundred and one things people do in everyday life, at work, at play, and in between (Long, 1985, p.89).

Richard et al. (1986) and Breen (1987) define a 'task' from the perspective of language teaching and learning. They state:

"an activity or action which is carried out as the result of processing or understanding language (i.e. as a response). For example, drawing a map while listening to a tape, listening to an instruction and performing a command, may be referred to as tasks. Tasks usually require the teacher to specify what will be regarded as successful completion of the task. The use of a variety of different kinds of tasks in language teaching is said to make language teaching more communicative ...since it provides a purpose for classroom activities ... since it provides a purpose for a classroom activity which goes beyond the practice of language for its own sake (Richards, Platt and Weber, 1986, p.289).

"... any structured language learning endeavour which has a particular objective, appropriate content, a specified working procedure, and a range of outcomes for those who undertake the task. "task' is therefore assumed to refer to a range of workplans which have the overall purpose of facilitating language learning- from the simple and brief exercise type, to more complex and lengthy activities such as group problem-solving or simulations and decision making (Breen, 1987, p. 23)."

Nunan (1989, p.11) further defines 'the task' in terms of six components. He writes,

"The task is a piece of meaning focused work involving learners in comprehending, producing and /or interaction in the target language, and that tasks are analysed or categorised according to their goal, input data, activities, settings and roles (Nunan, 1989, p.11)."

In line with Nunan (1989), Willis (1996b, p.23) emphasizes that tasks are 'goal-oriented' to achieve an *outcome*. The main six components of a task are illustrated as below (Nunan, 1989, 2004; Willis, 1996b):

<b>T</b>	- <b>Teacher &amp; Learner Role</b> (i.e. Monitor and Facilitator) & (i.e. Conversational partner and Learning Mates)
<b>A</b>	- <b>Activity</b> i) reading questionnaires ii) asking and answering questions about sleeping habits
<b>S</b>	- <b>Setting</b> (classroom/ pair or group work)
<b>K</b>	- <b>Input</b> (i.e. one questionnaire on sleeping habits)
	<b>Goals</b> (i.e. exchange person information)
(adapted from Nunan, 1989, p.11)	

With respect to qualities of tasks, Candlin (1987) provides guidelines for 'good' tasks as follows:

- a). Good tasks lead learners to attend to the meaning and to the purposeful language use.
- b). Good tasks give learners flexibility in resolving problems on their own ways, and in calling on their own choices of strategies and skills.
- c). Good tasks involve learners with their own personalities and attitudes.
- d). Good tasks are challenging, yet not excessively demanding.
- e). Good tasks raise learners' awareness of the processes of language use, and encourage them to reflect on their own language use.

Willis (1996b, p.36) also suggests that any tasks used in language classroom, should bring following advantages to learners:

- a). To develop learners' confidence to try out whatever language they know, or to think what they know in a pair or small group without fear of being wrong or of being corrected in front of the class.
- b). To give learners experience of spontaneous interaction, which involves composing what they want to say in real time, formulating phrases and units of meaning, while listening to what is being said.
- c). To provide learners a chance to benefit from noticing how others express similar meanings. Research shows that learners are more likely to provide corrective feedback to each other (when encouraged to do so) than adopt each other's errors.
- d). To offer all learners chances to practice negotiating turns to speak, initiating as well as responding to questions, and reacting to other's contributions (where in teacher-led interaction, they only have a responding role).
- e). To engage learners in using language purposely and co-operatively concentrating on building meanings, not just using language for displaying purposes.
- f). To make learners participate in a complete interaction, not just one-off sentences. Negotiating openings and closings, new stages or changes of direction are their responsibility. It is likely that discourse skills such as these can only be acquired through interaction.
- g). To give learners more chances to try out communication strategies like checking understanding, paraphrasing to get round an unknown word, reformulating other people's ideas, and supplying words and phrases for other speakers.
- h). To help learners gradually gain confidence as they find they can rely on co-operation with their fellow students to

achieve the goal of the tasks mainly through the use of the target language.

i). To offer a holistic language experience where learners carry out a communication task, use the language they have learnt from previous lessons or from other sources and gives far more opportunities for free language use and the linguistic content of the language focus phase is far richer.

#### B. *Task-based Language Teaching and Learning: Features and Pedagogic Paradigm*

According to Willis (1996b) and Willis and Willis (2001, 2007), Task-based instruction is identified with following features:

a). A holistic experience of language is provided to learners at the beginning by and then learners are helped to analyze the language they are studying in order to learn more efficiently.

b). The context is already established by the task itself. By the time learners reach the language focus phase, the language is already familiar.

c). Learners raise their consciousness through working on language focus activities which encourage them to think and to analyze.

d). A more varied exposure to natural language is provided through listening and reading.

e). The exposure includes a whole range of words, collocations, lexical phrases and patterns in addition to pre-selected language forms.

f). Learners are free to ask about any aspects of language they notice.

g). The aim is from fluency to accuracy (combined with fluency).

h). All four skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) are naturally integrated.

With the respect to the pedagogical paradigm, Task-based approach can be constructed through a *Pre-task* → *Task cycle* → *language focus* sequence (Willis, 1996a). The three components are illustrated as follows:

a). *Pre-task*: an introduction to the topic and the task.

b). *Task cycle* (task, planning or report): learners hear task recordings or read texts.

c). *Language focus* (analysis and practice): review and repeat the task.

In contrast, the traditional instruction is constructed through a *presentation practice-production* sequence as illustrated below:

a). *Presentation stage*: the stage may consist of pattern sentences given by teachers, or short dialogue illustration target items acted out by teacher, read from textbook, or heard on tape.

b). *Practice stage*: activities include pattern practice drills, matching parts of sentences, completing sentences or dialogues and asking and answering questions using pre-specified form.

c). *Production stage*: students are expected to produce language items they have just learnt, together with other previously learnt language. Therefore, in the present study the experimental group is instructed underpinned by the paradigm of *Pre-task* → *Task cycle* → *language focus* (Willis, 1996a) whereas the controlled group is instructed mainly based on the *presentation- practice-production paradigm*.

In the present study, teaching interventions were designed based on the two aforementioned paradigms, and were given to the experimental group and the controlled group respectively for one semester.

#### C. *Previous Studies on Task-based Instruction in Chinese EFL Context in Taiwan*

Since 2000, research into task-based language teaching and learning (hereafter TBTL) has started, and impacts of its implementation on classroom teaching continue to be examined in EFL contexts. In Taiwan's EFL context, research into applications of Task-based instruction is mainly found in English education at the primary and secondary levels. Fan-Jiang (2005), Tseng (2006), Ho (2006), and Chao (2008) researched TBTL in primary schools, and they reported that their participants' learning motivation and attitudes, English vocabulary, and English speaking were enhanced through TBTL. Lee (2004) and Guo (2006) studied implementing TBTL into English teaching in junior and senior high schools. They also reported that TBTL had positive effects on their students in learning confidence, English reading and English speaking. More importantly, these studies all point out that the use of TBTL in English classroom teaching is quite challenging as English has been learned as one subject of foreign languages in schools in Taiwan. As to research into TBTL at the tertiary level of English language education, Chuang (2010a, 2010b) investigated its implementation into oral English teaching class, and she found positive impacts of TBLT on her participants' oral interactions, communication strategies, learning motivation and attitudes. However, classroom-based research into applications of TBTL remains little in big-sized classroom settings at the tertiary level of English language education in Taiwan. Therefore, the present study aimed to explore the viability of TBTL in big-sized classrooms in relation to learning attainments/outcomes, oral performance, and learning attitudes/motivations.

### III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research context, research questions, data collections, research participants, and the experimental teaching are briefly described in this section.

#### A. *Research Context and Research Questions*

As TBTL was initiated to teach language in small classes, it is assumed that TBTL may not be applicable in big-sized language classes. In research literature, however, definitions of large classes' vary from context to context (Hayes, 1997; Al-Husseini, 2009). Hayes (1997, p.115) points out that 'there can be no quantitative definition of what constitutes a 'large' class.' A class size is difficult to be defined in terms of large or small. According to Hess (2001, p.1), if a class consists of 30 and more learners, the class can be big-sized. Hayes (1997) points out that in EFL contexts like Thailand, teachers may consider a class which has 45 to 55 students as a large class. In the participating university for the present study, the number of students in each class is approximately 45 to 55. The class could be regarded as big-sized according to Hayes (1997) and Hess (2001). Therefore, the present study aimed to answer three research questions as follows:

Research Question 1: To what extent may Task-based instruction improve Chinese college students' learning attainments while implementing it into big-sized class teaching?

Research Question 2: What is the impact of Task-based instruction on EFL learner's oral English performance while implementing it into big-sized college English teaching?

Research Question 3: What is the impact of Task-based instruction on Chinese college students' motivation/attitudes while implementing it into big-sized college English teaching?

### B. Data Collections

Written tests, and oral tests were employed and administered for data collections before and after teaching interventions. In addition, ten participants from the experimental group and the controlled group respectively were given 15-20 individual interviews. Interviews were recorded and transcribed for data analysis.

### C. Research Participants and the Teaching Experiment

The Chinese participants in the case study were 103 freshmen, studying in one university in the northern Taiwan. Among them, 30 students are males, and 73 are females. The average age is 18.5, and the average year of learning English is 10.6.

This study adopted classroom-based experimental research design. One control group received traditional teaching whereas one experimental group received task-based teaching. The teaching treatments were given to the two groups respectively for one semester in an academic year. The experimental teaching was undertaken for one semester, including 16 weeks of teaching, one week of the mid-term examination and one week of the final examination. The teaching was two hours in every week, and the main textbook used in the course was *Cover to Cover 2: Reading Comprehension*. One class having 52 students was randomly assigned to be the control group, and another class with 51 students as the experimental group. The control group was given teaching treatments based on the *presentation-practice-production* paradigm. The content of teaching focused more on vocabulary, language knowledge and form practice and production. In contrast, the experimental group was given teaching treatments based on the *Pre-task → Task cycle → language focus* paradigm proposed by Willis (1996). Tasks focus more on guiding students to comprehend, act and complete any tasks through working in pairs/ groups (Long and Crookes, 1993, and see Appendix for examples). Types of teaching, paradigms, interaction, the teacher role, the student roles and weeks of teaching involved in the present study are showed as in Table 3.1.

TABLE 3.1:  
THE COMPARISON OF THE CONTROLLED GROUP AND THE EXPERIMENTAL GROUP

Group	The Controlled Group (N= 52 )	The Experimental Group (N= 51)
Teaching Approach	Traditional Teaching	Task-based Approach
Teaching Paradigm	Presentation → Practice → Production	Pre-task → Task cycle → Language focus
Contents of Teaching	Vocabulary and language knowledge	Tasks-Learning Activities
Teacher Orientation	Teacher-Oriented	Learner-Oriented
Interaction	From Teachers to Learners	Learning mates in Pairs/ Groups
The Role of Teacher	Knowledge Transmission	A Helper, an Observer
The Role of Students	More passive learners	More active learners
Weeks of Teaching Treatments	16 weeks x 2 hours + 1 week (the mid-term exam) and 1 week (the final examination).	16 weeks of teaching + 1 week (the mid-term exam), and 1 week (the final examination).

## IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the present study are reported with respect to research questions proposed as follows:

### Research Question 1:

*To what extent may Task-based instruction improve Chinese college students' learning attainments while implementing it into big-sized class teaching?*

The data of the participants' written test performance were collected to examine their learning attainments/outcomes. T-Test was operated to compare test grades. Table 4.1 shows the difference in the pre-test and the post-test between the control group and the experimental group. The difference in the pre-test is not statistically significant ( $t=0.864$ ,  $P=0.39>0.05$ ). That indicates that the controlled group and the experimental group could be regarded as two comparable groups before the teaching treatment. However, after the teaching interventions the difference in the post-test between

the experimental group and the control is reported to be statistically significant ( $t=2.242, P=0.02<0.05$ ). This finding seems to imply that in the present study Task-based instruction has positive effects on learning attainments while implementing it into big-sized classroom teaching.

TABLE 4.1  
DIFFERENCE IN PRE-AND-POST TEST BETWEEN THE CONTROL GROUP AND THE EXPERIMENTAL GROUP

Test Type	Pre-Test					Post-Test				
	M	SD	F	t	P	M	SD	F	t	P
The Experimental Group (N= 52)	61.63	6.74	2.246	0.864	0.39	67.07	4.38	0.743	2.242	0.02
The Control Group (N= 51 )	59.65	5.09				62.36	5.99			

In addition, Table 4.2 shows the written grades of the two groups before and after teaching interventions.

TABLE 4.2:  
WRITTEN TEST GRADES OF THE CONTROL GROUP AND THE EXPERIMENTAL GROUP

Groups	The Experimental Group (N= 52 )					The Control Group (N=51 )				
	M	SD	F	t	P	M	SD	F	t	P
Pre-Test	61.63	6.74	1.21	-4.51	0.01	59.65	5.09	1.56	-1.681	0.10
Post-Test	67.07	4.38				62.36	5.99			

As seen from Table 4.2 above, both the control group and the experimental group showed improvements in learning attainments in the post-test after teaching interventions (the experimental group: the pre-test  $M=61.63$ , the post -test  $M=67.07$ ; the controlled group: the pre-test  $M=59.65$ , the post-test  $M=62.36$ ). It is also showed that the difference of the experimental group in the pre-test and the post-test is statistically significant ( $t=-4.51, P=0.01<0.05$ ) whereas the difference of the control group is not statically significant ( $t=-1.681, P=0.10>0.05$ ). That is, in the present study Task-based approach is likely to have positive effects on the participants’ learning of English whereas compared with the traditional approach.

*Research Question 2:*

*What is the impact of Task-based instruction on EFL learner’s oral English performance while implementing it into big-sized college English teaching?*

During the process of oral tests, 4 participants in the experimental group, and 4 participants in the control group were absent in the scheduled tests. The 8 participants were, thus, removed from data analysis of oral performance. The two oral tests were rated by two experienced English teachers. The score of each participant is the average score rated by the two raters. The oral scores of the experimental group and the control group are showed as in Table 4.3.

TABLE 4.3:  
ORAL SCORES OF THE CONTROLLED GROUP AND THE EXPERIMENTAL GROUP

	1 <sup>st</sup> Oral Test					2 <sup>nd</sup> Oral Test				
	M	SD	F	t	P	M	SD	F	t	P
The Control Group (N=47)	78.68	6.026	0.423	1.492	0.14	82.62	5.66	0.566	3.576	0.01
The Experimental Group (N=48)	77.27	7.64				76.55	6.82			

From Table 4.3 above, it is found that there is only slightly mean difference between the control group and the experimental group in the first oral test (the control group’s  $M=77.27$ ; the experimental group’s  $M= 78.68$ ). The difference is not significant as it reads  $t=1.492, p=0.14 >0.05$ . In contrast, the experimental group showed better mean scores than the control group in the second oral test; the mean of the experimental group is  $M=82.62$  whereas the controlled group is  $M=76.55$ . The difference between the experimental group and the control group in the second oral test is reported to be significant as it reads  $t=3.576, p=0.01<0.05$ . This finding is likely to indicate that the implementation of Task-based instruction in the present study could benefit Chinese EFL learners in their oral performance while comparing with the traditional instruction. The finding is consistent with, and supports the results of Chuang’s (2010a, 2010b) studies. In addition, the following responses of the participants in the experimental group extracted from individual interviews also support this finding:

*‘My English speaking is practiced in the classroom, and I am not so afraid of speaking English. (EG 03)’*

*‘I like to do the team-work task with my classmates in English (EG07).’*

*‘I have opportunities to speak out in English in class (EG04).’*

*‘I find English speaking not so difficult as before (EG06).’*

*‘I use English more while talking with classmates in English, and doing the work together with classmates in class (EG02).’*

*Research Question 3:*

*What is the impact of Task-based instruction on Chinese college students' motivation/attitudes while implementing it into big-sized college English teaching?*

While compared with the traditional way of instruction, it is likely that Task-based instruction implemented in big-sized classroom teaching in the present study has positive effects on learners' motivation and attitudes. The interviewees from the experimental group have showed their positive responses while being asked to describe their experience of learning in the class. Their responses are as follows:

*'I feel the class is different. We have to do lots of tasks with classmates, and have to use English (EG01).'*

*'Studying English is more interesting than before (EG02).'*

*'Sometimes, we laughed when our team did work together in class (EG04).'*

*'To study English can have lots of fun (EG08).'*

*'I like to know more about English (EG09).'*

*'I like to use English and learn in class (EG10).'*

In contrast, the interviewees from the controlled group have showed different responses while being asked to describe their learning experience. Their responses are as follows:

*'The English class is a bit dull (CG01).'*

*'I feel that my English is not improved (CG03).'*

*'The practice in class is useful, but it is really difficult to study English well (CG06).'*

*'Lots of classmates do not pay attention in class (CG08).'*

*'Teachers try to help us to learn, but I do not like to study English. It is very difficult to learn English well (CG10).'*

Although the teacher who provided the traditional instruction did her best to provide the control group with a variety of vocabulary and to change ways of doing language practice with the control group, yet it is likely that the participants in the control group seem to be less motivated to study English more, and to initiate more self study of English. The finding of the present study on Task-based instruction is also consistent with the results of many previous studies in Taiwan's EFL setting (Chao, 2008; Chung, 2011a, 2010b; Gao, 2006; Ho, 2006; Lee, 2006; Tseng, 2006).

## V. CONCLUSION

The paper reported a classroom-based case study undertaken to investigate viability and impacts of implementing Task-based instruction into College English Teaching in big-sized class. The results have showed the potentials of Task-based instruction in big-sized class teaching in three aspects: a) the participants given TBTL are likely to have similar or better learning attainments while comparing with those who were given teaching treatments based on the traditional instruction; b) TBTL in the study has made positive impacts on the participants' oral English performance; c) the participants receiving TBTL teaching treatments are likely to present better learning motivation/attitudes than those who receiving the traditional teaching. The results of the present study are consistent with previous studies on TBTL in Taiwan's EFL context. However, the challenge of implementing TBTL into big-sized class English teaching is also perceived and experienced in the present study in relation to course design and classroom management. In future, more research into TBTL in language teaching in big-sized class should be encouraged to provide more insights into the viability of TBTL in any global EFL contexts.

### APPENDIX. SAMPLES OF TASKS USED IN TASK-BASED TEACHING INVENTIONS TO THE EXPERIMENTAL GROUP IN THE PRESENT STUDY

#### A). *The Information-Gap Task:*

The class is divided into 14 groups, and each group consists of 3-4 students. Each group is assigned one theme to collect data, and to report in class. In class, they also have to offer open questions for discussion, answer questions from the teacher about the textbook reading and other relevant issues. At the end, the teacher and other classmates have to give grades to the group based on their presentation and reports.

#### B). *The Reasoning-Gap Task:*

As two themes are about Stereotypes and Korea Soup Operas in the syllabus, the teacher designed writing task for students do 'plot constructions'. The teacher showed a clip from YouTube first, and then paused, and asked students to predict, and to write down what will happen next, and the ending of the story. After students completed their writing, the teacher continued playing the clip to the end. After that, the teacher and students discuss, and compare their prediction, and what happened in the clip.

#### C) *The Opinion-Gap Task:*

This is a task for students to practice how to debate in English debates. The teacher prepared playing cards (5 red heart/diamond and 5 black club/spade). The students are divided into 10 groups (5 students in each group). 1-2 students can be judges. The groups picking up the red heart/diamond are the Pro-Group for the topic, and other groups picking up the black club/spade are the Against-Groups. Then, each member in every group has to pick up one playing to decide the order of doing debate. Then, the teacher randomly assigned one pro- group to debate with one against-group. After that, the teacher gave the topics out for 10-minute preparations. At the end, the best Pro-Group, and Against-Group were elected by the teacher and students.



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# Relationship between VAK Learning Styles and Problem Solving Styles regarding Gender and Students' Fields of Study

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**Abstract**—This study aimed to identify VAK learning styles and problem solving styles of students, to check the relationship between these and to investigate the differences in the above-mentioned styles between male and female students and their fields of study. To this end, 102 students were selected through convenient sampling from Boushehr Islamic Azad University (Iran). Reid's learning style and Cassidy and Long's problem solving style questionnaires were administered to the sample. The data gathered were subjected to the statistical procedure of Pearson Product Moment correlation, two way repeated measures ANOVA, and Independent sample *t*-test. The results indicated that there is a positive relationship between VAK learning styles and problem solving styles. The results also showed that fields of study did not have an effect on VAK learning styles and problem solving styles. Further, it was found that gender has no effect on VAK learning styles, but it has an effect on problem solving styles.

**Index Terms**—problem solving styles, VAK learning styles, fields of study, gender

## I. INTRODUCTION

In the study, two variables were used; the first one was VAK learning styles, the original VAK concepts were first developed by psychologists and child teaching specialists such as Fernald, Keller, Orton, Gillingham, Stillman and Montessori, starting in the 1920's. VAK theory is now a favorite of the accelerated learning community because its principles and benefits extend to all types of learning and development, far beyond its early applications. The Visual-Auditory-Kinesthetic learning style model does not overlay Gardner's multiple intelligences, or Kolb's theory; rather the VAK model provides a different perspective for understanding and explaining a person's preferred or dominant thinking and learning style, and strengths. Gardner's theory is one way of looking at learning styles; Kolb and VAK are still other ways. The VAK learning style uses the three main sensory receivers: Visual, Auditory, and Kinesthetic to determine the dominant learning style, and it is sometimes known as VAKT (Visual, Auditory, Kinesthetic, & Tactile). (Alan Chapman, 2005-2012)

Visual learners prefer to learn via the visual channel. Therefore, they like to read a lot, which requires concentration and time spent alone. Visual learners need the visual stimulation of bulletin boards, video and movies. They must have written directions if they are to function well in the classroom". (Oxford, 1995, p. 35)

Auditory learners enjoy the oral-aural learning channel. Thus, they want to engage in discussions, conversations, and group work. These students typically require only oral directions". (Oxford, 1995, p. 36)

Kinesthetic learners are those who "imply total physical involvement with a learning environment such as taking a field trip, dramatizing, pantomiming, or interviewing". (Kinsella, 1995, p. 172)

Tactile learners learn with one's hands through manipulation or resources, such as writing, drawing, building a model, or conducting a lab experiment". (Kinsella, 1995, p. 172)

The second variable was problem solving style. Problem solving style has emerged in the literature as an important variable in the development and maintenance of affective disorders. (Cassidy & Long, 1996). The concept of problem solving style originated in the literature on coping styles (Billings & Moos, 1981) and was developed through the work of Heppner and Petersen (1982) and Nezu (1987). This study attempted to investigate the relationship between these two variables. It aimed to reveal how gender and fields of study have an effect on these two variables.

## II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Everyone learns in different ways. Some people need to see things (visual style), some need to hear (auditory style), and some need to do something with the things in order to learn them (kinesthetic style). Sometimes not knowing the learning styles may cause anxiety. The present research intends to investigate the relationship between those styles and problem solving styles. The issue of problem solving has attracted the attention of many researchers. The findings show

that it is not so much important that people face problems and difficulties in their lives, but what is important is to behave correctly when facing problems. Some people are not even able to solve their routine problems and when facing a trivial problem they become embarrassed, upset and tense (Shokohi-Yekta & Parands, 2008).

### III. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to investigate both VAK learning styles of EFL students of Boushehr Azad University and problem solving styles they use. In addition to these, this study aimed at finding out whether there are significant differences in VAK learning styles and problem solving styles according to students' gender and students' fields of study, thus the following research question were formulated:

- RQ 1: Is there a relationship between VAK learning style and problem solving style?
- RQ 2: Is there a difference in VAK learning style of students based on their gender?
- RQ 3: Is there a difference in problem solving styles of students based on their gender?
- RQ 4: What are problem solving styles that are used by students based on their fields of study?
- RQ 5: Which methods of VAK learning style are used by students based on their fields of study?

### IV. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Much research has been done on learning style preferences in different sex, level, and fields of study. Chemistry curriculum, physiology courses, nursing and midwifery courses, and occupational therapy are some of the courses, in which research has been done. The present study has been done on different fields of study. Political sciences, laws, economics are the new courses for learning style preferences; and as for problem solving styles, most of the research, is in psychology and medicine domain and a few in teaching. In the following paragraphs, different research on learning styles and problem solving styles will be explained.

Dobson (2010) compared learning style preferences and sex and course performance. His results showed that there was a relationship between learning style and sex and course performance, and also Bidabadi and Yamat (2010) did a study on learning style preferences. The results demonstrated that there was no statistically significant difference between the mean scores of male and female students' learning style preferences (Bidabadi, F. SH., & Yamat, H. (2010)). Mulalic, Mohd Shah, and Ahmad (2009) attempted to determine the learning styles of the students, and the differences in learning styles of the students according to their gender and ethnicity. Results revealed that the students' preferred learning style was Kinesthetic. They expressed minor preference for Visual, and Auditory (Mulalic, A., Mohd Shah, P., & Ahmad, F. (2009)). Wehrwein, Lujan, and DiCarlo (2007) carried out a research on gender differences in learning style preferences among undergraduate physiology students. Their findings showed that male and female students have significantly different learning styles (Wehrwein, E., Lujan, H., & DiCarlo, S. (2007)). Bricheno, and Younger, (2004) revealed some unexpected results of a learning styles intervention. The analysis of data from the common VAK questionnaire suggested that contrary to expectations derived from assertions within some of the literature, there was no significant relationship between gender and preferred learning styles. Individual boys did not necessarily prefer a kinesthetic learning style compared to a visual or auditory one; indeed, data from across the four schools reveals that few boys apparently held such preferences and that the proportions of boys and girls identified as having a kinesthetic learning style were very similar (Bricheno, P., & Younger, M. (2004)).

Mohammadi, Alizadeh, and Sedaghat (2011) did research on divorce and problem solving style. The results revealed that most common problem solving styles among the participants were avoidance, approach and creativity respectively (Mohammadi, R., Alizadeh, KH., & Sedaghat, M. (2011)). Sarvghad and Dianat (2009) conducted a study aimed at investigating the learning and problem solving styles of university students. The results of the study showed that there was a significant relationship between students' learning styles and their problem solving styles. It was also indicated that there was a significant relationship between students' major and the patterns of use of both learning styles and problem solving styles. Further, it was revealed that there was a statistically significant difference between the pattern of use of problem solving styles of male and female students (Sarvghad, S., & Dianat, A. S. (2009)). Babapour, RasoulzudehTabaTabei, FathiAshtiani, and Ezhehei (2003) conducted a study on the relationship between problem solving styles and psychological well-Being among university students. They revealed that there is a partial gender difference between males and females in problem solving styles, so that females utilize avoidant problem solving style more than males (Babapour, K. J., RasoulzudehTabaTabei, k., Fathi Ashtiani, A., & Ezhehei, J. (2003)). Cassidy (2002) investigated the relationship between problem solving style, achievement motivation, psychological distress and effectiveness in an emergency in 107 volunteers in a simulated aircraft disaster. Effectiveness was measured in terms of the speed of egress averaged across four trials and the total number of bonuses earned. The best predictor of speed of egress was problem-solving confidence, while those who earned most bonuses tended to score higher on problem solving creativity, dominance and status aspiration (Cassidy, T. (2002), 325-332).

### V. METHODOLOGY

Population of this study was 102 students of Boushehr Azad University, from this population all subjects were selected through convenient sampling.

### A. Participants

The participants in this study were one hundred and two EFL learners majoring in political sciences, law, and economics at Boushehr Azad University, Iran. They were 59 male and 43 female freshmen students. The age of the learners ranged between 19 and 34 for political sciences (there were two male students with the age of 44 and 56 in political sciences as outliers), between 18 and 26 for economics, and between 18 and 24 for law (there was one male student with the age of 35 as an outlier). They were all Iranians and participated in this research willingly.

### B. Instruments

Reid's (1987) perceptual learning style preference questionnaire (PLSPQ) was used, according to Almasa Mulalic (2009), Reid's (1987) perceptual learning style preference questionnaire is valid enough to be used in this study. The questionnaire, which was designed and validated for non-native speakers, consists of five statements on each of the six learning styles to be measured: visual, auditory, kinesthetic, tactile, group learning, and individual learning. The first four categories are in the perceptual learning style categories, so they were used for the current study (Reid, 1987). The students responded based on Likert-scale, they chose one of these choices 1-strongly agree, 2-agree, 3-undecided 4-disagree, 5-strongly disagree.

Problem solving style questionnaire: this questionnaire which was designed by Cassidy and Long (1996) contains 28 items that have three choices which totally evaluated 7 factors or problem solving styles. These factors are:

1) Helplessness style, which shows that the individual is totally helplessness in problematic situation. 2) Control style that reflects inner-outer in problematic situations.

3) Creative style which show planning and considering various solutions.

4) Confidence style that believes the individual can solve the problem.

5) Avoidance style that reflects ignoring and rejecting the problem rather than facing it.

6) Approach style that shows positive attitude towards problems and tendency to face them.

7) Support Seeking style.

This measure is a useful, valid and reliable instrument to evaluate problem solving styles (Mohammadi, 1997). Mohammadi and Sahebi (2001) reported the reliability of this instrument using Cronbach's alpha coefficient as .66. In a study conducted by Babapoor Kheyroodin and Ezhey (2002) alpha coefficient was equal to .77.

The Persian translations of the questionnaires were used. The translations were done by the researcher, edited by a teacher, then they were back translated from Persian to English by an M.A. student. The researcher compared the translated texts with the original texts and no difference was identified, so the Persian translations of the questionnaires were used.

### C. Procedure

Students completed both of the questionnaires during class time, they completed them at the same time. At first, students completed the Persian version of the Perceptual Learning style Preference Questionnaire (PLSPQ). There was no time limit for answering the questionnaire. The researcher asked the students to write their age, gender, and major down, because of being important for the research. The researcher administrated the questionnaire herself. She asked the participants to mark one of the choices 1-strongly agree, 2-agree, 3- undecided 4-disagree, 5-strongly disagree. Score 5 was allocated to strongly agree, 4 to agree, 3 to undecided, 2 to disagree, and 1 to strongly disagree.

After completing the first questionnaire, the researcher ask the students to fill in the second questionnaire. The Persian version of the problem solving style questionnaire was given to the students (PSSQ). The participants were asked to mark one of the choices from true to false. Score 3 was allocated to true, 2 to?, and 1 to false.

### D. Data Analyses

To analyze the results of the first test (PLSPQ), Two way Repeated Measures ANOVA was used; with a Two way Repeated Measures ANOVA, there are three analyses to consider. The main effect for each of the two independent variables and the interaction between them. As Table 1 shows gender and fields of study as independent variables do not have an effect on VAK learning styles, because the P value is not significant and the interaction was also insignificant, meaning that there is no effect of gender on fields of study or vice-versa.

TABLE 1.  
TWO WAY REPEATED MEASURES ANOVA FOR VAK LEARNING STYLES, GENDER, AND FIELDS OF STUDY

Effect		Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.
VAK components	Wilks' Lambda	.968	1.032 <sup>a</sup>	3.000	94.000	.382
VAK components * sex	Wilks' Lambda	.997	.108 <sup>a</sup>	3.000	94.000	.955
VAK components * Major	Wilks' Lambda	.938	1.023 <sup>a</sup>	6.000	188.000	.412
VAK components * sex * Major	Wilks' Lambda	.967	.527 <sup>a</sup>	6.000	188.000	.787

To analyze the results of the second test (PSSQ), Two way Repeated Measures ANOVA was used; it was found that P value for problem solving styles is significant, but is unknown whether gender or fields of study have an effect on problem solving styles. So One way ANOVA was used to see the effect of fields of study on problem solving styles, but

the obtained data revealed that fields of study do not have effect on problem solving styles, and to know which style, gender has effect on, Independent sample *t*-test was carried out. As Table3 shows, control style has a P vale less than 0.05, which means that gender has an effect on this style, and according to Table 4. male has a higher mean than female, which means that male students have a higher inner-outer control in problematic situations. The interaction between gender and fields of study was not significant, meaning that there is no effect of gender on fields of study or vice-versa.

TABLE 2  
TWO WAY REPEATED MEASURES ANOVA FOR PROBLEM SOLVING STYLES, GENDER, AND FIELDS OF STUDY

Effect		Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.
Problem solving	Wilks' Lambda	.288	37.407 <sup>a</sup>	6.000	91.000	.000
Problem solving * sex	Wilks' Lambda	.907	1.557 <sup>a</sup>	6.000	91.000	.169
Problem solving * Major	Wilks' Lambda	.897	.848 <sup>a</sup>	12.000	182.000	.601
Problem solving * sex * Major	Wilks' Lambda	.828	1.505 <sup>a</sup>	12.000	182.000	.126

TABLE 3.  
INDEPENDENT SAMPLE T- TEST FOR PROBLEM SOLVING STYLES AND GENDER

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
control	Equal variances assumed	.116	.734	2.129	100	.036	.79267	.37238	.05389	1.53145
	Equal variances not assumed			2.136	91.787	.035	.79267	.37108	.05565	1.52968

TABLE 4.  
MEAN FOR CONTROL STYLE

	sex	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
control	male	59	8.9322	1.87418	.24400
	female	43	8.1395	1.83331	.27958

In order to determine whether there was a statistically meaningful relationship between VAK learning styles and problem solving styles of the students, the Pearson Product Moment correlation was computed.

TABLE5.  
PEARSON CORRELATION BETWEEN THE VAK LEARNING STYLES AND PROBLEM SOLVING STYLES

		VAK	PROBLEM
VAK	Pearson Correlation	1	.329**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.001
	N	102	102

The correlational analyses revealed a positive relationship between VAK learning styles and problem solving styles at the 0.01 level of significance. But Table 5 didn't tell anything about the relationship between the components of VAK learning styles and problem solving styles, so another Pearson Product Moment correlation was used, the results are summed up in Table6. The results revealed that confidence learning style significantly correlated with tactile learning style at  $p < .05$  significance value with Pearson correlation being 0.198 and  $p = 0.047$  (see Table 6.). This implies that tactile learners are more confident and can solve the problem when facing a difficult situation.

Creativity learning style significantly correlated with auditory, tactile, and kinesthetic learning styles at  $p < .05$  significance value with Pearson correlation being 0.283(0.004), 0.247(0.012), and 0.287(0.003) respectively (see Table 6.). Therefore, it shows that auditory, tactile and kinesthetic learners plan and consider various solutions when they face a problem. It was also found that there was a significant relationship between avoidance learning style and kinesthetic learning style at  $p < .05$  significance level , the correlation coefficient was found 0.226 (0.022). It means that kinesthetic learners prefer to ignore and reject the problem rather than face it.

The results also indicated that seeking support learning style significantly correlated with auditory, tactile, and kinesthetic learning styles at  $p < .05$  significance value with Pearson correlation being 0.209 (0.035), 0.320 (0.001) ,and 0.213 (0.031). Therefore, the results show that auditory, tactile, and kinesthetic learners when facing a problem get help from other people.

TABLE 6.  
PEARSON CORRELATION FOR THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE COMPONENTS OF VAK LEARNING STYLES AND COMPONENTS OF PROBLEM SOLVING STYLES

		visual	auditory	tactile	kinesthetic
helplessness	Pearson Correlation	.006	-.178	-.144	-.038
	P	.955	.073	.149	.702
control	Pearson Correlation	-.075	.017	.143	.085
	P	.454	.864	.153	.394
confidence	Pearson Correlation	.176	.143	.198*	.176
	P	.077	.150	<b>.047</b>	.077
creativity	Pearson Correlation	.017	.283**	.247*	.287**
	P	.867	<b>.004</b>	<b>.012</b>	<b>.003</b>
Avoidance	Pearson Correlation	.038	.115	.141	.226*
	P	.701	.249	.158	<b>.022</b>
Approach	Pearson Correlation	.090	.145	.100	.064
	P	.370	.147	.316	.522
Support Seeking	Pearson Correlation	.053	.209*	.320**	.213*
	P	.599	<b>.035</b>	<b>.001</b>	<b>.031</b>

## VI. DISCUSSION

In this section, reported results are discussed and the research questions are answered. The first question dealt with the relationship between VAK learning styles and problem solving styles. The correlational analysis for VAK learning styles and problem solving styles was carried out and it shows a positive relationship between VAK learning styles and problem solving styles.

To know more about the components of VAK learning styles and problem solving styles, the results are summed up in Table 6. According to this Table, the first component of VAK learning styles is visual style; there is no relationship between this style and the components of problem solving styles. The second style of VAK learning style is auditory style; this style has a positive relationship with Creativity style and Support Seeking. The third style of VAK learning styles is tactile style; this style has a positive relationship with Confidence, Creativity, and Support Seeking styles. The last component of VAK learning styles is kinesthetic style; this style has a positive relationship with Creativity, Avoidance, and Support Seeking styles.

The second question posed in this study, (Is there a difference in VAK learning style of students based on their gender?) is going to be answered and discussed, according to the obtained results. According to Table 1 gender does not have any effects on VAK learning styles.

The third question in this study, (Is there a difference in problem solving styles of students based on their gender?) is answered according to Table 2. It was found that gender has no effect on problem solving styles, except for one style. In all other styles the P value is bigger than 0.05. Table 4.3 shows that, control style has a P value less than 0.05, which means that gender has an effect on this style, and according to Table 4, male has a higher mean than that of female.

The fourth question of this study is: What are the problem solving styles that are used by students based on their fields of study? According to Table 2, it can be concluded that fields of study have no effect on problem solving styles, because the P value is bigger than 0.05 in all cases.

The last question, posed in this study, is: Which methods of VAK learning styles are used by students based on their fields of study? It can be concluded that fields of study have no effect on VAK learning styles, because the P value is bigger than 0.05 in all cases based on Table 1.

The last part in discussion section deals with previous research. Dobson (2010) compared learning style preferences and sex and course performance. His results showed that there was a relationship between learning style and sex and course performance, these results also supported the studies done by Wehrwein, Lujan, and DiCarlo (2007), Bricheno, and Younger, (2004), in contrast to this study, Bidabadi and Yamat (2010) found out that there was no statistically significant difference between the mean scores of male and female students' learning style preferences, whose research support the current study.

Sarvghad and Dianat (2009) revealed that there was a statistically significant difference between the pattern of use of problem solving styles of male and female students, and the study by Babapour, Rasoulzudeh TabaTabei, FathiAshtiani, and Ezhehei (2003) revealed that there is a partial gender difference between males and females in problem solving styles. These two studies share some similar aspects with the current study.

The current study investigated the relationship between VAK learning styles and problem solving styles of university students and the results showed that there was a relationship between VAK learning styles and problem solving styles. This result supported the study conducted by Sarvghad and Dianat (2009). They conducted a study aimed at investigating the learning and problem solving styles of university students. The results indicated that there was a significant relationship between students' learning styles and problem solving styles.

## VII. CONCLUSION

The aim of the study was to investigate the relationship between VAK learning styles and problem solving styles regarding gender and students' fields of study. The results of the study show that there is a positive relationship between VAK learning styles and problem solving styles at the 0.01 level of significance. No statistically significant gender difference in VAK learning style category was found between females and males, but gender has an effect on one style of problem solving styles; Fields of study have no effect on VAK learning styles and problem solving styles.

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**“A Study on the Pragmatic Fossilization of Discourse Markers among Chinese English Learners”**

by

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[2] Jesús Romero Trillo. (2002). The pragmatic fossilization of discourse markers in non-native speakers of English. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 34, 769-784.

# Cultural Capital and English Language Achievement at Grade Three in Iranian High Schools

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**Abstract**—This study administered the Persian cultural capital scale (CCS) compiled by Khodadady and Natanzi (2012) to three hundred and ten grade three high school (G3HS) students. The subjection of the collected data to the principal axis factoring and rotating the extracted latent variables via Varimax with Kaiser Normalization produced nine factors, i.e., *Cultural Investment*, *Religious Commitment*, *Artistic Appreciation*, *Cultural Visits*, *Cultural Commitment*, *Cultural Curiosity*, *Cultured Family*, *Literate Family*, and *Higher Education*. These results showed that compared to university students, more factors underlie G3HS students' cultural capitals. Reliability and correlational analyses showed that not only the CCS itself but also its eight factors were reliable and most of them correlated significantly with each other. Although no significant relationship could be found between the CCS and scores on English as a foreign language (EFL), one of its underlying factors, i.e., *Literate Family*, correlated positively and significantly with the EFL. Another factor, i.e., *Religious Commitment*, however, revealed a negatively significant relationship with the EFL. Results are discussed and suggestions are made for future research.

**Index Terms**—culture, religion, family, foreign language

## I. INTRODUCTION

The phrase *cultural capital* consists of two schemata, i.e., *cultural* and *capital*, which have proved to be of great educational importance not only to sociolinguists but also to sociologists. The semantic noun schema *culture* to which the morph *al* has been added to delineate its descriptive or adjectival role in the phrase, does not represent “whatever it is one has to know or believe in order to operate in a manner acceptable to its members and to do so in any role that they accept for any one of themselves” (Goodenough, 1967, p. 167). It does, however, refer to ‘high culture’ reflected in “the appreciation of music, literature, the arts, and so on” (Wardhaugh, 1992, p. 217).

*Capital* as the second adjective schema constituting the phrase *cultural capital* stands for “any resource which confers an advantage on those who hold it and which, further, can be accumulated and passed on through mechanisms of inheritance” (Bennett & Silva, 2011, p. 430). Having a library at home is, for example, considered as an indicator of cultural capital which can be used by grade three high school (G3HS) students to achieve their educational objectives better than their peers in the field of secondary education.

Although Ayre (2012) took an extreme position and asserted that “there has been little agreement as to how cultural capital should be measured, or even if it can be measured” (p. 2), a number of studies have developed questionnaires (e.g., Sullivan, 2001) or employed qualitative approaches such as in-depth interviews (e.g., Devine, 2004) to explore what factors underlie cultural capital and whether the factors have had any significant relationships with variables such as reading ability and General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) exams.

Jæger (2009), for example, employed the data collected from 2,234 students aged 15 by Danish PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) survey and analysed them via a customized empirical model and found a significant correlation between the respondents' reading ability and parents' stock of cultural capital such as home educational resources ( $r = .05$ ,  $p < .01$ ), cultural communication, i.e., often children report that their parents discuss 1) political or social issues and 2) books, films or television programs with them, ( $r = .26$ ,  $p < .001$ ), family socioeconomic status ( $r = .007$ ,  $p < .001$ ), father's level of education ( $r = .08$ ,  $p < .001$ ), and mother's level of education ( $r = .09$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

A review of literature shows that few studies, if any, have attempted to develop a reliable measure to explore the latent variables underlying cultural capital in given contexts. As Carter (2003) convincingly argued, cultural capital is context-specific. This often-neglected feature of psychological measures necessitates their validation in various societies where variables explored by these measures interact with each other differently. Khodadady and Golparvar (2011), for example, showed that while two factors underlie the religious orientation scale developed by Allport and Ross (1967) in America, it increases to four in Iran.

Khodadady and Natanzi (2012) [henceforth K&N] were among the first researchers who reviewed the literature in general and Lareau and Weininger's (2003) study in particular, selected the most salient cultural indicators, and added them to those already selected by Khodadady and Zabihi (2011) and Khodadady, Alee and Natanzi (2011) and developed the first cultural capital scale (CCS) in Mashhad, Iran.

K&N administered their 31-item Persian CCS to 381 English students of five universities. When they applied the Principal Axis Factoring to their data and rotated the results via Varimax with Kaiser Normalization, they extracted eight factors underlying the university students' cultural capital, i.e., *Cultured Family*, *Cultural Commitment*, *Cultural Investment*, *Religious Commitment*, *Cultural Visits*, *Literary and Art Studies*, *Art Appreciation*, and *Literate Family*, and concluded that cultural capital is not a unitary construct.

The present study is designed to find out whether the administration of the K&N's CCS to G3HS students will result in extracting the same number of factors. In addition to exploring the factorial validity of the CCS with the participants of a homogeneous age and educational level, the study aims to find out whether there is any significant relationship between the G3HS students' cultural capital and their achievement in English as a foreign language (EFL).

## II. METHODOLOGY

### A. Participants

Three hundred and ten G3HS students, 170 (54.8%) female and 140 (45.2%) male, took part in the study voluntarily. They had registered as full time students at Zeynabiyeh, Allameh, Allameh Tabtabaii and Narjess girls' schools in districts two and three and Sheikh Ansari Shahed. Imam Ali, Jamaran and Private Mafakher boys' high schools in districts one, five and six of Mashhad education bureaus. Their age ranged between 16 and 19 (Mean = 17.13, SD = .47) and they spoke Persian (n = 307, 99%), Lori (n = 1, .3%), Turkish (n = 1, .3%), and Arabic (n = 1, .3%) as their mother language.

### B. Instruments

A bio data questionnaire, cultural capital scale and overall scores on English achievement were used in the study.

#### *Bio data questionnaire*

A bio data questionnaire consisting of five short answer open-ended questions dealing with the students' school name, educational district, gender and age was used to collect demographic information.

#### *Cultural Capital Scale*

The Persian cultural capital scale compiled and validated by K&N was employed in this study. It consists of thirty one cultural indicators specified by a number of researchers. (Interest readers are suggested to consult the K&N for a brief description of sources from which the indicators have been taken.) Each indicator is presented on a five-point Likert scale requiring the participant to indicate whether they always, usually, often, seldom or never did a certain type of cultural activity such as listening to music. The values of 5, 3, 2, and 1 were then assigned to these five points to quantify the elicited responses, respectively.

#### *Overall scores on English*

Since the questionnaires employed in this study were administered at the end of school year in Iran, the EFL teachers were asked to write down the overall score of each student on English. The score is formally reported out of twenty as the average of scores obtained by students contributions to the discussions brought up in the class, quizzes held during the year, and final written examination measuring the students grammar and vocabulary knowledge as well as reading comprehension ability.

### C. Procedure

Upon having the bio data and the Persian CCS copied, the second author who teaches English as a foreign language (EFL) in high schools herself contacted the EFL teachers in the specified seven schools and asked them to encourage their students to take part in the project. Upon their approval, she attended the classes on previously specified dates, administered the questionnaires in person and answer the participants' questions and concerns. Since both measures were in Persian, no serious questions were raised as regards the content of cultural indicators and they were thus administered under standard conditions. The participants were asked to hand in their completed questionnaires to their teacher who wrote their English scores in a specified slot by checking their records.

### D. Data Analysis

For determining the well functioning of indicators comprising the Persian CCS their descriptive statistics were calculated. The reliability of the CCS was then estimated to ensure that it yields a stable measure of cultural capital among the G3HS students. The cultural capital indicators were then subjected to Principal Axis Factoring and the factors extracted were rotated via Varimax with Kaiser Normalization to determine what latent variables underlie the students' cultural capital. For determining the number of factors, eigenvalues of one and higher were adopted as criteria.

The descriptive statistics and reliability of the factors extracted were also estimated to have a better picture of their functioning. The factors were then correlated with each other to find out whether they had any significant relationships with each other. The CCS and its factors were finally correlated with the G3HS students' English scores to determine

whether they were related to each other. The descriptive as well as inferential statistics were estimated via IBM SPSS Statistics 19.0 to test the five hypotheses below.

- H1. The CCS will be a reliable measure of cultural capital.
- H2. The factors underlying the CCS will be reliable.
- H3. The factors underlying the CCS will correlate significantly with each other.
- H4. The CCS will correlate significantly with the G3HS students' scores on English.
- H5. The factors underlying the CCS will correlate significantly with the G3HS students' scores on English.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics and the reliability coefficient of the CCS administered in this study and those of K&N. (The descriptive statistics of indicators comprising the CCS is given in Appendix.) As can be seen, the alpha reliability coefficient of the CCS in this study is 0.84, *confirming* the first hypothesis that *the CCS will be a reliable measure of cultural capitals*. The coefficient is, however, slightly lower than the one reported by K&N for university students, i.e., 0.86, which might be attributed to the difference in the number of participants in the two studies.

TABLE 1  
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS AND RELIABILITY COEFFICIENT OF THE CCS

CCS	N	No of loading items	Mean	SD	Alpha
Present study	310	30	87.42	15.959	.84
K&N	381	29	90.40	16.707	.86

Table 2 presents the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy of this and K&N's studies, i.e., 0.80 and 0.83, respectively. As can be seen, both KMO statistics are in the .80s, indicating that the sample selected in the study was as "meritorious" (DiLalla & Dollinger 2006, p. 250) as that of K&N. As it can also be seen, the significant Bartlett's Test of Sphericity, i.e.,  $X^2 = 2449.014$ ,  $df = 465$ ,  $p < .001$ , showed that the correlation matrix was not an identity matrix.

TABLE 2  
KMO AND BARTLETT'S TEST

	This study	K&N
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy	.798	.830
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	2449.014
	df	465
	Sig.	.000

Table 3 presents the initial communalities (IC) and extracted communalities (EC) obtained from the 31 CC indicators in this and K&N studies. As can be seen, the lowest extraction communalities in the studies are .21 (Items 6 and 24) and .18 (Items 6 and 26), respectively. These results do not support Costello and Osborne's (2005) suggestion of .40 as the lowest acceptable communality. They do, however, support K&N's acceptance of any communality whose item loads acceptably on a factor. It is also suggested in this study that regardless of its EC magnitude, any item loading negatively on a factor be considered as non-contributive to the construct under study.

TABLE 3  
INITIAL COMMUNALITIES (IC) AND EXTRACTED COMMUNALITIES (EC) OBTAINED VIA PAF

Item	This study		K&N		Item	This study		K&N		Item	This study		K&N	
	IC	EC	IC	EC		IC	EC	IC	EC		IC	EC	IC	EC
I1	.46	.56	.34	.39	I12	.38	.44	.47	.54	I23	.34	.61	.32	.29
I2	.50	.59	.37	.56	I13	.29	.29	.47	.49	I24	.32	.33	.31	.33
I3	.32	.34	.34	.35	I14	.40	.51	.49	.57	I25	.20	.21	.26	.23
I4	.46	.59	.46	.54	I15	.43	.49	.49	.53	I26	.25	.29	.46	.54
I5	.42	.61	.50	.75	I16	.24	.26	.42	.50	I27	.26	.27	.25	.18
I6	.19	.21	.20	.18	I17	.21	.24	.35	.37	I28	.27	.36	.39	.51
I7	.29	.29	.33	.30	I18	.32	.60	.57	.59	I29	.26	.43	.25	.30
I8	.51	.62	.51	.55	I19	.25	.32	.61	.70	I30	.30	.30	.39	.41
I9	.44	.50	.51	.51	I20	.18	.31	.43	.49	I31	.57	.65	.60	.66
I10	.55	.67	.62	.76	I21	.21	.24	.38	.41		.52	.65	.52	.56
I11	.28	.50	.37	.45	I22									

Item one, *I like to listen to music*, for example, has the ECs of .39 and loads acceptably on factors four (-.32) and seven (.51), respectively, in K&N's study. However, K&N ignored the negative loading on factor four and adopted the positive and acceptable loading of .51 on factor seven as the main contribution of the item to this factor. In contrast, as shown in Table 4, the same item loads negatively only on factor two, indicating that whatever the factor represents, item one does it in the opposite direction. For this very reason it was treated as non-contributive in this study. Similarly, item

two loads negatively on factor two (-.55). It does, nonetheless, load positively on factor three (.40) and this very positive loading renders it as a constituting indicator of factor three only.

TABLE 4  
ROTATED FACTORS UNDERLYING THE CCS

Item	Factors									Item	Factors								
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
I01	*	-.62	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	I17	*	*	*	*	*	*	.35	*	*
I02	*	-.55	.40	*	*	*	*	*	*	I18	*	*	*	*	*	*	.75	*	*
I03	*	*	.46	*	*	*	*	*	.30	I19	*	*	*	*	*	*	.50	*	*
I04	*	*	*	.69	*	*	*	*	*	I20	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	.47
I05	*	*	*	.71	*	*	*	*	*	I21	*	*	*	*	.31	*	*	*	*
I06	*	.30	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	I22	*	*	*	*	.74	*	*	*	*
I07	.40	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	I23	*	*	*	*	.42	.31	*	*	*
I08	.71	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	I24	*	*	*	*	.33	*	*	*	*
I09	.61	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	I25	*	.41	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
I10	.76	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	I26	*	*	*	*	*	.32	*	*	*
I11	*	*	*	*	*	.65	*	*	*	I27	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	.49	*
I12	.33	*	*	*	*	.48	*	*	*	I28	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	.62	*
I13	*	*	*	*	*	.30	*	*	*	I29	.36	*	.33	*	*	*	*	*	*
I14	*	.65	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	I30	*	*	.68	*	*	*	*	*	*
I15	*	.67	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	I31	*	*	.72	*	*	*	*	*	*
I16	*	.37	*	*	*	*	*	*	*										

\* Loadings less than .30

Table 5 presents the descriptive statistics of the nine rotated factors underlying the CCS. As can be seen, the alpha RCs of eight factors range from .50 to .74, largely confirming the second hypothesis that the factors underlying the CCS will be reliable. While factors one and four have the highest RC, i.e.,  $\alpha = .74$  and  $.72$ , respectively, factor four has the lowest,  $\alpha = .50$ , which might be attributed to the fewness of its constituting items and lower standard deviation as compared to factor four comprising the same number of items.

TABLE 5  
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF THE NINE ROTATED FACTORS UNDERLYING THE CCS

F	Name	# of item	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	Variance explained	Alpha
1	Cultural Investment	5	14.07	5.145	.119	-.852	7.464	.74
2	Religious Commitment	5	14.06	3.826	.240	-.321	6.783	.65
3	Artistic Appreciation	4	11.09	4.011	.134	-.654	6.195	.70
4	Cultural Visits	2	5.23	2.029	.499	-.202	4.233	.72
5	Cultural Commitment	4	11.63	3.691	.047	-.432	4.189	.57
6	Cultural Curiosity	4	9.47	3.384	.427	-.421	4.086	.60
7	Cultured Family	3	12.57	2.157	-1.364	2.381	4.001	.53
8	Literate Family	2	4.81	1.882	.602	.210	3.257	.50
9	Higher Education	1	4.49	1.114	-2.618	6.705	2.464	-
	CCS	30	87.42	15.959	.154	-.144	42.673	.84

Table 6 presents five items, i.e., I07, I08, I09, I10, and I29, comprising Cultural Investment as the first factor. As can be seen, most of its items load on the third factor for university students with item I29 loading on a different factor, indicating that Cultural Investment is of first priority for G3HS students. Out of 42.7 it explains 7.464% of variance in the scale and shows the highest significant correlation with the sixth factor called Cultural Curiosity, i.e.,  $r = .45$ ,  $p < .01$ , in this study.

TABLE 6  
INDICATORS LOADINGS ON CULTURAL INVESTMENT AS THE FIRST FACTOR (F)

Item	Loading	K&N		Indicator
		F	Loading	
I10	.76	3	.85	I buy lots of books, study and keep them in my library.
I08	.71	3	.68	I have extracurricular study in my leisure time
I09	.61	3	.69	I have personal library in my room and add new books to that.
I07	.40	3	.39	I have library membership
I29	.36	6	.49	I am interested in literature and poetry and have literal study

Table 7 presents the loadings of items I06, I14, I15, I16 and I25 constituting the second factor, i.e., Religious Commitment, underlying the G3HS students' cultural capital. This factor occupies the fourth position for university students whose Religious Commitment does not involve eating in traditional eateries. Out of 42.7 it explains 6.78% of variance in the scale and correlates he highest with the sixth factor, i.e., Cultural Curiosity, i.e.,  $r = .26$ ,  $p < .01$ , in this study.

TABLE 7  
INDICATORS LOADINGS ON RELIGIOUS COMMITMENT AS THE SECOND FACTOR (F)

Item	Loading	K&N		Indicator
		F	Loading	
I15	.67	4	.67	I attend commentary classes on the Quran and Hadith.
I14	.65	4	.70	I listen to religious radio stations
I25	.41	4	.66	While traveling, I prefer to visit shrines of Imam’s offspring
I16	.37	4	.58	I visit the holy shrine of Imam Reza regularly.
I06	.30	-	-	I prefer to eat in traditional eateries than in fast food restaurant.

Table 8 presents items I02, I03, I30 and I31 loading acceptably on factor three, *Artistic Appreciation*. As can be seen, while items 30 and 31 along with item 29 contribute to university students’ sixth factor, *Literary and Art Studies*, items I01, I02 and I03 constitute their seventh factor, *Artistic Appreciation* as found by K&N. The loadings of these items on a single factor for G3HS students shows that some cultural factors become more distinct over years and education. Out of 42.7 it explains 6.2% of variance in the scale and correlates the highest with *Cultural Visits*, i.e.,  $r = .41, p < .01$ , establishing the closest relationship between the two factors.

TABLE 8  
INDICATORS LOADINGS ON ARTISTIC APPRECIATION AS THE THIRD FACTOR (F)

Item	Loading	K&N		Indicator
		F	Loading	
I31	.72	6	.45	I attend art courses.
I30	.68	6	.54	I visit art exhibitions
I03	.46	7	.38	I enjoy watching theatres on TV.
I02	.40	7	.71	I like to attend art courses and play an instrument.

Table 9 presents items I04 and I05 loading acceptably on factor four, *Cultural Visits*. As can be seen, the same items load on the same factor for university students and thus reveal the factorially confirmed constant nature of *Cultural Visits* over years and education. Out of 42.7 it explains 4.2% of variance in the scale and correlates the highest with *Cultural Investment* i.e.,  $r = .54, p < .01$ , followed by *Artistic Appreciation* i.e.,  $r = .41, p < .01$ , emphasizing the significant role cultural investment and visits play in helping G3HS students appreciate arts.

TABLE 9  
CULTURAL CAPITAL INDICATORS LOADINGS ON CULTURAL VISITS AS THE FOURTH FACTOR (F)

Item	Loading	K&N		Indicator
		F	Loading	
I05	.709	5	.83	I visit handy-craft galleries.
I04	.692	5	.68	I visit museum and historical places.

Table 10 presents the four items, i.e., I21, I22, I23 and I24, loading acceptably on factor five called *Cultural Commitment* by K&N. As can be seen, I22 has a much higher loading on this factor for G3HS students (.74) than university students (.46), indicating that *internet* is playing a more significant role in the *Cultural Commitment* of the former than the latter. Out of 42.7 it explains 4.2% of variance in the scale and correlates the highest with *Cultural Curiosity* i.e.,  $r = .37, p < .01$ .

TABLE 10  
INDICATORS LOADINGS ON CULTURAL COMMITMENT AS THE FIFTH FACTOR (F)

Item	Loading	K&N		Indicator
		F	Loading	
I22	.741	2	.46	I use internet for doing my different official works.
I23	.420	2	.52	I visit news and political websites
I24	.329	1	.30	I attend sport classes
I21	.308	2	.50	I watch documentaries on TV

Table 11 presents items I11, I12, I13, and I26 loading acceptably on factor six, *Cultural Curiosity* extracted in this study. As can be seen, three out of four of its constituting items load on *Cultural Commitment* for university students, indicating that culture loses its attractive nature as the students leave high schools. *Cultural Curiosity* involves not only buying newspaper and reading scientific magazines, but also solving cross-word puzzles which disappears when the students enter universities. Out of 42.7 it explains 4.1% of variance in the scale and correlates the highest with *Cultural Investment* i.e.,  $r = .45, p < .01$ .

TABLE 11  
INDICATORS LOADINGS ON *CULTURAL CURIOSITY* AS THE SIXTH FACTOR (F)

Item	Loading	K&N		Indicator
		F	Loading	
I11	.654	2	.60	I buy newspapers regularly every day.
I12	.475	2	.63	I read scientific magazines.
I26	.316	-	-	I solve cross-word puzzles in my free time
I13	.302	2	.56	I study cultural part of the magazines

Table 12 presents items I17, I18, and I19 loading acceptably on factor seven, *Cultured Family*. As can be seen, G3HS students are striving towards establishing themselves as worthy members of society because Item I18 confirming their being a cultured person has the highest loading (.75) on the factor whereas for university students it shifts to their being grown up in a cultured family (.78). Out of 42.7, factor seven explains 4% of variance in the CCS and correlates the highest with *Cultural Investment* i.e.,  $r = .27, p < .01$ .

TABLE 12  
INDICATORS LOADINGS ON *CULTURED FAMILY* AS THE SEVENTH FACTOR

Item	Loading	K&N		Indicator
		F	Loading	
I18	.745	1	.74	I am a cultured person
I19	.503	1	.78	I have grown up in a cultured family
I17	.351	1	.54	I have fluency in my speech and others understand me easily

Table 13 presents items I27 and I28 loading acceptably on the eighth factor, *Literate Family*. As can be seen, the highest loading item indicates the ability of G3HS students' parents to communicate in English (.62) whereas parents' studying in leisure time loads the highest for university students (.59), indicating that compared to the past, more and more parents are learning English as a language of communication in Iran. Out of 42.7, it explains 3.3% of variance in the scale and correlates the highest with *Artistic Appreciation* i.e.,  $r = .29, p < .01$ .

TABLE 13  
INDICATORS LOADINGS ON *LITERATE FAMILY* AS THE EIGHTH FACTOR

Item	Loading	K&N		Indicator
		F	Loading	
I28	.618	8	.50	My parents can communicate in English
I27	.490	8	.59	My parents study in their leisure time

Table 14 presents the only indicator, i.e., I20, which loads acceptably on the ninth factor called *Higher Education* in this study. As can be seen, this item loads on the first factor, *Cultured Family*, for university students, indicating that G3HS students view higher education as a single and distinct factor whose pursuing becomes their main goal. Out of 42.7 it explains 2.5% of variance in the scale and correlates the highest with *Cultural Investment* i.e.,  $r = .18, p < .01$ , emphasizing the primary role of *Cultural Investment* and *Cultured Family* in the lives of G3HS and university students, respectively.

TABLE 14  
THE INDICATOR LOADINGS ON *HIGHER EDUCATION* AS THE NINTH FACTOR (F)

Item	Loading	K&N		Indicator
		F	Loading	
I20	.466	1	.60	I like to continue my education to higher level

Table 15 presents the correlation coefficients obtained between the 30-item CCS, its nine factors and English achievement scores. As can be seen, out of 36 coefficients, 29 (81%) are significant and thus confirm the third hypothesis that *the factors underlying the CCS will correlate significantly with each other* to a large extent. Among the nine factors, *Religious Commitment* does not show significant relationships with *Artistic Appreciation*, *Cultured Family*, and *Literate Family*, implying that religious families may not approve with nonreligious arts, discourage their children's fluency in speech and avoid communication in English. Similarly, pursuing *Higher Education* does not significantly relate to *Cultural Visits*, *Commitment* and *Curiosity*, indicating that G3HS students who intend to continue their studies are more focused on their school studies and employ their family to achieve their goal.

TABLE 15  
CORRELATIONS BETWEEN THE 30-ITEM CCS, ITS NINE FACTORS AND ENGLISH SCORES

Factors and English	CCS	Factors								
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1 Cultural Investment	.76**	1	.23**	.37**	.33**	.32**	.45**	.27**	.25**	.18**
2 Religious Commitment	.46**	.23**	1	.01	.18**	.23**	.26**	.09	-.09	.13*
3 Artistic Appreciation	.63**	.37**	.01	1	.41**	.31**	.32**	.19**	.29**	.14*
4 Cultural Visits	.54**	.33**	.18**	.41**	1	.26**	.29**	.06	.19**	.06
5 Cultural Commitment	.64**	.32**	.23**	.31**	.26**	1	.37**	.23**	.23**	.11
6 Cultural Curiosity	.68**	.45**	.26**	.32**	.29**	.37**	1	.25**	.16**	.03
7 Cultured Family	.44**	.27**	.09	.19**	.06	.23**	.25**	1	.20**	.17**
8 Literate Family	.40**	.25**	-.09	.29**	.19**	.23**	.16**	.20**	1	.16**
9 Higher Education	.28**	.18**	.13*	.14*	.06	.11	.03	.17**	.16**	1
English Scores	.01	.02	-.17**	-.03	-.02	.07	-.02	.09	.20**	.07

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

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

As it can be seen in Table 15, learning English as a foreign language (EFL) in high schools does not show any significant relationship with cultural capital and thus *disconfirm* the *fourth* hypothesis that *the CCS will correlate significantly with the G3HS students' scores on English*. It does not correlate significantly with seven factors, either. Seventy eight percent of the results presented in Table 15 *disconfirm* the *fifth* hypothesis that *the factors underlying the CCS will correlate significantly with the G3HS students' scores on English*, questioning the generally held assumption that language and culture are closely related, especially within a context where the EFL is taught as a part of national curriculum.

English achievement, however, correlates significantly with *Literate Family* ( $r = .20, p < .01$ ) and *Religious Commitment* ( $r = -.17, p < .01$ ). These results reveal the important role parents play in their G3HS children's learning of the EFL, explaining four percent of variance in their achievement. They also show that the more religiously committed the G3HS students are, the lower their scores will be on the EFL test, calling for a national EFL policy to explore the relationship more thoroughly and change the direction to a positive one.

IV. CONCLUSION

The CCS developed by K&N and employed in the present study is a reliable and valid measure of cultural capital which can be employed to improve the quality of secondary and higher education for several reasons. First, its 31 indicators contribute to different factors underlying the CCS depending on the age and educational level of participants. While *listening to music*, for example, loads on university students' *Artistic Appreciation*, it does not load acceptably on any of the nine factors underlying the G3HS students' cultural capital, indicating that it is only higher education which helps university students appreciate music as part of their cultural capital. In contrast, only G3HS students solve cross-word puzzles as part of their *Cultural Curiosity* whereas such an action lacks relevance to university students' cultural capital in Mashhad.

Secondly, pursuing *Higher Education* reveals itself as a distinct factor for G3HS students whereas it forms a part of *Cultured Family* for university students. In other words, *Higher Education* loses its appeal as a distinct underlying variable of cultural capital and fades into *Cultured Family* once students enter university. For the G3HS students, however, pursuing *Higher Education* shows the highest significant relationships with their *Cultural Investment* followed by *Cultured Family*, reflecting its priority among these students' parents.

Thirdly, factors underlying the CCS vary in the percentages of variances they explain in the cultural capital of the members of a given society as they grow developmentally and educationally. While *Cultural Investment* explains the highest percentage in the G3HS students' cultural capital, *Cultured Family* does the same for university students. The difference highlights the distinct role of static and relational cultural capitals established by Tramonte and Willms (2010). Static cultural capital "is an expression of the family's socioeconomic advantage" reflected in their *Cultural Investment*. *Cultured Family*, however, behaves as an aspect of relational cultural capital in that it "embodies the resources and experiences of children that they can use in society to interact strategically and successfully in achieving their goals" (p. 201).

Fourthly, age and educational level contribute to the relationship between the factors underlying the CCS. The highest significant relationship is, for example, found between the *Cultural Investment* and *Cultural Curiosity* for G3HS students. For university students, however, the same relationship exists between *Cultured Family* and *Literate Family*, indicating that static cultural capital plays a more important role in G3HS students' life *if only the factors underlying the CCS are taken into account*. However, it is the *Literate Family*, i.e., an index of G3HS student' relational cultural capital, which relates positively to the EFL achievement.

And finally, achievement in the EFL shows significant relationships with two factors underling the CCS, i.e., *Religious Commitment* and *Literate Family*, though in opposite directions. The findings of this study show that the more religiously committed the G3HS students are, the less they achieve in the EFL, implying that religion-friendly EFL syllabi are needed to reverse the direction. They also indicate that among the nine factors underlying the CCS, the



parents are the pivot upon which the relational cultural capital operates to help G3HS students achieve their best in the EFL. Future research must show whether this relationship holds equally true for other grades in high schools and universities.

APPENDIX THE DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF ITEMS COMPRISING THE CCS (N = 310)

Item	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	Missing %	Never %	Seldom %	Sometimes %	Often %	Always %
I01	4.09	1.143	-1.121	.400	0	3	8	15	22	51
I02	3.30	1.582	-.360	-1.369	1	22	9	16	17	34
I03	2.44	1.270	.532	-.627	1	28	28	24	10	9
I04	2.83	1.103	.168	-.394	1	8	33	32	18	8
I05	2.40	1.188	.475	-.345	2	20	39	19	13	6
I06	3.07	1.353	-.057	-1.080	1	14	21	25	19	20
I07	2.94	1.510	.019	-1.295	2	20	22	17	16	23
I08	3.02	1.313	-.128	-.913	2	12	24	22	25	15
I09	2.72	1.676	.229	-1.537	2	35	15	12	11	26
I10	2.36	1.364	.617	-.772	1	33	28	14	13	11
I11	2.09	1.286	1.005	-.031	1	44	26	14	7	9
I12	2.67	1.202	.168	-.661	1	17	28	29	17	8
I13	2.69	1.339	.279	-.985	1	21	28	21	16	13
I14	2.17	1.162	.740	-.301	1	34	33	16	12	4
I15	2.15	1.164	.682	-.503	0	38	26	20	11	4
I16	3.52	.988	-.277	-.417	0	2	13	33	35	17
I17	3.84	1.046	-1.091	1.434	1	1	9	17	44	27
I18	4.27	.899	-1.564	3.283	1	0	4	9	37	49
I19	4.46	1.060	-2.411	5.678	1	3	2	5	18	70
I20	4.49	1.114	-2.618	6.705	3	1	3	6	13	75
I21	3.52	1.367	-.698	-.310	3	6	13	22	25	31
I22	2.37	1.373	.487	-.960	1	36	20	19	14	9
I23	2.49	1.443	.465	-1.126	1	34	22	15	15	14
I24	3.25	1.386	-.241	-.955	2	9	22	23	19	26
I25	3.16	1.256	-.084	-.962	0	11	20	29	21	18
I26	2.03	1.200	.940	.069	1	42	27	16	8	5
I27	3.14	1.227	-.151	-.902	0	12	19	28	26	15
I28	1.67	1.072	1.536	1.889	2	58	23	8	5	4
I29	3.04	1.444	-.030	-1.240	1	17	21	21	17	23
I30	2.78	1.326	.181	-1.025	0	21	22	27	16	14
I31	2.57	1.346	.346	-1.045	0	28	23	22	16	11

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# Binary Oppositions in the Structure of Masnavi Stories

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**Abstract**—Structuralism and post-structuralism criticisms are scientific, novel methods of studying Persian stories through which the coherent structure which is intertwined in the story can be revealed. Binary oppositions are basic concepts which exist in structural and post-structural criticism. According to these theories, there are two major functions for the text that advance the story. These binary oppositions can be found in all parts of Masnavi. The authors tried, in this study, first to analyze the lexical meanings of binary oppositions and then to examine the binary oppositions in Masnavi.

**Index Terms**—Molana, Masnavi, binary oppositions, structuralism, post-structuralism

## I. INTRODUCTION

The structuralism theory, as one of the most significant theories in the twentieth century, has been an active area in all fields of humanities in general, and in literature, anthropology, and linguistics, in particular. It has been an appealing, efficient, and popular style in the analytic criticism. This style was first created from the linguistic viewpoints of Ferdinand De Saussure about the general rules of the language and their discovery through synchronic study, and was applied, then, to other fields as well (Meghdadi, 2000).

In structural analyses, there are two major styles derived from Saussure theories about syntagmatic and paradigmatic pivots (Propp, 1990). Sequential structural analyses are Propp's structural style which has been formed based on the sequence of events; a term derived from syntax. On the other hand, Strauss's style is called vertical analysis which is a concept derived from the vertical analysis of the language (ibid).

According to Strauss, synchronic structural analysis merely shows the obvious side of the text, whereas in diachronic analysis, the 'hidden side' of the story is indicated (ibid).

There are some points to be taken into account in structural analysis:

- Extracting the components of the text
- Discovering the relationships among the components
- Indicating an implication within the generality of the text (Goldman, 1991)

According to Strauss, structure includes some characteristics:

A: It is like a system in which a change in each part would result in change in other parts as well

B: Every structure can be changed into a frequent structure of its type

C: In the light of the above feature, it can be predicted that if there are changes in one or more elements of the structural elements, the whole structure would react (Azad Barmaki, 2003).

### A. Binary Oppositions in Criticism

One of the most important applications in structural and post-structural criticism is binary opposition in which the essence of everything is revealed through opposition with another thing that has no quality at all, and the perception of every subcategory is related to its distinction with another object. This kind of distinction is interpreted as opposition. Our knowledge about things depends on our knowledge about what is in opposition with them. (Caddon, 1999)

Strauss's investigation about cooking is based on oppositions such as raw and cooked, fresh and rotten, and rare and well-done. Such relationships do not reflect the fact which is imposed on the mind, but reflect the structures that encourage the human mind fundamentally to rank its world. Structure and meaning exist, but there are no compatibility necessarily. Strauss believed that, behind all cultural activities, we can find a deep structure in binary oppositions

which reflect the general structure of the human mind (Dan, 2005). Zimel considers the binary oppositions as a solution to the oppositions in order to achieve the planned integrity (Azad Barmaki, 2003).

Whitehead asserts that the world is binary because, in the deepest meaning possible, it is both transient and eternal. The universe is binary because every fact is both material and mental. The universe is binary because each of its facts necessitates analysis. It is binary for, in every event, the formal pursuit and unity is unified with the objective's independence. The world is infinite because it should be ideally analyzed into various ultimate facts or as Descartes states "into various facts". The universe is unique because of its single appearance and totality. Thus, there is an opposition between infiniteness and unity. Throughout the world, the unity of the mutual affairs is predominant and this results in opposition (Whitehead, 1993).

Ghazali, in Meshkatol Anvar, suggests that if darkness and devil have not appeared, we would not have been aware of light. The realization of deficiency is the first step toward perfection (Ghazali, 2011). The trace of binary oppositions can be found in the majority of the structuralists' viewpoints, especially among narratologists. According to Roland Barthes, the most fundamental concept for structuralism is binary opposition (Barthes, 1992).

*B. Binary Oppositions in Post-structuralism*

Post-structuralism, especially Derrida's deconstructionism which is part of post-structuralism, plays a critical role and is considered a key concept. The difference, however, is that it has been looked upon critically. Derrida, using structuralism against self-structuralism, takes the western binary oppositions (i.e. speech, self, life, father, and light against writing, body, death, mother, and darkness) and deconstruct them without reaching a higher synthesis. He indicates how these binary oppositions result in closures or puzzles that should be tolerated in an unending experience other than overcoming them (Dan, 2003). Basically, Derrida, in his deconstruction, believes in subverting hierarchies and bases in binary oppositions (Meghdadi, 2000). With major changes Jacques Derrida (born in 1930) made in Western discipline in 1960s, the concept of binary oppositions underwent a fundamental change as well (ibid).

Post-structuralists partially criticized the rules that structuralists had firmly proposed for binary oppositions and this is a better reason for its centrism. Now, adopting Strauss and Barthes, we examine the binary oppositions governing the structure of Masnavi stories.

**Opposition of soul/self**

Rumi, in the beautiful story of "the king and the handmaiden", bases the story on the binary opposition of soul/self. The center of Rumi's attention is demonstrating the two sides of opposition in the real context. The acting of the characters of the story and the events concerning the binary opposition of soul/self occurs quite artistically. The king is enchanted by a bondwoman. But, in a short time, the handmaiden gets sick and the king summons all the skilled doctors, who are dependent on their wisdom and knowledge and create another kind of opposition with spiritual doctor to treat the handmaiden, while they ignore the ordinance of the Almighty. However, the more they try, the more the patient gets worse. When the king gets disappointed with all the natural treatments, he turns to God. While he is praying, he falls asleep and he is called in the dream that the skilled spiritual doctor comes to you and cures the handmaiden. The spiritual doctor declares the cause of the disease is that the she is in love with a goldsmith in Samarkand. He summons the goldsmith and arranges their marriage. They live happily with each other for six months. Then, the spiritual doctor, by God's order, gives a deadly poison the goldsmith by which the beauty and appeal of the merchant diminishes and gradually he loses his appeal to her. Rumi's interpretation of this story is that, the king is the symbol of the soul. The proud doctors are the symbol of minor wisdom, the handmaiden is the symbol of beastly desires, the goldsmith is the symbol of the world, and the spiritual doctor represents general wisdom or real mentor. By taking a look at the characters of the story, it can be observed that what is fixed in the mind of the reader is the soul/self hierarchy that Rumi criticizes its existence in the human being and summons the audience to accompany.

*In olden time there was a king to whom belonged the power temporal and also the spiritual  
It chanced that one day he rode with his courtiers to the chase*

*On the king's highway the king espied a handmaiden: the soul of the king was enthralled by her  
(Masnavi, book I, p. 35-38)*

*The king gathered the physicians together from left and right and said to them, "the life of us both is in your hands"  
My life is of no account, she is the life of my life, I am in pain and wounded: she is my remedy  
(ibid, p. 43-44)*

*When the king saw the hopelessness of the physicians, he ran bare-footed to the mosque  
He entered the mosque and advanced to the altar, the prayer carpet was bathed in the king's tear  
(ibid, p. 55-56)*

TABLE1.  
BINARY OPPOSITIONS IN THE CHARACTERS OF THE KING AND THE HANDMAIDEN

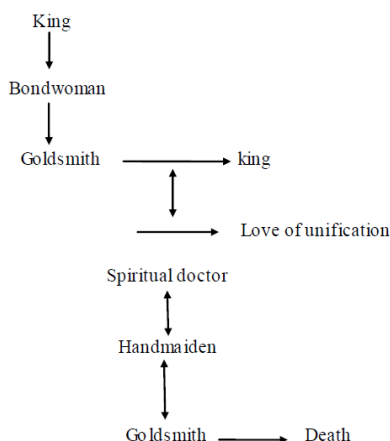
King	Sensual skilled doctor	King
Goldsmith	Spiritual skilled doctor	handmaiden

TABLE2.  
BINARY OPPOSITIONS IN THE ADVANCING ELEMENTS OF THE KING AND THE HANDMAIDEN

		line			line			line
Stranger	Self	146	Impolite	polite	78	Worldliness	Religion	36
Fear	Safety	171	gallant	mean	90	Right	Left	43
untrue	Real	180	Man	Woman	90	Bile	Laxative	53
Unruly	Obedient	181	Barrenness	Fertility	104	Constipation	Laxative	53
Fire	Water	199	This	That	111	Fire	Water	54
Serenity	Depression	231	Tongueless	Tongue	113	Evident	Hidden	60
Pageant	Believer	239	Heaven	Earth	127	Shadow	Sun	68
Happiness	Sorrow	244	Beginning	End	143	War	Peace	71

Strauss analyzes the binary oppositions based on the agreement among tensions which gives a more practical existentialism color to it; for example, life and death may be in opposition with each other, but the concept of the life after death can intervene the two opposing issues (Dan, 2005).

Now, if we have a closer examination of the structure of the story of the king and the bondwoman, we can realize that Rumi has used binary opposition to convey his intended meaning to the reader, create the desired reaction in the audience, and direct him to that particular spiritual and moral context. In the king and the bondwoman and its spiritual interpretation, the symbols of self, wisdom, and love are discussed. Three dimensions of competition among lover, beloved, and rival leads to the binary graph and balance between lover and beloved and consequently ends in either the unification of the lover and beloved or their death.



### Existence/nonexistence opposition

The most important opposition which is the basis of every opposition in the realm of creation and developmental world as well as in the world of mind and science is the opposition of existence and nonexistence. The first and the last category of Parmenides philosophy is existence category. It states that whatever exists has existence and whatever does not exist is not created. Existence does not vanish and non-existence does not come to life. Whatever exists will be quiet and easy in the world and will not change (Jones, 1970). Rumi is one of the Sufis that has used non-existence in opposition with existence. He has conveyed his theosophical and moral intentions in a line using binary oppositions:

*Life is the peace of contraries, death is the fact that arose between them*

(Zamani, 2009, p. 1293)

*That which seems to be really existent is (mere) skin, while that which seems to have perished – is the root.*

(Nickolson, 1996, p. 1668)

*We and our existence are really non-existence: thou art the absolute Being which manifests the perishable*

(Zamani, 2009, p. 602)

*The form came forth from Formlessness and went back (thither), for verily unto Him are we returning*

(ibid, p. 1141)

*Being can be seen in not being: the rich bestow generosity on the poor*

(ibid, p. 3202)

*What is the mirror of being? Not-being. Bring not being (as your gift), if you are not a fool*

(ibid, p. 3201)

### Figure/sense

The opposition between figure and sense is one of the pillars of Rumi's doctrines that should be remembered forever. He mentions this opposition in many various topics and contexts and in majority of the figures of speech as well as different symbols. In fact, there is no specific reason for naming the fundamental opposition within the world to the opposition between figure and sense except that these two terms have the widest function from among all pairs of opposition terms that Rumi has used.

Rumi regards a basic distinction between figure and sense. Figure is the external aspect and sense is the hidden internal fact. Eventually, sense is what is evident to God and since God is beyond every remuneration, in the final analysis, sense is nothing but God. "Shadow which is figure is an indication for sun which is sense".

*What is form in the presence of reality? Very feeble. 'tis the reality of the sky that keeps it upside down (like an inverted cup)*

*The motion of wind is from its reality, like the wheel that is captive to the water of the stream.*

(-Masnavi, book I, p. 3330-33)

*Know that the outward form passes away, (but) the world of reality remains for ever*

*How long will you play at loving the shape of the jug? Leave the shape of the jug, go seek the water.*

*You have seen its outward form, you are unaware of the reality; pick out from the shell a pearl, if you are wise.*

(Masnavi, book II, p. 1020-22)

*You ask "why art thou doing this?" because the forms are (as) the oil, and the essential meaning is (as) the light.*

*Otherwise, wherefore is this saying "why"? – the use of this form is only the form itself.*

(Masnavi, book IV, p. 2994-95)

*Its outward says, 'we are this, and no more'; its inward says, 'look well before and behind!'*

*Its outward is denying and says that the inward is naught; its inward says, 'we will show (thee the truth), wait and see!'*

(Masnavi, book IV, p. 1009-10)

*The more perfect he is in worldly science, the more backward he is in reality and the more forward in appearance.*

*One needs a knowledge whereof the root is Yonder, inasmuch as every branch is a guide to its root.*

*Why should every wing fly across the breadth of the Sea? Only the esoteric knowledge will bear thee to the presence (of God).*

(Masnavi, Book III, p. 1117&1124-25)

### **Good/ Evil**

The most evident and annoying opposition existing in the universe is the opposition between Good and Evil. However, the absolute virtue can be found in God. Evil and its various levels are originated from diminishing the light of Goodness due to getting far from the origin. In this world, affairs are relatively not absolute Good or Evil because no absolute quality can exist. Objects and affairs are considered Good or Evil in comparison with us, not compared to God because before God, everything does the same thing; revealing the hidden treasure. Rumi discovers the opposition of virtue and vice and fully understands this point that if there were no Evil in the world, most of the God's epithets such as forgiveness and revenge could not manifest themselves at all.

*Hence there is no absolute evil in the world; evil is relative, know this also*

*In the realm of time there is no poison or sugar that is not a foot (support) to one and a fetter (injury) to another*

*To one a foot, to another the fetter; to one a poison and to another like a sugar*

*Snake poisons life to the snake, but it is death in relation to man*

*The sea is as a garden to the water-creatures; to the creatures of earth it is death and a painful brand*

(Masnavi, book IV, p. 65-69)

*None of these things is absolutely good, nor is any of them absolutely evil*

*The usefulness and harm of each depend on the place: for this reason knowledge is necessary and useful*

(Masnavi, Book VI, p. 2898-99)

*Although thou believe that all the evils are from Him, but it is not a deficit of His grace (God)*

*Giving evil to man is of His maturity, O Man (Mohtasham), I will show you an example (to prove this)*

(Masnavi, Book II, p. 2535-36)

*The cadi said, "Were there no bitter Commandment and were there no good and evil and no pebbles and pearls,*

*And were there no flesh and Devil and passions, and were there no blows and battle and war,*

*Then by what name and title would the King call His servants, O abandoned man?*

*How could he say, 'O steadfast one' and 'O forbearing one'? How could He say, 'O brave one' and 'O wise one'?*

(Masnavi, book VI, 1747-50)

### **Existence/nonexistence**

These two terms are the most complicated oppositions Rumi has used because both terms may or may not refer to figure or sense with regard to the context.

*Everyone has turned his face in some direction, but those holy ones have turned towards that which transcends direction.*

(Masnavi, Book V, p. 350)

*You are of where, but your origin is in Nowhere: shut up this shop open that shop.*

(Masnavi, Book II, p. 612)

*Form is brought into existence by the Formless, just as smoke is produced by a fire.*

(Masnavi, Book VI, p. 3712)

Rumi puts these two views beside each other in a similar literature and in other cases refers to one of them.

*This world of non-existence has become like real existence, while that world of real existence has become very hidden*

*The dust is on the wind; it is playing, it is making a false show and forming a veil*

*This which is busy (in appearance), is really idle and a husk, and that which is hidden, is its core and origin*

(Masnavi, Book II, p. 1280-83)

#### **Adam/Satan**

One of the primary concepts that human has had opposition with from the beginning of his existence is the opposition between Adam and Satan; an opposition that has existed from the time of human creation up to now. God addresses man in A'raf verse (Quran) in the following way:

“We created you, then we gave you figure, and told the angels to genuflect. All genuflected except Satan. God said “when I ordered you to genuflect what made you disobey?”, Satan said “I am better than him; you have made me from fire and him from mud” (A'raf, 7, p. 11-12). Rumi has perfectly stated this opposition in Masnavi.

*In an Adam who was without like or equal, the eye of Iblis discerned naught but a piece of clay*

(Masnavi, Book III, p. 2759)

*See the beginning and the end with both eyes: beware, do not be one-eyed like the accursed Iblis*

(Masnavi, Book IV, p. 1709)

*Hundreds of thousands of years the accursed Iblis was a saint and the prince of true believers;*

*On account of the pride which he has, he grappled with Adam and was put to shame like dung at morning tide*

(Masnavi, Book I, p. 3296-97)

*The sin of Adam arose from the belly and sexual intercourse, and that of Iblis from pride and power.*

*Consequently, he (Adam) at once besought pardon, while the accursed (Iblis) disdained to repent*

(Masnavi, book V5, p. 20-21)

*Like Adam whose lapse was temporary, of necessity he showed penitence at once*

*Since the sin of Iblis was original, for him there was no way to precious penitence*

(Masnavi, book IV, p. 3414-15)

*Those who are the elect children of Adam sigh forth, ‘verily we have done wrong.’*

*Submit thy petition, do not argue like the accursed hard-faced Iblis*

(Masnavi, book IV, p. 347-48)

#### **Man/woman**

The opposition between man and woman is one of the major concepts of binary positions in the world. In theosophical poems of Rumi which revolves around the world's bipolarity, men and women are mainly symbols. Therefore, in the poems of this theosophical scholar, men are the symbol of the saints and women are the symbol of pageants. In other words, men are under the dominance of wisdom and women are overcome by self. Men consider sense whereas women are stuck in figures. Accordingly, men are theosophical devotees and women are after mundane affairs.

*This man and wife, which are the flesh and the reason, are very necessary for good and evil;*

*And this necessary pair in this house of earth is engaged in strife and altercation day and night*

*The wife is craving requisites for the household, that is to say, reputation and bread and viands and rank*

*Like the wife, the flesh in order to contrive the means (of gratifying its desires), is at one time seeking humility and at another time to domination*

*The reason is really unconscious of these worldly thoughts: in its brain is nothing but love of God*

(Masnavi, Book I, p. 2618-22)

*O you wife beware of your inner self, fear of your kind (woman), since thou hast a share of evil in yourself*

(Masnavi, book II, p. 2272)

#### **Love/wisdom**

One of the main oppositions in Rumi's viewpoints is the opposition between love and wisdom. The opposition of love and wisdom plays a critical role in most of the Sufi's works, including Rumi's. However, Rumi's criticisms about wisdom in the eye of love should be extracted from the context of all of his doctrines in which they play a major role, because wisdom is an essential introduction for love as well as directing human toward God.

*Partial reason is a denier of Love, though it may give out that it is a confidant*

*It is clever and knowing, but it is not naught; until the angel has become naught, he is an Ahriman (Devil)*

(Masnavi, Book I, p. 1982-83)

*Sacrifice your intellect in love for the friend: anyhow, intellects are from the quarter where He is*

*The intelligent have sent their intellects to that quarter: only the dolt has remained in this quarter where the Beloved is not*

*If from bewilderment this intellect of yours go out of this head, every head tip of your hair will become a new head and intellect*

(Masnavi, Book IV, p. 1424-26)

*He (Iblis) had knowledge but since he had not religious love, he beheld in Adam nothing but a figure of clay*

(Masnavi, Book VI, p. 260)

*The intelligent are abased before Him from necessity; the lovers are abased with hundredfold free will  
 The intelligent are bond slaves to Him; the lovers are like sugar and candy to Him  
 “Come against your will” is the toggle for the intelligent; “come willingly” is the spring-time of them that have lost their hearts*

(Masnavi, Book III, p. 4470-72)

**Emergence of binary oppositions in some of the stories of Masnavi**

By taking a closer look at the precious book of Masnavi, we can come to this important point that binary oppositions have been the essence of Rumi’s work. The oppositions such as positive and negative, good and evil, vice and virtue, ...are completely apparent. Rumi has frequently used this effective style to introduce his intended moral and theosophical concepts to the reader. In the following, some of these oppositions are mentioned as examples:

- The story of the Jewish king who killed the Christians (Masnavi, 2009), opposition of good/bad
- The story of the merchant and parrot (Masnavi, 2009), opposition of self/soul
- The story of the witches and Moses (Masnavi, 2009), opposition of good/evil
- The opposition between the Godly dervish who needs God and the dervish who needs others ((Masnavi, 2009), opposition of good/evil
- The opposition of Satan and Quran verses ((Masnavi, 2009), opposition of good/evil
- Spitting of (Amro) on Imam Ali (Masnavi, 2009), opposition between good/evil
- The story of Adam’s surprise at Satan’s reprimand (Masnavi, 2009), opposition of good/evil
- The story of Jesus’ follower and resurrecting the dead (Masnavi, 2009), opposition of doubt/certainty
- The story of the proud king and the saint (Masnavi, 2009), opposition of religion/ worldliness
- The story of Moses and calf worshiper (Masnavi, 2009), opposition of good/evil
- The story of Satan and Moavieh (Masnavi, 2009), opposition of Satan/Man
- The story of the hypocrites and their assisting prophet Muhammad in building mosque (Masnavi, 2009), opposition of good/evil
- The story of the unbelievers and prophets (Masnavi, 2009), opposition of good/evil
- The story of the person who believed God could not catch him while committing a sin and Shoeib’s response (Masnavi, 2009), opposition of good/evil

TABLE 4

Protagonist	Antagonist	Volume	page
Christians	Jewish king	1	143
Parrot	Merchant	1	493
Moses	Witches	1	516
Godly Dervish	Worldly Dervish	1	810
God	Satan	1	974
Ali	Amro	1	1059
Adam	Satan	1	1101
Jesus	Suspicious Youth	2	146
King’s Hawk	Owls	2	298
Mystic	Proud King	2	380
Moses	Calf Worshipers	2	509
Moavieh	Satan	2	649
Muhammad	Hypocrites	2	737
Prophets	Unbelievers	2	748
True followers	Sinful people	2	825

II. CONCLUSION

The theory of binary oppositions has a long history. Its basics can be found in the thought of primitive man. Since Masnavi is a theosophical collection of poems formed based on the opposition between this world and the other world, good and bad, existence and non-existence, contentment and welfare, blasphemy and religion, etc. if we take a closer look at the structure of Masnavi, we can realize that Rumi has used binary oppositions to convey his intended theosophical concepts and create the desired effect in the audience. The binary oppositions such as positive/negative, soul/self, good/bad, etc. are clearly evident in Masnavi. The topics that Rumi has cited in Masnavi are indicative of this issue. Generally, the heroes of the stories have a high-spirited soul and possess features like charity, good sense of humor, and bravery. On the other hand, there is the anti-hero who possesses a devilish and pitiful character which is right against the characteristics of the hero of the story.

In the deep structure of Masnavi, Rumi, in the description of his major basics, creates binary oppositions directly or indirectly. When he is talking about soul/self, he mentions the king and the bondwoman story in which the king is the symbol of soul and the bondwoman is the symbol of self and creates a binary opposition between them. Elsewhere, when he is talking about dipping the anger, he brings the story of Imam Ali and Amro which is indicating the opposition of good/bad. It can be concluded that the general deep structure of these stories is based on the two governing poles in the Islamic culture (i.e. this world and another world) and the concepts are raised according to these



two pivots. Thus, the situation of story writing in that time and the theosophical basis which revolves around the bipolarity of the universe, has encouraged Rumi to form Masnavi as a rather diverse collection of oppositions and base his intellectual foundation on the spirit of opposition among the characters of the story.

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# Learning a Foreign Language through Text and Memorisation: The Chinese Learners' Perceptions

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**Abstract**—Text memorization is a widely used yet under-explored language practice in foreign language teaching and learning in China. The research addresses the need for a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the practices and beliefs of Chinese learners regarding the use of text memorization in foreign language learning and teaching. This paper reports on findings from semi-structured interviews concentrating on the perceptions of text memorisation as a way of learning from the learners' perspective. The data was collected from a group of Chinese learners and teachers (N=62) affiliated with 15 schools and universities at three different educational levels, i.e. junior high, senior high and college, which constitute the major part of foreign language education in China. Qualitative analyses of the data reveal that the practice was perceived to be beneficial not only because it assists learning in a number of ways but because it affords the learners psychological satisfaction built on their sense of achievement and confidence.

**Index Terms**—text, memorization, Chinese learner, foreign language learning

## I. INTRODUCTION

In the special issue of 'Language Education Research in International Contexts' in TESL-EJ (September 2006), Duong (2006) investigated Vietnamese learners' and teachers' beliefs and attitudes towards memorisation in learning English as a foreign language (EFL) and found that memorisation, which, from teachers' and students' perspectives, is classified into good and poor types, can satisfy certain needs of language learners. Indeed, an increasing number of ELT scholars, including some contemporary Western researchers (e.g., Pennycook, 1996; Sowden, 2005; Watkins & Biggs, 1996) have recognised that memorisation, a highly valued way of learning in the Far East, can lead to high levels of understanding if applied appropriately. However, scepticism among Western teachers and methodologists on the purpose of extensive use of memorisation in foreign language learning and teaching (as is the case in East Asia represented by China) has not ceased. The Chinese mastery of English through memorisation is commonly characterised as 'rather quaint, a misguided use of effort and a barrier to communication' (Cortazzi & Jin, 1996, p. 185). On the other hand, text memorisation – an extreme use of memorisation and one of the frequently mentioned learning strategies by Chinese learners is drawing increasing interest among Chinese scholars in recent years (see Ding, 2004, 2007; Ding & Qi, 2001; Long & Huang, 2006; Yu, 2009, 2010). This body of research, which largely focuses on the potential facilitative role of this practice in second language acquisition from a psycholinguistic perspective, attempted to make a positive reappraisal of text memorisation as a learning device. However, there is a dearth of documentation in literature as to how this traditional practice is perceived by Chinese learners from an emic perspective.

This paper attempts to address the gap by reporting on findings from in-depth interviews aiming at investigating Chinese learners' perceptions and attitudes towards text memorisation in learning EFL. Firstly, I will clarify the working definition of text memorisation in the current study and sketchily review previous analogous studies. Then, I will move on to the delineation of the methodological particulars of the current study and the detailing of the bio-information of the participants. In the section that follows, I present and discuss at length a number of prominent issues or themes emerging from analyses of the interview data. Finally, I conclude the paper by summarily stating the primary points interpreted from the participants' perceptions or opinions of text memorisation.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### A. Defining 'Text Memorisation' in the Present Study

While different versions of definition of memorisation can be found in various studies and dictionaries, I found the following understanding of memorisation is more fair or neutral: 'Memorising is the process of establishing information in memory. The term 'memorising' usually refers to the conscious process' (Richards, Platt, & Platt, 1992, p. 226). Based on this understanding and following Stevick's (1982, p. 67) definition of 'memorisation' in language education, text memorisation is understood in this paper as 'working on a body of [textual] material until one is able to reproduce it word for word on demand'. A further understanding of text memorisation can be found in the following statement which distinguishes between 'learning by heart' and 'learning by rote':

When a student ‘learns by rote’, he or she may be able to recite the words, but might not necessarily understand what the words mean. A student who learns something by heart understands the concept of the lesson. The lesson is internalized and becomes part of the person’s working knowledge. (Hendrickson, 1997, p. 29)

What is captured more than anything else in this quotation is the relationship of memorisation and understanding. Taking the position of ‘learning by heart’ rather than ‘learning by rote’, text memorisation is here defined as the attempt to commit a text to memory through verbatim repetition based on the understanding of the content of the text. In contemporary school practice in China, text memorisation is usually preceded by teachers’ detailed explanation of the meaning of and grammar points contained in the text.

Memorising texts to learn a foreign language is a culturally-specific learning practice transferred from traditional Chinese literacy education. It needs to be pointed out that ‘texts’ learned by heart by Chinese learners are not confined to texts in the textbook or course book, rather, they may include any short essays, passages, dialogues, contextual paragraphs and sentence clusters. Moreover, song lyrics, celebrities’ speeches and scripts of films and TV series in English are all included, which are indeed being taken as authentic materials for memorisation by Chinese learners.

### B. *Prior Work on the Conceptions of Text Memorisation*

There is a paucity of research on the conceptions of text memorisation although the last decade has seen an increasing number of empirical studies on learning texts by heart published in China (e.g., Long & Huang, 2006; Yao, 2003). Here I would like to mention two of them.

Stevick (1989) performed a interview-based case study with an L1-English learner of Chinese who had reached ‘an extraordinarily high level of competence both in speaking and in reading Chinese’ (1989, p. 21). The informant reported the use of ‘memorisation of texts’ as part of his learning practice. This English learner of Chinese, though brought up in Western culture, was not defensive about this practice at all and repeatedly said it was ‘within reason’. This practice, as he himself put it, ‘gave you an instinct for what is actually said in the language — for how sentences are put together’ (1989, p. 30).

In a more recent study, Ding (2007) reported interviews with three university English majors who had won prizes in nationwide English speaking competitions and debate tournaments in China. The interviewees regarded text memorisation and imitation as the most effective methods of learning English. They said the practice enabled them to attend to collocations and sequences, to borrow these sequences for productive use, to improve pronunciation, and to develop the habit of attending to details of language. Based on these self-reports, the author concludes that such practice enhances noticing and rehearsal and hence facilitates second language acquisition.

Following the tradition of ‘good language learner’ research<sup>1</sup>, both of the above mentioned studies sets out to relate the high achievement of the successful foreign language learners to the use of certain learning strategies (for instance, text memorisation). Although such research does provide insights into the kinds of behaviour associated with successful language learning (Ellis, 1994) and offer suggestions as to which strategies are important for language development (Ellis, 2000), one problem inherited in this body of study is that we have difficulty in deciding whether successful learners excel because they use particular valued strategies, or whether they use varied strategies including the valued ones because they are already successful learners.

A small number of studies (cf. Y.-Q. Gu, 2003; Stevick, 1989) have reported the use of text memorisation by successful learners; the present study, however, makes no attempt to evaluate the effectiveness of text memorisation as a learning strategy. Rather, it sets out to learn about how the practice is perceived by Chinese practitioners based on their own experience of using text memorisation in their foreign language learning. Given the cultural specificity of the topic under discussion, interviewing seems to be the most effective way of exploring the insider’s perspective on this cultural practice in terms of its members’ understandings.

## III. METHODOLOGY

### A. *Informants*

Participants in the current study were to a large extent ‘opportunistic’ (Holliday, 2002; Miles & Huberman, 1994) in nature. The first batch of participants was secured by taking advantage of my interpersonal relationship network. They were mainly my colleagues and friends who are language teachers at secondary and tertiary level. I also applied *snowball sampling*, that is, participating teachers introduced me to other willing participants who were either their students or associates. Since there were no quantitative restrictions in this interview-based study, the final number (62) of the participants reflects the availability of the qualified informants. There was no stringent qualification for participants in the current study – only being (1) current full-time foreign language learners or teachers at secondary or tertiary level and (2) having the experience of learning through text memorisation – so that the informants had a wide range of ages (ranging from 12 to 65), affiliations (including public schools and private training institutions), geographical scope (from 12 provinces and municipalities) and learning experiences (including a few who had

<sup>1</sup> In order to discover which strategies are important for L2 learning, this body of research aims to investigate how the ‘good language learner’ tries to learn by ‘identifying learners who have been successful in learning an L2 and interviewing them to find out the strategies that worked for them’ (Ellis, 2000: 77).

sojourned in foreign countries as well as those who have never been abroad). In my opinion, the diversity of the background of the participants would be a plus point in terms of obtaining a broader vista in the analysis of the data. More information about the participants is listed in Table 1.

TABLE 1.  
DEMOGRAPHICS OF THE PARTICIPANTS (LEARNERS AND TEACHERS)

Group(N)	affiliation type(N)	geographical area (N)	experience of studying abroad(N)
Learners (42)	foreign language school /English department <sup>2</sup> (7/3) ordinary school	coastal province (9) inland province (33)	3-4 months (9) never (33)
Teachers (20)	public school (16) private institution (4)	coastal province (2) inland province (18)	2 years (1) 1 year (2) 3 months (1) never (16)

The learner participants at tertiary level were diversified in terms of their home provinces where they finished their secondary education. Demographic information on this group of participants is presented in Table 2. Previous studies (e.g. Hu, 2005) have suggested that Audiolingual-featured practices like reading-aloud or memorisation of dialogues and texts are less used in coastal provinces/cities than inland provinces/cities, and this is the rationale underlying the distinction between coastal province and inland province in Table 2. Data from the current study, however, indicates that learners from the two areas showed no difference in terms of perception of memorisation of textual materials.

It needs to be pointed out that although this paper is dealing with ‘learner’s perceptions’, data from interview with teachers is also referred to whenever of relevance because teachers are here treated as advanced learners<sup>3</sup>.

TABLE 2  
DEMOGRAPHICS OF THE LEARNER PARTICIPANTS AT TERTIARY LEVEL

Coastal province		Inland province	
Beijing*	1 (Heysea)	Chongqing*	3 (Tengjing; Eli; Jake)
Shenzhen*	1 (Howard)	Henan	1 (Yunpeng)
Guangdong	2 (Xiaofeng; Zhibiao)	Yunnan	1 (Emma)
Jiangsu	3 (Zhikai; Wanshi; Rock))	Sichuan	2 (Xuying; Xujia)
Shandong	1 (Deqian)	Gansu	1 (Lixia)
Qingdao	1 (Tiantian)	Wuhan	1 (Leila)
		Ningxia	1 (Xiaodong)
Sub-Total	9		10
Total	19		

\*Note. 1. Beijing and Chongqing are municipalities rather than provinces; Shenzhen is a special administrative area rather than a province.  
2. Those students who are currently studying in the UK are given English pseudonyms.

**B. Data Analysis**

Data analysis started as the data collection was underway. After each interview, I carefully listened to the recording and made a brief note of the participant’s main viewpoints for reference purposes. All interviews were transcribed in English straightaway. I made a special effort to edit the English translation by listening to the Chinese original recording repeatedly in order to reflect as closely as possible the language the informants themselves used.

The English transcripts were analysed by moving back and forth between the data and categories of meaning which roughly followed the interview guidelines. The interpretation of the informant’s account was cautiously tested against the context of the whole transcript in addition to being loyal to the meaning residing in the single sentence. The intended meaning was often checked by clarification questions during the interview. In other few cases, whenever inconsistency or ambiguity arose during the process of transcription, I returned to the interviewees for validation after the interview through telephone conversations. Email exchanges were also occasionally used to confirm the accuracy of my interpretation of learners’ interview narrative accounts when there was a necessity.

An essential principle followed in the analysis of the data was that the informants’ statements are not taken as true or false, but rather as ‘displays of their perspectives on the issue at hand’ (Silverman, 2001, p. 112). As already mentioned, the focus of the study is an emic perspective of the evaluation of text memorisation as a learning practice.

**IV. FINDINGS**

This section is organised according to significant themes which were either informed by the interview questions or emerged from the analysis of the data with respect to the learner-participants’ perceptions of their own experiences of using text memorisation in English learning. In the citations I make of the interview data throughout the paper, the coding begins with the participant’s anonymised name. The pseudonym is followed by the identity of the participant, i.e.

<sup>2</sup> The distinction between foreign language school and ordinary school was made among secondary students and the distinction between English department and non-English department among college students.

<sup>3</sup> The current research is part of a bigger project which investigates both learners’ and teachers’ perceptions of text memorisation.

a teacher-participant (*TP*) or learner-participant (*LP*) and the educational level s/he was in (*JH* for Junior High, *SH* for Senior High and *U* for university).

#### A. Perceptions of Benefits of the Practice of Text Memorisation

Many of the learners' perceptions mentioned above are apparently tinted with cultural influence. It should not be surprising that the values and perceptions of learning of the members of a culture have been influenced to a considerable extent by the values and perceptions that they have commonly experienced within their sociocultural group when they enter formal education (Littlewood, 1999). This does not mean, however, that they have been passively moulded by these values or conceptions and therefore unable to make their own judgement or reflection.

The overwhelming majority of the participants expressed positive views on the use of text memorisation in English learning. They offered various reasons why the practice had been beneficial to their English learning. The first concerns the cultivation of the so-called 'sense of language', a pragmatic understanding of which can be found in the participants' accounts:

*One thing that I felt especially beneficial from learning texts by heart is that I could choose the right answer in the multiple-choice section without second thought. I didn't know why, but I just made the right choice. This is the effect that can never be achieved by applying grammatical analysis. ... I guess it is about what people often call 'language sense'. (Xujia, LP, U)*

'Language sense' is a literal translation of its Chinese equivalent 'yugan'. 'Language sense' or 'feel for the language' is not a new term for Chinese learners (cf. Ding, 2007; Jiang & Smith, 2009) although the definition can vary from person to person. It was also mentioned in a recent study that '... the participants found them [memorising textbook texts, English essays, speeches and song lyrics] useful because they helped them internalise different ways of expressing themselves and gave them a feel for the English language' (Gao, 2007, p. 100). The concept originates from a German word 'Sprachgefühl' whose English explanation is as follows (*Webster's Third New International Dictionary*):

- (1) sensibility to conformity with or divergence from the established usage of a language
- (2) a feeling for what is linguistically effective or appropriate

Intangible as it may appear, the 'sense of language' may be noticed at some point by most language users. It is analogous to intuition invoked in dealing with grammaticality judgment tasks. Although it is largely tacit and inaccessible to consciousness, such sense has to be built on considerable language experiences. In the case of Chinese students who claim that they develop a sense of language through learning texts by heart, the subtle feeling for language might be an implicit abstraction and systematisation of language rules based on a reasonable amount of input (i.e. texts memorised). The gradual development of language sense involves, quoting an informant, 'progressing from a quantitative change to a qualitative change' (Hongying, TP, U). One student offered an interesting analogy: 'What we eat is rice, but what is transformed is glucose' (Shuhan, LP, SH). The cultivation of 'language sense' through memorisation, according to a college student, seems to be a long-term task which should not be omitted even at tertiary level: 'In college, it is important to learn many texts by heart as this is essential to develop a sense of language' (Tengjing, LP, U).

The second reason given by the learners is that text memorisation relates to what they call 'forced learning':

*It [text memorisation] is a forced learning. You have to consciously put all stuff into your mind [when memorising texts]. ... If you just listen [to English] or speak to someone [in English], you may only learn the bits that you can remember and miss out many other useful stuff. When we learn by heart, we force ourselves to memorise all sentences. It's learning with definite purpose. (Eli, LP, U)*

Forced learning, or in academic terms, 'conscious learning' seems to play an important role in adult learning (Takeuchi, 2003), and this is especially true in an FL context where linguistic resources do not come as easily as they do in the SL context. One may wonder why memorisation should be stressed at all, given our experience that retention comes naturally when we are involved in the right way with enough samples of the language. Natural retention, however, 'places a limit on how much the student can get in a course of fixed length' (Stevick, 1982, p. 68). Moreover, different from real-time communication, text memorisation frees the learners from the pressure of spontaneous interaction, which may enable them to notice new forms and eventually incorporate them into their linguistic system. It has been reported from prior research (Ding, 2007) that the practice of text memorisation enhances noticing and rehearsal, a viewpoint with which an interviewee showed agreement:

*You can learn the details of the language as the text is ready at any time and it is an off-line process. But listening [to English from radio or TV] can only allow you to know the outline or rough idea of what they are talking about. You have no chance to learn the language per se including the sentence structures they use. After all, we don't have the capacity to snatch all that we need to know in that short time, and even worse, it is unlikely that you know everything they are talking about. (Eli, LP, U)*

The third oft-raised comment concerns the building of confidence or a sense of achievement owing to being able to learn a text by heart. I found the following narrative especially interesting:

*I went to an English corner on campus when I was a sophomore. ... One day, I approached the most fluent speaker who always showed impatience in talking with me because of my hesitating English. I offered to discuss with him about such topics as intellectual copyright and laid-off workers. He was shocked by my incessant speaking with sensible arguments while he was at a loss to find appropriate English words to express himself. ... But he never knew that I had*

*just memorised some episodes from China Daily and poured them out to him. (Xiaodong, LP, U)*

During the interview, this participant used the word ‘*shuang*’ (a Chinese catchword among young people, meaning ‘feeling super-good’) to describe his exaltation upon the incident. We should not underestimate the psychological impact of this dramatic episode on the learner in terms of his motivation. Learning to speak a foreign language is a psychologically challenging process, especially for adult learners who are conscious of their self-image. This challenge is furthered when the learner is brought up in a social context where loss of face constitutes a ‘real dread affecting the nervous system ego more strongly than the physical fear’ (Hu, 1944, p. 50; see also Brick and Wen 2003):

They fear looking ridiculous; they fear the frustration coming from a listener’s blank look, showing that they have failed to communicate; they fear the danger of not being able to take care of themselves; they fear the alienation of not being able to communicate and thereby get close to other human being. (Beebe, 1983, p. 40)

These above-listed fears are probably all down to a feeling of inferiority regarding their linguistic competence. The practice of text memorisation was seen to help the learner to relieve the sense of inadequacy and build self-confidence:

*I feel happy after I memorise something because I feel proud of myself being able to do it. I especially possess a sense of achievement when I perform better than my classmates [in classroom interaction]. The feeling that I’m better than others [in speaking English] motivates me to learn more texts by heart. I enjoy the process most of the time because I can get something out of it. (Zhibiao, LP, U)*

Purposeful memorisation may or may not enable one to speed up his/her progress in leaning, but at least it may help learners to ‘sound more confident’ (Duong, 2006) or make them feel they are stepping forward whenever they have memorised a bit of material. A sense of attainment or satisfaction is thus achieved. This may be taken as an advantage compared with relying only on natural retention as result of exposure to enough samples of the language, which is theoretically ideal, but for many people, especially adult learners, also means very slow improvement which means discouragement and frustration (Stevick, 1982). What is more, the psychological satisfaction gained from text memorisation can be from external sources, as in the comment made by a younger learner: ‘*I don’t think it’s boring. I feel contented when my parents praise me for doing a good job [in recitation]*’ (Lijia, LP, JH).

In addition to reporting the general ways in which text memorisation helps, the participants also offered particular reasons why the practice facilitates their language learning. First and foremost, learning by heart helps to learn useful phrases, collocations, sentence structures and grammar. The following comments are typical:

*I get to know the sentence patterns through learning texts by heart, therefore, I understand the grammar ... . (Chengcheng, LP, JH)*

*It helps with fixed collocations, phrases, sentence structures and grammar. (Xiaoqing, LP, SH)*

*It helps me learn phrases and sentence patterns. It also helps with grammar. (Lixia, LP, U)*

It is my personal experience that it is hard to accurately recall the texts which were memorised the other day, let alone a week ago and this was unanimously confirmed by the participants in the interview study. It is conceivable that they can usually retain in their memory sentences or mere phrases and sentence patterns. This is despite the apparently contradictory fact that learners are initially intended to memorise the whole text. Realising the fact that text memorisation eventually leads to the retention of set phrases, one participant raised the following question: ‘*Why do we bother to memorise the whole text rather than simply committing to memory phrases and expressions if the latter does the same job?*’ (Lijia, LP, JH). My speculation is: textual material may be in a better position than fragmented phrases, borrowing Cook’s (1994, p. 138) words, to ‘give the mind something to work on, so that gradually, if one wishes, they may yield up both their grammar and their meaning’.

This process is reported by many participants saying ‘*It [text memorisation] really helps a lot in terms of grammar and sentence structure*’ (Yunpeng, LP, U). An early-stage learner also commented: ‘*I usually refer the newly-learned grammar back to the sentence in the text I have memorised and try to understand its usage in the context*’ (Yangkun, LP, JH). The practice was thought to ‘*help understand the delicacy of the grammar that has been taught*’ (Yangke, TP, SH) because

*only through text or dialogue can you understand how foreigners express certain ideas. It is useless if you memorise some disorganised stuff like individual words or phrases without knowing how they are actually used. (Yangke, TP, SH)*

As a result, learning texts by heart becomes ‘*learning the whole contents and system*’ (Yangkun, LP, JH), a view shared by a successful Chinese learner who commented that once textual materials are memorised, ‘... they become part of you, the sentence structures, the set phrases, and the new vocabulary’ (Chen Hua, quoted in Y.-Q. Gu, 2003, p. 94). Thus, the learners’ perception of text memorisation found in the study confirms analogous interview data in previous research: ‘By doing so [trying to memorise texts], vocabulary and grammar would not be a problem’ (interviewee 26, quoted in Jiang, 2008, p. 131).

Moreover, text memorisation was perceived to be especially helpful in terms of speaking and/or writing:

*I found my oral English improves after memorising texts. (Yixiao, LP, JH)*

*It helps with writing besides the sentence structure and the grammar. You can construct a sentence by imitating the sentence structure in the texts. (Jingyu, LP, JH)*

*Learning texts by heart especially helps with speaking and writing. (Xiaofeng, LP, U)*

*The more texts I learn by heart, the more comfortable I feel with speaking and writing. (Yangkun, LP, JH)*

*I found my English greatly improved after the process [of text memorisation], especially writing and speaking. (Jake,*

LP, U)

It seems that the practice of text memorisation helps the learners most with the 'productive' skills as far as the 'four skills' are concerned. A similar perception was also reported by other Chinese students in previous research. For instance, commenting on the role of 'reading aloud' – an accompanying practice with memorising texts among Chinese learners, a student states:

Reading aloud from model essays ... familiarises students with the rules for combining words into sentences and at last into whole essays ... . The aesthetic patterns absorbed from a lot of reading will work their way naturally into students' writing. (Wang Kui, quoted in Parry, 1998, pp. 87-88)

Two different ways in which text memorisation contributes to language production were mentioned in my data. The first is about efficiency in writing and speaking. Memorised texts are perceived to be serving as a source from which the ready-made materials are available for prompt use:

*When I'm translating or writing an article, the sentences just automatically come out of my mind. (Lixia, LP, U)*

*If you memorise a lot of stuff, you may find some expressions flow out of your mouth. (Rock, LP, U)*

The feeling resonates with that reported by the interviewee in Stevick's study: 'I just have countless patterns sort of swimming around in my head' (Bert, quoted in Stevick, 1989, p. 30). A participant further remarked:

*... they [memorised texts] are stored in your mind and can be accessible immediately in need. There are many ready-made sentences or expressions there for your use. ... We can take advantage of the memorised stuff without starting from scratch. (Hongying, TP, U)*

Thus, prior storage of language samples through text memorisation is considered to make for 'economy of effort' and to speed up language processing in real-time communication (see Sinclair, 1991; Skehan, 1998 for more discussion from a psycholinguistic perspective). One may argue that many sentences in memorised material are much less likely to come up in real-life conversation, but, according to speculation by Stevick (1982, p. 68), they 'may still serve as handy models for what students may want to say in later years':

A student whose memory places at his disposal 'Can you tell me where the snack bar is?' will be less likely in real life to say the incorrect 'Can you tell me where is the post office?' or the correct but abrupt 'Where is the post office?' And he'll probably come out with 'Can you tell me where the post office is?' a lot more smoothly than he could have otherwise. (Stevick, 1982, p. 68)

The second way in which text memorisation benefits production is thought to be the increased accuracy in output: '... borrowing memorised structures or expressions [means one] is less likely to make grammatical errors, especially in real-time oral communication' (Hongying, TP, U). This notion had been implicitly included in Stevick's (1982, p. 68) justifications for the use of textual memorisation (as opposed to retention that comes naturally) in language teaching and learning: 'Naturally, ... means in the short run at least that the degree of correctness in speaking and writing will be reduced'.

Another reason deals with being able to 'memorise new words more firmly' (Yixiao, LP, JH). This is because memorising texts enables one to understand the meaning of a word in a particular context:

*A word usually has several meanings. You can easily memorise the particular meaning of that word in that particular context and keep it for a long time. If you memorise the word and its meanings in an isolated way, you forget it the next day. (Huangpu, LP, JH)*

Moreover, the usage of the new word is incorporated in the text:

*If you only memorise isolated words, you don't know how to use them. There is situation for you to understand where and how words are used if you learn them through text memorisation. (Jake, LP, U)*

This may best explain the perceived benefit of memorising texts as opposed to vocabulary lists. Text memorisation seemed to be more favoured as the overall meaning of the text and the way words are used in particular sentences helped sustain the memory of the vocabulary. It also accords with the data collected from another Chinese learner in a previous interview-based study: 'In fact, remembering words in the text makes them difficult to forget' (Interviewee 8, quoted in Jiang & Smith, 2009, p. 292). This idea chimes in with a Chinese linguist's remark:

Learning texts by heart is extremely helpful to me. It works much better than memorising individual words in the sense that memorising on the basis of whole passage or at least whole sentence enables us to better understand word meaning, ... (Zhao, 2002, p. 11; Chinese original)

It is thus agreed that memorising textual materials, whether dialogues or monologues, affords the learner an opportunity to retain a word or phrase along with the context in which it is used so that s/he may obtain a deeper understanding of the vocabulary item, rather than memorising it in an isolated way.

Summing up the reasons offered by the participants why they considered that learning texts by heart had been helpful with their foreign language learning, they centred around two vantage grounds. The first is concerned with the broad ways in which learning texts by heart benefits foreign language learning. Notably, the participants mentioned the cultivation of 'language sense', the facilitation of conscious learning and promotion of self-confidence and a sense of achievement. The second vantage ground around which the discussion was carried out is on specific reasons why text memorisation contributes to language development. These reasons were related to three aspects: (1) Linguistically, it improves the learning of phrases, sentence structures and grammar; (2) In terms of language skills, it especially helps with writing and speaking; and (3) It assists vocabulary learning by enhancing the understanding of new words.

### B. General Perception

Of all the participants, only two expressed disbelief or uncertainty about the usefulness of text memorisation in foreign language learning. One showed her aversion to this practice by saying, *'It's definitely rote-learning, nothing different from the ancient system of imperial examination'* (Yuting, LP, JH). Part of the reason of her distaste can be found in the following account:

*I feel it [text memorisation] really troublesome because I don't know where I should start to ask questions. Even worse, some words are so long that I'm unable to pronounce them properly, let alone learning them by heart.*

It seems that the difficulties she experienced in memorising text made her resistant to the practice. The other one hesitated to sanction this practice simply because it was one of many methods she had tried briefly but which proved fruitless: *'It [text memorisation] seems not working for me. ... I tried many other methods, but they did not work better.'* (Ema, LP, U)

Despite the very few negative voices, the participants' perceptions of the use of text memorisation in English learning are overwhelmingly positive. The feeling at times appears to be so strong that it has led some participants to go so far as to claim:

*It [text memorisation] should be more or less helpful in every aspect of English learning. I cannot think of any way in which it does not help. It's simply a matter of degree.* (Chengcheng, LP, JH)

*It is such a good method that it benefits me in every aspect.* (Yangkun, LP, JH)

Exaggerated as these comments may appear, they suggest that the identification with the practice might be prevalent among Chinese learners, even though the data were collected from a relatively small opportunistic sample. I noticed in a recent study (Gao, 2007) on Chinese learners' strategy use in learning English that many participants mentioned the use of textual memorisation and found it useful. For instance, one reported:

We had to memorise and recite every text to him [the teacher]. ... I think that memorisation was good because it kept you speaking English and reading English to maintain the feel of English. (Liu, quoted in Gao, 2007, p. 123)

Quite a few participants in my study expressed their conviction of the overall helpfulness of text memorisation to English learning. Take the following extract, for example:

*Sometimes I think I need someone to push me to do some memorisation. I believe if I learn by heart a bit every day, I can improve my English quickly. I really regret that I didn't keep on learning by heart in senior high.* (Xiaofeng, LP, U)

This belief was even held by those who do not like this practice:

*I'd like to use 'bitter melon' to describe this method [text memorisation]. I didn't like bitter melon at all when I was a kid because of its bitter taste. My grandma told me that this stuff can cool one's body. I forced myself to eat bitter melon every day because my body easily got hot and I often had a nose bleeding. It did miracle eventually – I found myself no longer suffer from nose bleeding. I prefer to liken learning texts by heart to bitter melon. I personally don't like learning texts by heart, but I never doubt its usefulness to English learning.* (Xujia, LP, U)

A more emotional description was provided by a participant, who said,

*I felt unhappy when the teachers in high school forced us to memorise texts. But now I am really grateful to them. ... My Mom hired a private English teacher for me and she required me to learn texts by heart. She checked regularly. I really hated her at that time. But now I should thank her for doing so. I found many of the articles she forced me to recite were very helpful to my later study, especially when I was taking part in some English speaking contests.* (Lixia, LP, U)

These participants gave a positive rating to the practice although they also emphasised the painful process they had to endure in memorising text. The mixed feeling about the 'bitter melon' experience has confirmed the result produced by an analogous prior research (Ding, 2004) which targeted a group of advanced learners of English from a top university in China. Similarly, text memorisation was compared by a participant in Ding's study to 'good medicine that tastes bitter', a Chinese idiom referring to hard, painful experience that brings a desirable outcome. Having been convinced of the value of text memorisation as a 'good medicine', albeit not tasty, a teacher made the following comments which are consonant with the student's account mentioned above:

*Sometimes we have to compel them to do this [learning texts by heart]. ... Some students told me later, 'If you had not forced us to do this, we could not have made the progress we have now. In retrospect, you were doing the right thing'.* (Jiean, TP, U)

Many other participants, however, see their psychological experience with text memorisation as being changing or dynamic rather than static. Take the following extract for example:

Interviewer: Isn't it a boring and painful experience?

Suhan (LP, SH): ... *The process is painful for some people, but not for others. For me it was painful at the beginning because I don't have a good memory. And at the initial stage, it is mostly mechanical memorisation as you lack for basic knowledge of how that language is used. But it gradually takes less time to memorise as you find a sort of feeling ... memorisation is thus made much easier.*

Interviewer: So it is 'thorny' anyway?

Suhan: *Not exactly. It is a process of evolving from struggle to relaxation. It is not painful all the way.*

Perhaps the most important factor in determining whether people succeed in this task is their attitude toward the undertaking (Stevick, 1982), as in this comment:



*It [persistence in text memorisation] depends on individual choice. If it is a painful thing for you and you don't think it's worth doing, how can you invest so much of your spare time doing this? And you have to persevere in for three years. It's obviously impossible. If you see the value of this activity and think it makes sense to you, you can do this. Otherwise, I bet you cannot persevere at this for three months, let alone three years. (Zhikai, LP, U)*

This participant is an enthusiast of text memorisation who had been persevering at learning by heart the texts in *New Concept English* for three years and eventually excelled over his peers. He probably speaks for those who 'consider memorisation to be hard work, mildly onerous, but something they can do if they have sufficient reason to' (Stevick, 1982, p. 69).

Although a big part of the data in my study project a metaphor of the practice of text memorisation as 'bitter melon', implying the unenjoyable process they have to endure, some participants expressed a different feeling about the practice. Text memorisation did not bother them at all:

*I do lots of [text] memorisation even at college. I never feel the process of text memorisation 'painful'. I like English very much. It's not painful for me at all. ... No one forced me to do so. (Jake, LP, U)*

*I don't think learning texts by heart is boring. On the contrary, it's very interesting for me. (Yankun, LP, JH)*

*I don't see it a painful process. Maybe I'm majoring in art and I have good memory. (Xiaofeng, LP, U)*

*[Although grammar learning has its advantage,] I still prefer text memorisation which is more interesting and effective to me. (Lixia, LP, U)*

*I'd like to memorise more good articles even now if I don't have so many trivial things to deal with. I find it an enjoyable job. (Wenna, TP, JH)*

It appeared that text memorisation not only has not bothered these participants at all, but makes a pleasant experience for them. Recitation sometimes becomes the realisation of the need for satisfying personal desire: 'Some texts are really beautiful and connect to me so that I just want to memorise them. That's it.' (Jiean, TP, U). This would confirm the observation made by Stevick (1982, p. 69): 'Some people find memorizing easy, and may even do it just for fun'. Indeed, some people 'memorise things *inadvertently* after hearing them a few times' (ibid; emphasis original):

*The easier it feels the more articles I memorise. I naturally memorise it after reading aloud a few times if it is a short paragraph. (Jake, LP, U)*

My interpretation of the facility with textual memorisation felt by this type of learners is that they are usually intrinsically motivated, that is to say, they have a love affair with English. In the words of a successful Chinese learner in a previous study, 'Not that I wanted to recite them; they get memorised after you read them a few times' (Chen Hua, quoted in Y.-Q. Gu, 2003, p. 94).

Another participant just felt that text memorisation was a way of learning she was comfortable with:

*It [text memorisation] makes my English learning easier. If I intend to merely memorise words in a list, they cannot get memorised even after much time is spent. If I learn the text by heart, the new words are naturally memorised as they are all contained in the text. ... I felt it more interesting because it involves your reading aloud and you hear your own pronunciation. (Xuying, LP, U)*

This comment also lends support to the finding by Marton et al (1996) that Chinese memorisation practices were integrated with understanding and enjoyment. Although these enthusiastic practitioners of text memorisation perhaps represent only a small minority of Chinese learners who are keen in English and/or endowed with talent in learning a foreign language, their passionate comments may lead us to reconsider the issue of whether text memorisation is necessarily an anti-humanistic practice, as it has been portrayed by some Western scholars. A more important question to ask is: If it indeed makes sense to Chinese learners in particular contexts, how can the practice be made less psychologically challenging from a humanistic view of learning? I found the following comment made by a participant rather inspiring and insightful:

*Students need to be guided to appreciate the beauty of language so that the process of memorisation becomes that of enjoying the delicateness of language rather than being forced to endure what they may think is pointless. (Eli, LP, U)*

Perhaps in addition to communication, language or speaking functions as 'a source of comfort and an outlet for joy and exuberance' (Cook, 1994, p. 138) which I have a strong conviction in and I believe has been experienced by many others. This perspective may help encourage us (learners and teachers) to consider how we can incorporate the pleasurable aspect of speaking into the practice of text memorisation as a learning device.

## V. CONCLUSION

If the most widely accepted view of learning in China is indeed that 'it is memory-based' (Maley, 1983, p. 99), it is far from being 'old-fashioned', 'misguided' or even 'stupid' - at least concerning the practice of text memorisation. While many of the perceptions emerging from the inquiry are indeed culturally-rooted and context-bound, the benefits the learners feel text memorisation has brought to their English learning may have contributed much to their positive rating of the practice. The study suggests the need to pay attention to what the 'insiders' (in this case, the practitioners of text memorisation) actually do and say before allowing us to be led by our own preconceptions. Such initiative is expected to - especially when talking about a practice of Chinese cultural heritage - help us to move from excessive emphasis on culture which may, to some extent, 'result in a dismissive attitude towards Chinese learning practice' (Q. Gu & Brookes, 2008, p. 338).

As is clear from the preceding discussion, many of the contributions offered by the learners were thoughtful and well-reasoned. The Chinese learners have their own opinions and judgment about whether and why the use of text memorisation had been beneficial to their foreign language learning in a Chinese context. While it was viewed by many Western scholars as 'unrewarding in learning terms' (Maley, 1983, p. 102) if not harmful, participants' perceptions of the use of text memorisation in foreign language learning were decidedly positive. The participants perceive text memorisation as being beneficial to foreign language learning not only because it linguistically facilitates and expedites foreign language learning in a number of ways but also because this practice psychologically builds their confidence and a sense of achievement. It seems that the practice of text memorisation probably will not be eliminated in years to come, nor will it be denied by Chinese learners.

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# Brian Friel's *Translations*: A Bourdieusian Reading

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**Abstract**—Brian Friel is one of the most eminent figures in contemporary Irish drama. In his plays, he addresses the issues of language, culture, education, power, politics and myth. He is also mostly regarded as a postcolonial writer, since he is concerned with colonial and postcolonial contexts in which language and cultural clash are dominant factors. Pierre Bourdieu, a French sociologist, as one of the theorists in cultural studies mentions the dynamics of power relations in social life through such ideas as capital, habitus, field, symbolic violence, etc. Therefore Bourdieu's theories regarding class, culture and language are applicable. The focus of this article is to analyze Friel's plays in the light of Bourdieu's sociological notions. According to Bourdieu, there are different types of capital (cultural, economic, social and symbolic) which distinguish every individual's position in society and in relation to other individuals. For instance in *Translations*, the play which is going to be analyzed, the Irish characters who speak their native language (Gaelic) try to learn English in order to get linguistic capital and form a prestige or social status for themselves.

**Index Terms**—*Translations*, Bourdieu, cultural capital, symbolic capital, power

Brian Friel is one of the most eminent figures in contemporary Irish drama. In his plays, he addresses the issues of language, culture, education, power, politics and myths. As he is mostly regarded as a postcolonial writer, critics have analyzed his plays from the postcolonial perspective. Csilla Bertha in "Brian Friel as Postcolonial Playwright," calls Friel a postcolonial writer:

He is postcolonial in the sense that, feeling in his nerves the responsibility for the community he comes from, and worrying about the survival not only of individual but also of cultural values in the value-free modern/postmodern world, Friel continually faces the consequences of colonization, the experience that so deeply determined the formation of the modern Irish history, society and identity. His writing has been concerned with the nuances of both personal and cultural-national identity and its relation to colonial dispossession, issues of home, language, tradition, the working of private and public memory □ all issues that inform postcolonial consciousness. Apart from thematic considerations, Friel has also experimented with the techniques of fragmenting, subverting and destabilizing conventional stage realism favored by postcolonial drama. (Bertha, 2006, p. 154)

He dramatizes the conditions of Irish society through small communities which serve as microcosms representing the Irish society. *Translations*, as one of Friel's most outstanding works, addresses most of the above-mentioned issues, especially the interconnection of language, culture and power. Thus Pierre Bourdieu's theories about the relation between individuals, which he calls social 'agents,' and the position they try to gain, is applicable to *Translations*. According to Bourdieu in the process of socialization, agents struggle for different capitals (cultural, social, linguistic, economic and symbolic) which guarantee power and social status. The aim of this article is to analyze Friel's play in the light of Bourdieu's main sociological notions, viz. capital, habitus, bodily hexis, misrecognition and field.

Before starting the discussion of the play, a brief introduction to Bourdieu's relevant theories follows. Bourdieu believes that there are different types of capital which distinguish every individual's position in society in relation to other individuals. Bourdieu's major capitals or values are cultural, social, symbolic, linguistic and economic.

Cultural capital is the desire for something which is culturally valued and is worth accumulating in order to gain a higher social status. As Jen Webb puts it:

Cultural capital is a form of value associated with culturally authorized tastes, consumption patterns, attributes, skills, and awards. Within the field of education, for example, an academic degree constitutes cultural capital (Webb, 2002, p.x).

Social capital, is a network of relationships among the members of a group which provides the members with some values and credit

The aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintances and recognition – or in other words, to membership in a group – which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectively owned capital, a 'credential' which entitles them to credit, in the various senses of the word. (Bourdieu, 1979, p.21)

In linguistic capital, language as a means of creating power can shape the identity of the characters and is regarded as a value by Bourdieu. "The more linguistic capital the speakers possess, the more they are able to exploit the *systems of*

*differences* to their advantage and thereby secure a profit of distinction". (Thompson, 1991, p.18) Language for Bourdieu is a mechanism of power:

Bourdieu takes language to be not merely a method of communication, but also a mechanism of power. The language one uses is designated by one's relational position in a field or social space. Different uses of language tend to reiterate the respective position of each participant. Linguistic interactions are manifestations of the participants' respective positions in social space and categories of understanding, and thus tend to reproduce the objective structures of the social field. This determines who has a 'right' to be listened to, to interrupt, to ask questions, and to what degree (Webb, 2002, p.3).

Symbolic capital is prestige, social status, fame and qualities which are not meaningful by themselves, but people believe that someone has them:

A form of capital or value that is not recognized as such. Prestige and a glowing reputation, for example, operate as symbolic capital because they mean nothing in themselves, but depend on people believing that someone possesses these qualities (Skeggs, 2004, p. 25).

Finally, economic capital, refers to money, land, house and other properties. The agents try to gain more properties to have a higher social status (Storey, 1990, p. xi).

Another term in Bourdieu's terminology is "Field", which he defines as a "dynamic" social space in which individuals struggle for a position or, in other words, for capital, like the field of education. Cultural field can be defined as "a series of institutions, rules, rituals, conventions, categories, designations and appointments which constitute an objective hierarchy and which produce and authorize certain discourses and activities." (Shusterman, 1999, p.18) Bourdieu also mentions the field of power as the space of relations of force between the agents or institutions to gain the dominant position in a field.

Habitus, as one of the main concepts of Bourdieu is described as "a system of durable dispositions; that is, as an internalized mental or cognitive structure that functions both consciously and unconsciously and constrains what people should and should not do." (Ihlen, 2009, p.65) Thus it is through habitus that the agents obtain certain manners, values and make an image for themselves in society.

"The physical attitudes and dispositions which emerge in individuals as a result of the relationships between particular fields and individuals' habits" is Bourdieu's definition for the term "bodily hexis." (Bourdieu, 1979, p.11) Bourdieu believes that people's disposition, way of standing, speaking, walking, feeling and thinking, that is, their body language, functions as distinction for people. For example, slow gestures are associated with noble class and too much haste and agitation with Bourgeoisie.

The last Bourdieusian term to be mentioned here is "misrecognition," which is the imposition of the dominant-class culture on subordinate groups. It is forced on agents by authority and the agents; it is a form of "symbolic violence," (Bourdieu, 1992, p.126) which the agents do not feel, that is, they consider all the limitations and denied-resources as natural, and therefore do not protest against it. For example, in a patriarchal society, female members may regard their status of being inferior to male ones as natural.

In Friel's *Translations* the dominant field is arguably that of education. The play is about a small community of Irish people, who live in Baile Beag village. A group of students with different age, sex and class from this village are trying to learn Irish, as well as Greek and Latin languages. The teacher, also the schoolmaster, is Hugh. Manus, Hugh's lame son also helps his father in teaching the village members. Owen, Hugh's other son, works as a translator for the English regiment which has the mission of renaming the Irish places and making a new map for Ireland. The English want to replace the Irish language with English claiming that Irish people will benefit from this replacement of language because they can do business and trade much more easily this way. Just a few members of this small Irish community see through the real motivation behind the English army's activities. At the end of the play, after the disappearance of English soldier Yolland, the Irish are threatened to be evicted unless the English soldier is found and it is at this point that the English survey group's aim becomes known to all the Irish inhabitants.

As in every community, the members of this small community also compete to gain various capitals or values in the cultural, educational and social fields. The most important capital in the play in relation to most of the characters is cultural capital. Hugh, as the schoolmaster of the hedge-school community is the most respectable and cultured person in the cultural field of education. He has a knowledge of different languages such as Irish, English, Greek and Latin; therefore he has the highest status in the cultural field and all the other students try to improve their social position by learning these languages. In the process of the play he frequently declaims words or phrases in Greek or Latin and asks the students to translate them into Irish:

Hugh: Indeed- I encountered Captain Lancey of the Royal Engineers who is engaged in the ordnance survey of this are.... He explained that he does not speak Irish. Latin? I asked. None. Greek? Not a syllable. He speaks – on his own admission – only English and to his credit he seemed suitably verecund – James? Jimmy: Vercecundus – humble (I. 399).

At one level the use of classic languages – Greek, Latin and even Irish (related through the Celtic family of languages to Latin) – marks the 'distinction' between the teacher and the students culturally. However, at a more important level what is at stake here is a kind of cultural war, one between the colonizing English and the colonized Irish. The fact that Hugh emphasizes the English captain's ignorance of classic languages signals his attempt to depict him, and the English

generally, as culturally inferior to the Irish with their Gaelic culture. In other words, Hugh astutely uses his people's cultural capital, or its myth, as a weapon against the colonizers. The English in turn are trying to take away this cultural weapon by changing the Gaelic names into English and making English the dominant language.

Hugh is highly respected for his cultural capital and the students in his school try to emulate him. The only student who is close to Hugh in possession of cultural capital is Jimmy Jack, a bachelor in his 60s. He comes to the evening classes partly for the company and partly for the "intellectual stimulation." (383) Jimmy believes in gods and ancient myths and is "fluent in Greek and Latin but is in no way pedantic." (384) Although he is nearly as knowledgeable as Hugh, he is not considered as a master as Hugh is, for Hugh has a special kind of prestige which is also partly due to his bodily hexis giving him a particular capital (symbolic capital) in the eyes of his students. Symbolic capital is "denied capital", it is a form of power "that is not perceived as power but as legitimate demands for recognition, deference, obedience or the services of others." (Swartz, 1997, p. 43) Prestige, fame, authority and alike are not meaningful by themselves; they are recognized as source of power when public opinion receives them as legitimate. Therefore the students regard some features in Hugh as prestigious, which lead to his cultural, social and symbolic capital. Jimmy Jack, however, fails to attract these kinds of capital.

Part of this capital that is given to Hugh is because of his particular gestures, body language, the way he talks, walks, etc. Although Hugh is often drunk, he is described in the stage directions as :

A large man, with residual dignity, shabbily dressed, carrying a stick. He has, as always, a large quantity of drink taken, but he is by no means drunk. He is in his early sixties (I. 397).

Unlike Hugh Jimmy Jack who is almost as fluent in Greek and Latin as Hugh, is not as respectable as him. Because his appearance, body language and gestures mark him as a student rather than a teacher:

Jimmy Jack Cassie- known as the Infant Prodigy- sits by himself, contentedly reading Homer in Greek and smiling to himself. He is a bachelor in his sixties, lives alone, and comes to these evening classes partly for the company and partly for the intellectual stimulation. He is fluent in Latin and Greek but is in no way *pedantic* – to him it is perfectly normal to speak these tongues. He never washes. His clothes – heavy top coat, hat, mittens, which he wears now – are filthy and he lives in them summer and winter, day and night. He now reads in a quiet voice and smiles in profound satisfaction. For Jimmy world of the gods and the ancient myths is as real and as immediate as everyday life in the townland of Baile Beag (I.383). (emphasis added)

The point is that Jimmy, unlike Hugh, lacks the proper 'habitus' and 'bodily hexis' (generally part of habitus) associated with the 'field' of education; he neither looks nor sounds like a teacher. Crucially, he is not 'pedantic'.

Friel also uses different bodily gestures and poses to characterize his dramatis personae, to intimate their social status and power in the small Irish community. For instance, in Act I, Sarah is described as: "sitting on a low stool, her head down, very tense, clutching a slate on her knees." (Act 1, scene1) She is sitting on a lower stool than Manus, who is teaching her to speak. Her "speech defect is so bad that all her life she has been considered locally to be dumb and she has accepted this"(Act 1, scene1). As a male who is older than Sarah and has the ability to speak and also the ability to teach Irish, English, Greek and Latin, Manus in contrast has power over Sarah because of the factors of sex, age, social class and education. All these give him various kinds of capital; he has linguistic and social capital that has created symbolic capital for him.

The relationship between Manus and Sarah leads the reader to another Bourdieusian notion, that of 'misrecognition.' Sarah regards the superiority of Manus over herself as natural and does not object to it. In a larger context one can see this misrecognition about Irish people. The inhabitants of the village feel inferior to the English mostly because they speak English but the Irish cannot, that is, this ability has created a linguistic capital for the English soldiers. Also they are trained and have special ability in military services. Thus the Irish naturally accept the English dominance over themselves. Even when one of the villagers suggests that union and independence can save them, the idea is rejected and it is considered as impossible:

Doalty: If we'd all stick together. If we knew how to defend Ourselves.

Owen: Against a trained army (III. 442).

Owen, Hugh's second son who knows English and thus works as a translator for the English army, thinks of the English as very powerful and superior; to him they mean to help the Irish to improve and progress. At the beginning of the play, the reader sees that Owen translates Lancey's (the English Lieutenant) words to the benefit of the English rather than accurately. He depicts the English activities in their village as positive and explains that the English want to standardize the Irish map and help the people to improve their country:

Owen: And I'll translate as you go along.

Lancey: I see. Yes. Very well. Perhaps you're right. Well. What we are doing is this. (He looks at Owen. Owen nods reassuringly.) His Majesty's government has ordered the first ever comprehensive survey of this entire country – a general triangulation which will embrace detailed hydrographic and topographic information and which will be executed to a scale of six inches to the English mile.

Owen: The job is being done by soldiers because they are skilled in this work.

Lancey: And also so that the entire basis of land valuation can be reassessed for purposes of more equitable taxation.

Owen: This new map will take the place of the estate agent's map so that from now on you will know exactly what is yours in law (I. 406).

Owen, the English translator, is after accumulating capital. By speaking English fluently (linguistic capital) he gets power over other Irish villagers. He is also connected with the soldiers who work in the English army (social capital). This leads to symbolic capital; that is, the Irish men consider a special rank for Owen and they trust him because they think he knows more than them and has more power. Owen, like other characters in the play, is also after economic capital and in fact his symbolic capital somehow paves the way to his economic success.

The reader should know that, Friel has used a theatrical technique to solve the linguistic issues at the heart of the play. As the critic Martine Pelletier declares, Baile Beag in 1833 would have been an Irish –speaking community, though some characters would also have been fluent in English. Yet the language the audience hears onstage throughout is English, except of course when it comes to the place names or some Latin and Greek words and quotations. Since the focus of the play is very much on language, its role in shaping and expressing personal and collective identity, the very fact that English onstage represents two separate languages – the Irish we are asked to imagine and the English which is now the "natural vehicle" for a play on an Irish stage – is immensely ironic and hugely significant (Pelletier, 2006, p.68).

In Act I, the interweaving of cultural issues, education, Irish history and identity, myths and language comes to the fore. The play starts with an educational field: Sarah and Manus in the hedge-school, with Manus trying to teach Sarah to speak. In the next part, after Hugh comes to the class, we see many Greek and Latin words and passages written by Hugh. Hugh also talks about publishing his book (as a cultural capital). Also, Jimmy Jack as an expert in Latin and Greek, frequently recites some passages from Homer, Virgil and other classical masters. Friel's focus, then, seems to be on cultural capital, but in the second and third Acts, culture becomes less prominent and it is replaced by economic capital, that is, money, property and wealth. Owen tells his father that he is earning a great deal of money for translating from English into Irish for the villager. Ironically, though he plays the role of a 'brown sahib,' 'house negro,' or 'comprador,' he feels proud and content.

Maire, the other character, who is Manus's beloved, is determined to climb socially through increasing her capitals. At the beginning of the play, Maire is blaming Manus because he has not applied for teaching at the new national school. The English have decided to close the Irish hedge-schools and substitute them with new national schools in which English is taught to the Irish. This is clearly an attempt to vanquish Irish culture and language to sustain the colonization of Ireland. Manus has rejected working in the new school as he is one of the few who are aware of the depth of the disaster.

Unlike Manus and like Owen, Maire is after economic capital. Looking down on her country's culture, she wishes to learn English; rehearsing the colonizers' ideology, this would be comprador says: "the old language is a barrier to modern progress." (400) To get a chance to learn English, she becomes intimate with one of the English soldiers, Yolland. In fact, she leaves Manus, who loves her truly, and goes to Yolland whose language she cannot understand. But Yolland's social status as an English soldier, his gestures and even his soft hands that she thinks are like gentlemen's, seduce Maire. In this respect, she is very much similar to Owen. Both are seduced by the symbolic capital of the colonizers.

By the end of the play, Yolland has disappeared and Lancey comes to the hedge-school threatening the villagers that he will destroy their village unless Yolland is found. It is at this point that most of the characters come to realize the real end of the English army. The reader finds that the close relation, the friendship or the marriage between two cultures which are miles away from each other is impossible. This impossibility is depicted through the relations of Owen and Maire with the English; the dream of friendship or marriage with the masters is shattered.

Friel artistically demonstrates this impossibility by using marriage as a metaphor. At the end of the play Jimmy Jack, the bachelor, who is interested in ancient gods and myths, asserts that he wants to marry Athene (the Greek goddess). When Maire talks about Yolland, Jimmy says:

Do you know the Greek word endogamein? It means to marry within the tribe. And the word exogamein means to marry outside the tribe. And you don't cross those borders casually- both sides get very angry. Now, the problem is this: Is Athene sufficiently mortal or am I sufficiently godlike for the marriage to be accepted to her people and to my people? You think about that (III. 446).

The parallelism that Friel has created in the image of marriage between tribes intimates the unfeasibility of the dream of union between two cultures, that of the colonizing and the colonized.

Brian Friel's play is obviously about culture or rather the clash of cultures. Of course a most relevant theorist here is Edward Said who has cogently theorized the crucial link between culture and imperialism. This paper argues for the relevance of another eminent theorist, that is, Pierre Bourdieu who has theorized how culture marks individuals socially. Friel's play illustrates this marking in the context of colonialism.

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# The Impact of Gender and Strategic Pre-task Planning Time on EFL Learners' Oral Performance in Terms of Accuracy

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**Abstract**—The role of planning time and gender as an interactional factor or task condition in second language development is one of the interesting issues in the realm of task-based language teaching and learning. The present study intends to investigate the effects of strategic pre-task planning and gender on EFL learners' oral task production in terms of the linguistic domain of accuracy. In order to collect the data, a narrative pictorial task was employed as the means of data collection. The orally collected data was quantified and measured by means of the measure of accuracy. Then, the data was fed into the SPSS Software (Version 16) for statistical analysis. Independent Samples T-Test was employed as the statistical means of analysis. The results of the study indicated significant differences between the oral performance of the female and male learners in both planned and unplanned conditions. The results of the study carry some pedagogical implications for SLA researchers, language teachers in EFL contexts, and teacher educators.

**Index Terms**—task-based language teaching, task, gender, pre-task planning time, strategic planning time, accuracy

## I. INTRODUCTION

Tasks are of great importance in recent second language acquisition literature, research, and pedagogy. This is obvious in a large number of studies and research pertaining to task-based language teaching and learning. According to Williams and Burden (1997), task is viewed as a pedagogic tool for the language teacher and a central unit for syllabus design and research. Thus, due to the importance of task, many studies over the past two decades have been carried out to investigate different aspects of it (Bygate, 2001; Robinson, 2001, 2005, 2007; Gilabert, 2005; Ortega, 1995; Skehan and Foster, 1999; Elder and Wigglesworth, 2003; Ellis, 2005; Rahimpour, 2007, 2008; Rahimpour and Yaghoubi-Notash, 2008; Wang, 2008; Salimi and Yousefi, 2009; Mehrang and Rahimpour, 2010; Salimi and Dadashpour, 2010; Dadashpour, 2011; Shafaei, 2012; Salimi et al, 2012; Salimi and Dadashpour, 2012a, 2012b). Planning time and gender of language learners have been the topic of research in many studies in the literature of second or foreign language research. However, their joint effect on L2 learners' oral and written task production in terms of three production elements of accuracy, fluency, and complexity is something which has rarely been explored in the field of task-based language teaching and there is a gap in the current literature on the topic. Thus, the present study was an attempt to contribute to the current literature and tried to investigate the effects of L2 learners' gender and pre-task strategic planning time on their oral task performance in terms of accuracy.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### A. Task-based Language Teaching and Learning (TBLT)

According to Ellis (2003, p. 30) tasks can function as a useful device for planning a communicative curriculum, particularly in contexts where there are few opportunities for more authentic communicative experiences, for instance, many English as foreign language (EFL) learning contexts.

As Rahimpour (2008) states, task-based approaches to teaching second language concentrate on learners' ability to perform target-like tasks without any explicit teaching of grammatical rules. According to Long and Crookes (1992), these approaches involve procedural syllabuses, process syllabuses, and task-based language teaching (TBLT). The third approach, task-based language teaching (TBLT), owes its development to the dissatisfaction with the previous methods and approaches of language teaching such as audiolingual, grammar translation, etc (Salimi et al, 2012c). According to Rahimpour (2010), task-based language teaching is a response to a better understanding of a language

learning process. Tasks, in TBLT, are considered as the units of analysis and the creation of meaning without any prior prescription of forms is emphasized in TBLT. Therefore, language learners are free to employ any strategies and forms to perform the task and achieve the task goal (Willis and Willis, 2001).

As Ellis (2005) argues task-based language teaching challenges the main approaches to language teaching in that it is based upon the fact that language learning will develop most successfully and effectively if teaching aims simply to create context and condition in which learners' natural language learning ability can be nurtured.

The various approaches to task-based language teaching (TBLT) reflect the issues that figure mainly in the current discussions of language pedagogy and SLA research. These issues are the role of meaning-based activity, the need for more learner-centered curricula, the importance of affective factors, the contribution of learner-training, and the need for some focus on form (Ellis, 2003). Task-based language teaching provides ways of addressing these various concerns and for this reason is attracting increasing attention of language teachers and researchers (Ellis, 2003).

### *B. Definition of Task*

Crookes (1986, p. 1) argues that in neither research nor language pedagogy is there complete agreement as to what constitutes a task, making definition problematic, nor is there consistency in terms employed to describe the different devices for eliciting learner language. According to Long and Crookes (1992), task is pedagogical unit that can be used as a basis for designing language courses. By specifying what tasks are to be used course designers can create blueprints for the kinds of language use that will foster language development (Ellis, 2003, p. 27).

Different researchers and scholars have offered various definitions for the notion of task over the past two decades (Long, 1985; Prabhu, 1987; Skehan, 1996; Bygate, Skehan, and Swain, 2001; Ellis, 2003; Nunan, 2004; Tavakoli and Foster, 2008). Nunan (2004) goes on defining a task as follows:

A piece of classroom work that involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language while their attention is focused on mobilizing their grammatical knowledge in order to express meaning and in which the intention is to convey meaning rather than to manipulate form. The task should also have a sense of completeness, being able to stand alone as a communicative act in its own right with a beginning, middle and an end (p. 4).

### *C. Planning Time in Task-based Language Teaching*

Over the past two decades, task planning has become a burgeoning area of research within task-based language teaching. As Ellis (2005, p.3) points out, planning is an indispensable part of every spoken and written language use. That is, one who wants to speak need to decide what to say and how to do it. Besides, Sangarun (2001, p. 6) argues that planning time is assumed to be "an important feature of language production". Comparing planned and unplanned L1 oral and written productions, Givon (1979) proposed two modes of production: the "pragmatic mode" and the "syntactic mode". On the one hand, adult L1 unplanned production, according to Givon, was comparable to the pragmatic mode in the sense that its coordination is loose, and its use of grammatical morphology is low. On the other hand, adult L1 planned production is comparable to the syntactic mode which had high subordination and high use of grammatical morphology.

Planning, in research on language production, generally involves the retrieving and organizing an utterance (Wendel, 1997). Foss and Hakes (1978) suggest that planning in language production includes formulating an idea, choosing suitable vocabulary, and organizing them "in a suitable semantic and syntactic framework" (p. 170). In language teaching, planning has been associated with interlanguage (IL) development. Interlanguage is a term first coined by Selinker (1972) and refers to the developmental language between learners' first and second languages. Corder (1981) suggests that it is a mixture language that incorporates the learner's first and second language properties, and also has its own properties. Ellis (1987) argued that planning helps the learner access the linguistic forms that have not yet been totally automated. Further, Crookes (1989) suggested that planning stretches IL and engages the processes of second language acquisition.

### *D. Pre-task Planning Time and Its Types*

According to Ellis (2005) planning time is divided into two types of pre-task and within-task planning time. Pre-task planning which is the topic of this paper refers to planning that occurs before the main performance of the task (Ellis, 2005, p.3). It involves, according to Schmidt (2001), preparatory attention which contributes in performing actions with greater accuracy and speed.

In task-based language teaching, pre-task planning involves two kinds of rehearsal and strategic planning. In rehearsal, learners are given the chance to carry out the task before its main performance (Ellis, 2005, p. 3). That is, the learners' first performance of the task is considered as a practice or rehearsal for the final performance. The other type, strategic planning, refers to the learners' preparation of the content of the task they want to perform. In strategic planning, they "have access to the actual task materials" (Ellis, 2005, p.3).

### *E. Studies Conducted on Planning Time*

Since 1980s, many SLA researchers have done several studies on the impacts of task planning and its types on language performance and language acquisition of language learners (Ochs, 1979; Crookes, 1989; Wigglesworth, 1997;

Foster and Skehan, 1999; Yuan and Ellis, 2003; Ellis and Yuan, 2004; Kawauchi, 2005; Tavakoli and Skehan, 2005). Findings of many of these studies have indicated that planning has obvious effects on language learners' task performance in terms of complexity and fluency (Foster and Skehan 1996; Mehnert, 1998; Ortega, 1999; Foster and Skehan, 1999; Ellis and Yuan, 2004; Kawauchi, 2005) but the findings regarding language learners' accuracy have not been homogenous which is part of the focus of the present study. Crookes (1989) investigated the consequences of ten minutes pre-task planning time on the learners' performance while performing two information-gap tasks. He found that learners in planned condition produced more fluent and more complex language than the learners without planning, but the performance of learners in planned condition was not more accurate than the others. Ortega (1999) investigated the effect of strategic planning on two groups of language learners from low intermediate and advanced proficiency levels. As a result, he found that planning affected the fluency and complexity of language learners. On the contrary, planning had a beneficial effect on the lexical complexity of just the low-intermediate participants and conversely, planned narratives were more accurate in case they were produced by the advanced learners but not by the low-intermediate level speakers. Salimi and Fatollahnejad (2012) studied the effects of strategic planning and topic familiarity on Iranian intermediate EFL learners' written performance in TBLT. The results of the data analyses showed that strategic planning and topic familiarity did not have any significant effects on the learners' written task performance.

#### *F. Gender and Second Language Learning*

Gender issues in classrooms appear in a growing body of research. In many approaches to language teaching and learning, it has been delineated that females are superior to the males in language learning. The female superiority in second or foreign language learning, by most of neurolinguistic experimentations, is related to the more contribution of left hemisphere in females which is believed to be responsible for language development (Long and Crookes, 1992). Also, Oxford (1994) stated some points about the differences of male and female learners. He stated that females, specially, adults, are more dependent on the field (global) and males are more independent from the field (analytic). He also commented that females tend to be more reflective than males. Maher and Ward (2002) pointed out many implications of gender bias in classrooms and suggested that these contribute to loss of self-esteem and academic security for girls. Adolescence is also a time when the lives of boys and girls become even more sex-differentiated. Besides, Taylor (1993) strongly insists that social construction of gender is an active and ongoing process; teachers must supply materials with alternative versions of femininity—those more helpful to females in developing a sense of self and their future as women. Furthermore, Alcoff (1988) argued that gender is not a point starting, not a given, but a construct, formalizing discourse in some non-arbitrary way through a matrix of habits and practices.

Reviewing the studies carried out in the field of task-based language teaching, it was revealed that there was a gap in the current literature on the role of L2 learners' gender and pre-task planning time on their task performance in terms of three production elements of accuracy, fluency, and complexity. Therefore, the present study aimed at investigating the impact of gender and strategic pre-task planning time on EFL learners' oral performance in terms of accuracy.

### III. RESEARCH QUESTION AND HYPOTHESIS

The above literature review yielded the following research question and research hypotheses:

**RQ<sub>1</sub>:** What are the effects of gender and strategic pre-task planning time on L2 learners' oral performance in terms of accuracy?

**H<sub>0</sub>:** There are no significant differences between gender and strategic pre-task planning time and L2 learners' oral performance in terms of accuracy.

**H<sub>1</sub>:** Female learners while performing task with strategic pre-task planning time will produce more accurate language than male ones.

### IV. METHODOLOGY

#### *A. Participants*

40 Learners of English in an intermediate level of language proficiency affiliated to Iran national Language Institute Miandoab Branch were chosen as the participants of this study. They were chosen from among the intermediate level English learners based on their performance on a pre-test which was administered in order to ensure the homogeneity of the learners participating in the study. They aged between 18-27. The participants of this study involved twenty males and twenty females. The participants were taking conversation courses for at least two years. Their first language background was Turkish and Persian. After the selection of the participants, according to the goal of the study, they were randomly divided into two groups of male and female.

#### *B. Data Collection Instrument*

In order to collect the required oral data for this study, a valid narrative pictorial task taken from the Mock or sample examinations of Cambridge University Press (2007) was employed as the data collection instrument in the study. Narrative tasks, according to Tavakoli and Skehan (2005), refer to the stories based upon a set of sequenced picture prompts which are given to language learners to elicit language performance. Attempts were made to find those picture

prompts which were appropriate to the proficiency level of the participants in the study in terms of clarity, length, and difficulty, and were culturally familiar for the participants. Eventually, the task employed in the study was selected as the means of data collection since it is mostly suitable for the purpose of the study.

C. Procedure

In order to collect the data, each participant was called from the class individually to perform the narrative task. Then, they were informed of what they were expected to do. Also, the participants were told that their oral performance would be recorded while they are performing the pictorial task. Moreover, they were ensured that the recordings of their oral performance would be confidential, and that this was not a test.

The oral data for this study was collected as following. Firstly, the participants of female group were asked to perform on the narrative task with strategic pre-task planning time. They were given the pictorial task to look at it and narrate the story of the picture prompts. Then, the male learners were asked to perform on the same task. At this level (performing the narrative task with strategic pre-task planning), both male and female learners were given 10 minutes for strategic pre-task planning time. Having collected the data with strategic planning time, the participants of both male and female groups were asked to narrate the story of picture prompts without strategic pre-task planning time. That is, they were not given any time for strategic pre-task planning time before they perform on the task. It needs to be noted that the data collection without strategic pre-task planning time was conducted after an interval of two weeks. This interval was due to eliminating the learners' memorial effects. The collected oral data from the participants was transcribed, quantified, and measured by the accuracy measure employed in the study.

D. Accuracy Measure

To measure accuracy, percentage of error-free clauses is divided by the total number of words (Ellis, 2003).

V. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Table 1 clearly presents the means differences of accuracy of the male and female groups in narrative task with strategic pre-task planning time.

TABLE 1  
COMPARISON OF THE MEANS OF ACCURACY OF ORAL PERFORMANCE OF MALE AND FEMALE GROUPS WITH STRATEGIC PRE-TASK PLANNING

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Means
Accuracy Planned Female	20	0.51	0.13	0.03
Accuracy Planned Male	20	0.34	0.09	0.02

According to the data presented in table 1, female learners produced more accurate (0.51) language while performing narrative task with strategic pre-task planning than male learners (0.34).

Figure 1 shows the means differences of accuracy of the male and female groups in narrative task with strategic pre-task planning time.

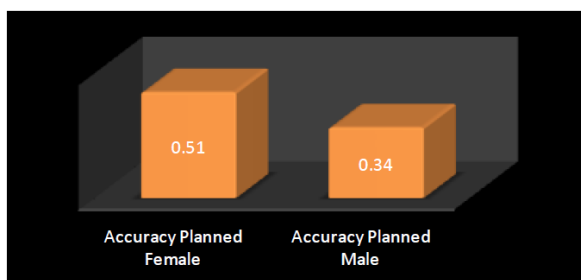


Figure 1 Comparison of the Means of Accuracy of Oral Performance of Male and Female Groups with Strategic Pre-Task Planning

Table 2 shows the results of Independent Samples T-test for the means of accuracy the male and female groups in narrative task with strategic pre-task planning time.

TABLE.2  
INDEPENDENT SAMPLES T-TEST FOR THE MEANS OF ACCURACY OF ORAL PERFORMANCE OF MALE AND FEMALE GROUPS WITH STRATEGIC PRE-TASK PLANNING

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
Independent Samples Test	4.39	.043	4.64	38	.000	0.17	0.036	0.096	0.24
Equal variances not assumed			4.64	33.70	.000	0.17	0.036	0.095	0.24

The results of statistical analysis of applying Independent Samples T-test to test the proposed hypothesis are presented in the above table. The results of SPSS at  $df = 38$  and  $\alpha = .05$ , indicated that there was a significant difference between gender of the learners and strategic pre-task planning and L2 learners' accuracy of oral performance in narrative task. Therefore, the proposed null hypothesis claiming "there are no significant differences between gender and strategic pre-task planning time and L2 learners' oral performance in terms of accuracy" was rejected.

The means differences of male and female learners' oral performances in narrative task while performing the task without pre-task strategic planning are presented in the following table (table 3).

TABLE 3.  
COMPARISON OF THE MEANS OF ACCURACY OF ORAL PERFORMANCE OF MALE AND FEMALE GROUPS WITHOUT STRATEGIC PRE-TASK PLANNING

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Means
Accuracy Unplanned Female	20	0.44	0.11	0.024
Accuracy Unplanned Male	20	0.35	0.11	0.024

As it is clear from table 3, the learners of the female group outperformed the learners of male group in terms of accuracy of oral production in narrative task without strategic pre-task planning. Female learners produced more accurate (0.44) language while performing narrative task without strategic pre-task planning than male learners (0.35).

Figure 2 clearly shows the means differences of accuracy of oral performance of the male and female groups in narrative task without strategic pre-task planning time.

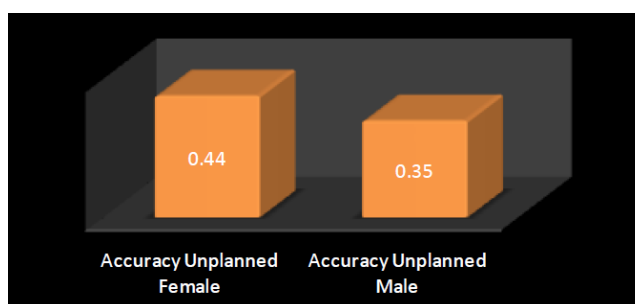


Figure 2. Comparison of the Means of Accuracy of Oral Performance of Male and Female Groups without Strategic Pre-Task Planning

Table 4 shows the results of Independent Samples T-test for the means of accuracy of oral performance of the male and female learners in narrative task without strategic pre-task planning time.

TABLE 4.  
INDEPENDENT SAMPLES T-TEST FOR THE MEANS OF ACCURACY OF ORAL PERFORMANCE OF MALE AND FEMALE GROUPS WITHOUT STRATEGIC PRE-TASK PLANNING

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
Independent Samples Test			2.64	38	0.012	0.093	0.035	0.021	0.16
Equal variances not assumed	0.033	0.85	2.64	37.99	0.012	0.093	0.035	0.021	0.16

The results of statistical analysis of applying Independent Samples T-test to test the second hypothesis of the study are presented in table 4. The results of SPSS at  $df = 38$  and  $\alpha = .05$ , revealed that there was a significant difference between gender of the learners and strategic pre-task planning and L2 learners' accuracy of oral performance in narrative task. Therefore, female participants outperformed males. Thus, our proposed hypothesis stating that "female learners while performing task with strategic pre-task planning time will produce more accurate language than male ones" was confirmed.

## VI. DISCUSSION

Considering the impacts of gender and strategic pre-task planning time on L2 learners' oral performance in terms of accuracy in narrative task, it was found that there was a considerable difference between the learners' gender and strategic pre-task planning time and the accuracy of their oral production. That is, the female learners performing the narrative task with strategic pre-task planning time outperformed male learners in oral accuracy (Tables 2 and Figure 1). The findings of the study are in line with the findings of Foster and Skehan (1996), Rahimpour and Yaghoubi-Notash (2008). However, the findings of this study regarding accuracy of oral production are in odds with Robinson, Ting, and

Urwin (1996), Gilabert (2005), and Mehrang and Rahimpour (2010). The production of more accurate language can be interpreted according to pragmatic and syntactic modes introduced by Givon (1989) who states that requiring learners to use greater syntactic resources and abilities will increase their grammatical accuracy. The findings of this study in terms of accuracy can be attributed to the fact stated by Skehan (1998) who argued that trade-off effects occur between different dimensions of language production due to limited attentional resources of humans. This means that language learners are not capable of paying a balanced attention to different aspects of language simultaneously. Finally, it could be concluded that planning time, and in the case of the present study has a positive effect on L2 learners' oral production in terms of accuracy. Also, it could be concluded that females employ strategies such as planning better than male learners in their language production. The outperformance of females over males could be attributed to the precision females put on the task performance as well as their verbal language skills.

## VII. PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

The present study carries some implications for language teachers, second language acquisition (SLA) researchers, and syllabus and task designers. The findings may contribute language teacher and, especially, syllabus designers to design instructional activities that alternate attention to all three aspect of language production (accuracy, fluency, and complexity) so that learners can develop these three elements of language production in a good balance. Furthermore, the findings of this study can contribute to methodology of task-based teaching since, as Ellis (2009) argues, planning is regarded as one of the task implementation factors which can be manipulated by providing or not providing time for learners to plan their performance, providing learners with different kinds of planning before performing a task, and giving different lengths of time for planning and the influences of planning can be viewed in language learners' language performance (Ellis, 2009). This study and its findings can have some contributions to the current SLA and task-based language teaching (TBLT) literature.

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# The Semantic Understanding of the English Counterfactual Conditionals—A Model Based on Conceptual Integration Theory

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**Abstract**—This research refers to the previous studies on the semantic understanding of the English Counterfactual Conditionals linguistically and aims at revising the Conceptual Integration Theory to find out a better model of explaining the semantic understanding of the English Counterfactual Conditionals. Through the theoretical inference and analysis of some live samples of these conditionals, the validity and explanatory power of the new model are defined.

**Index Terms**—semantics, counterfactual conditional, CIT

## I. INTRODUCTION

Counterfactual way of thinking is a common living way in which we human beings think and even start our intelligence. In English, counterfactual meanings are indicated by some specific verb patterns and grammatical structures. The pedagogic grammar rules provide the descriptions and regulations of how these meanings are organized in phrases and sentences. Inspiringly it is noticed that the counterfactual *if*-conditionals, which bear the typical and prominent structures in grammar. Anyway, from a cognitive perspective, Fauconnier (1997) language is a superficial manifestation of hidden, highly abstract, and cognitive constructions (p.34) English Counterfactual Conditionals<sup>1</sup>, as a kind of important structure of ‘subjunctive mood’, is a good sample of counterfactuality to study, under the guidance of relevant cognitive theories.

We can study the etymology of ‘subjunctive’ to find that ‘subjunctive’ means ‘proper to be subjoined’, which means that subordinates, mainly are the major manifestation of the counterfactual property. As a matter of fact, English subjunctive mood has left little forms in use, because of the vanishing of some inflexions in live present English text. ECC are the most commonly used form nowadays. Meanwhile, ECC research is commonly regarded as a grammatical structure analysis in some researches and has left some unsolved problems to deal with. However, critically, ECC is not simply the manifestation of some inflexions in grammatical structure, but also more importantly convey the cognitive psychology of the unreal in human way of thinking. That’s to say, the study of ECC is necessary to be put to more research cognitively.

Dancygier & Sweetser (2005) write that Conditionality or conditional reasoning is also important in human thought. “Philosophers have long focused on conditional constructions as manifestations of human logical reasoning... Psychologists, philosophers and anyone who studies human reasoning should be interested in the unique and persuasive cognitive patterns displayed in conditions.” (p. 56) Conditionality is not only a philosophical concern, but also is a major concern in linguistics. The property of conditionality arouses linguistic insights of grammar, semantics and cognitive approaches.

In the selection of linguistic theories to apply to this research, Conceptual Integration Theory<sup>2</sup> proposed by Fauconnier and Turner in a multitude of their studies and books can be thought to be proper in this research, because CI can better explain the backstage running of the dynamic meaning-form construction of ECC. Secondly, though some application researches have been done by adopting CI to the study of ECC, they have not yet provided a general model which can explain the general cognitive rules under which ECC’ meaning is generated and is also comprehended.

ECC embodies the integrated property of counterfactuality and conditionality. Besides grammatical, semantic and pragmatic approaches, the cognitive mechanism of ECC needs to be looked into in a way where the accounts of counterfactuality and conditionality are taken organically together.

Based on this discussion, the present research is both necessary and practicable.

The research will apply CI to the theoretical analysis; the original theoretical aspects are reviewed and evaluated. To review them, the thesis will sort out the relative different scholarly viewpoints, mainly CI theory and its derivation. Accordingly, conditionality and its study will be reviewed.

Another but the most important objective of this research is to provide a pattern under the guidance of which common rules of how ECC meaning is indicated can be well defined. As we all know, CI has offered a description of

<sup>1</sup> shortened as ECC in this thesis, as is explained in 1

<sup>2</sup> Shortened as CI in this thesis

how our brains work in the generation of semantics and the comprehension. In more detailed way, a framework must be constructed according to the generals of CI for the explanation of ECC. In this pattern, an integrated account will be taken to build spaces and network(s) to analyze ECC in live English text. In the application of the theories, the thesis will analyze the relative structures in English language and will explain further about the pattern proposed through the research.

In the use of the sample structures, the research will employ live English counterfactual conditionals, collected randomly as the corpora. The corpora are open; random sentences or texts valid in live English language are analyzed to testify the common explanatory capability of the pattern in this research. The classifications of these sentences will be done according to the pattern in the present thesis as the justification of the theoretical approach. CI has been applied to ‘subjunctive mood’ and some researchers have applied the theory in the study of ECC. The present research will reserve the valuable assertions.

The analyses of CI and its extended contents, along with the application of it to ECC examples, will discover how the meaning of ECC is generated and understood by people. A mode is given in the summary of the study that helps to explain the issue in general; this part is the aim and result of the research.

Limitations of the relevant theoretical approaches will be discussed, too, and the suggestions will be made for the future studies on the issue. The description of these limitations and suggestions will also be one of the important parts as the motivation of the present thesis.

As a qualitative theoretical study, this research collects ECC that are needed in the analysis. The published studies of ECC are introduced in the literature, whose focus has been put either on the cognitive mechanism of counterfactuality or on that of conditionality. CI applies to ‘subjunctive mood’ and some researchers have put the theory in the study of ECC. The present research reserves the valuable assertions.

The original CI is firstly adapted to the further analysis and a pattern is constructed to explain. Again, the pattern is testified in the analysis of randomly chosen ECC. In the application of the theory, conditionality and its study are considered too, as is proclaimed in the previous verse.

In the use of the sample structures, the research employs live English counterfactual conditionals, collected randomly as the corpora. The corpora are open, and some random sentences or texts valid in live English language are analyzed to testify the common explanatory capability of the pattern in this research. The classification of these sentences is specified according to pedagogic grammar and the sentences are analyzed respectively based on the pattern originated from CI.

## II. COUNTERFACTUALITY AND COUNTERFACTUAL CONDITIONAL

In understanding and indicating the meaning of counterfactuality, a question must be asked in advance: how do human beings determine whether the meaning of a condition is true or false? David Lewis (1973) analyzed the truth conditions and the logic of counterfactuals in terms of possible world semantics. (p.94) The counterfactuality is considered as a statement about how things run in other possible worlds managed by the same laws of nature.

Besides logic-semantic perspective, counterfactuality is also viewed as complex, dynamic cognitive property. Fauconnier and Turner (2002) note as “counterfactual scenarios are assembled mentally not by taking full representations of the world and making discrete, finite, known changes to deliver full possible worlds but, instead, by conceptual integration, which can compose schematic blends that suit the conceptual purposes at hand.”(p.218)

As in Oxford English Dictionary (1989), “COUNTERFACTUAL” is, as an adjective, Pertaining to, or expressing, what has not in fact happened, but might, could, or would, in different conditions; counterfactual conditional, a conditional statement of this sort, normally indicating its character by the use of the subjunctive mood in its protasis.” (Vol. III: p. 1026) The *Oxford English Dictionary* definition of “subjunctive” is to “designating a mood, the forms of which are employed to denote an action or a state as conceived (and not as a fact) and therefore used to express a wish, command, exhortation, or a contingent, hypothetical, or prospective event” (Vol. XVII: pp. 35-36).

According to Quirk et al (1985), a hypothetical condition is also termed a “closed”, “unreal”, “nonfactual” or “counterfactual” condition. It “conveys the speaker’s belief that the condition will not be fulfilled (for future conditions), is not fulfilled (for present conditions), or was not fulfilled (for past conditions)” . (p.1097) They (Quirk et al, 1985) also provided a diagram to demonstrate the verb forms with “hypothetical (counterfactual, in this paper) conditions” (p.1088), as in Table 2.1:

TABLE 2.1:  
VERB FORMS WITH HYPOTHETICAL CONDITIONS

	conditional clause	matrix clause
present and future reference	PAST If I were younger,	PAST MODAL I would study Classical Greek.
past reference	PAST PERFECTIVE If I had seen you,	PAST PERFECTIVE MODAL I would have invited you home.

From the perspective of semantics, counterfactual conditional gains its own features. Discussed by Leech (1987), different verbal constructions in English indicate three different meanings—“factual”, “theoretical” and “hypothetical (counterfactual, in this paper)” (p.106). Fillmore (1990a, 1990b) set two parameters—“epistemic stance” and “tense structure”, on which English conditionals analysis depends, for ECC require the verb form which has an interpretation of the protasis negative in epistemic stance, and the apodosis negative in epistemic stance, too. (pp. 49-56; pp. 57-76)

Grammatically, specific verb forms are taken to indicate definitely present or future counterfactual conditional. In present counterfactual conditional, “*BE*” is specified to “*WERE*” even if matched with the first-singular or the third-singular person to indicate the counterfactual meaning. In the future counterfactual subordinate, auxiliary “*WERE TO*” (or as a modal phrase) is used. However, these forms are used less frequently nowadays, especially in oral language, and Quirk et al (1985:158) called them “fossilized inflections”.

The following description of specific verb forms of ECC is a comprehensive review of various grammarians’ studies, such as Quirk et al’s (1985), Zhang Daozhen’s (2002), Zhang Zhenbang’s (1984), Bo Bin et al’s (1978) and Bo Bin’s (1994) with the classification and assortment in this research.

From the perspective of time, verb forms vary according to the supposition contrary to the present-fact, to the past-fact and to the possible future in ECC. Besides, “mixed-time” happens when the subordinate and the matrix clause take different time.

The diagram is to illustrate in Table 2.2:

TABLE 2.2:  
VERB FORMS IN ECC<sup>3</sup>

Time	Verb Form in the Subordinate	Verb Form in the Matrix clause
Present	[DID] (be→were) <sup>4</sup>	Would/should/could/might... <sup>3</sup> [DO]
Future	[DID] Were to [DO]	Would/should/could/might... [DO]
Past	had [DONE]	Would/should/could/might...have [DONE]

We also notice that the truth-conditional subordinates, certain words and phrases, other kinds of subordinates such as, the attributive clause or the objective clause, can imply counterfactual conditions. Context is also utilized in this implication. In these forms, the subordinates (or the equal semantic structures) are not “counterfactual” or even “conditional”, but the matrix clause, yet with specific forms, also indicates the counterfactual meaning.<sup>6</sup>

Examples of these structures are in Appendix I.

### III. STUDIES OF ECC

Goodman (1947) began the modern researches on counterfactuality. According to his essay “The Problem of Counterfactual Conditionals”, the following analysis of the counterfactual conditional “ $p \square \rightarrow q$ ” is read “If  $p$  were true, then  $q$  would be true.” (p.58)  $p \square \rightarrow q$  if and only if  $p$  nomologically requires, given prevailing conditions, the truth of  $q$ . Or, in other words, if  $p$ , conjoined with some set of facts  $S$  and laws of nature  $L$ , deductively entails  $q$ . More formally, we have:

$$(C) p \square \rightarrow q \text{ if and only if } \{p, S, L\} \models q$$

Suppose (as is typically the case) that  $p$  and  $q$  are (in fact) both false. If we were to include  $\neg q$  in the “set of facts”  $S$ , then Goodman’s  $\{p, S, L\}$  would be unsatisfiable, and so  $p \square \rightarrow q$  would be true, trivially. For example, we accept “If the war had been prevented, the civilians in battle-field would have survived” because the war is blood-shedding and people are killed in it. We do not, however, (pace Goodman) accept “If the war had been prevented, the war wouldn’t have been blood-shedding” even though people are not in fact killed. Not wanting to make all (interesting) counterfactuals true, Goodman suggested that we constrain  $S$  in such a way that it include only facts “that would not be altered by the truth of (i.e., those cotenable with)  $p$ .” The problem with this response is that it constrains  $S$  using, essentially, another counterfactual. In essence, Goodman’s “fix” is to add the constraint that  $p \square \rightarrow S$ . But, this is viciously circular.

To explain what “law” is, Goodman suggests a generalization of the form “All A’s are B’s” is a law if it is “projectible” — that is, if the observation of A’s that are B provides reason to believe that unobserved A’s are B. But, when does this happen? It seems that there are many non-lawlike generalizations that are (legitimately) “projected” from small samples. All it takes for a generalization to be projectible is the belief that its truth would not just be a coincidence, but there is some uniform reason for its conformity — they cannot be “wholly accidental”.

<sup>3</sup> In mixed-time ECC, verb forms are taken according to what time it takes in their own clauses.

<sup>4</sup> [DID] is a parameter which means the past form of any verb including its passive voice or other proper inflexions, and any capitalization in the squared brackets “[ ]” means the similar. The structure “(be→were)” is the explanation which means in this situation, verb “be” should be transformed into “were”.

<sup>5</sup> The symbolic structure “/.../...” means the units are any-one-optional in use.

<sup>6</sup> This discussion has been preserved in the previous part of this chapter.

Possible World Theory is widely utilized in the analysis of ECC. Stalnaker (1968) proposed a possible-world semantics for counterfactual conditional. Digression on possible world semantics for modal logic: “ $\Box p$ ” (necessarily, p) is interpreted as “p is true in all worlds which are accessible from the actual world.” The accessibility relation  $R$  between worlds can have various properties. If  $R$  is transitive, then  $\Box p \rightarrow \Box \Box p$  is valid. If  $R$  is symmetric, then  $\Box p \rightarrow \Box \Box p$ . If  $R$  is serial, then  $\Box p \rightarrow \Box \Diamond p$ , where “ $\Diamond p$ ” (possibly, p) is true if and only if “ $\neg \Box \neg p$ ” is true. (pp. 121-123)

Stalnaker introduced a selection function  $f(p) = w$  which maps each false sentence (or proposition)  $p$  into “the world  $w$  such that  $w$  is the minimal revision of the actual world that would be required to make  $p$  true.” Thus, we have the following account of the counterfactuals:

$$(S) p \Box \rightarrow q \text{ if and only if } q \text{ is true at } f(p).$$

Stalnaker’s account has various virtues. It is able to match certain intuitions about non-truth-functional conditionals. Stalnaker’s assumption that there is a *unique* closest  $p$ -world to the actual world turns out to be equivalent to the following pair:

$$(Conditional Excluded Middle): (p \Box \rightarrow q) \vee (p \Box \rightarrow \neg q)$$

$$(Stalnaker’s Axiom): \text{If } \Diamond p, \text{ then } \neg (p \Box \rightarrow q) \text{ if } p \Box \rightarrow \neg q$$

David Lewis has pursued the counterfactual question to a totally new level, where many critical questions are found and released. David Lewis (1973a) took Stalnaker’s account to task for his account of counterfactuals. In particular, Lewis objects to the assumption that there is a *unique*  $f(p)$ .

Lewis proposes the following variation on Stalnaker’s approach:

(L)  $p \Box \rightarrow q$  if and only if some (accessible)  $p \& q$ -world is closer to the actual world than any  $p \& \neg q$ -world, if there are any accessible  $p$ -worlds. If there are no accessible  $p$ -worlds, then  $p \Box \rightarrow q$  is true.

Lewis rejects two assumptions implicit in Stalnaker’s account. 1, Uniqueness Assumption is the assumption that there is a unique closest  $p$ -world to the actual world. 2, Limit Assumption is as we proceed to closer and closer  $p$ -worlds, we eventually hit a limit and can go no farther.

Lewis and Stalnaker both accept the following two assumptions: Ordering Assumption is that the comparative similarity imposes a weak ordering connected and transitive on the accessible worlds, Centering Assumption is that the actual world is accessible from itself (indeed, they assume reflexivity of  $R$ ), and closer to itself than any other world is to it.

Sweetser’s (1990, 2002) classification of three domains—content, epistemic and speech act domains—explains the three types of the logic relations in conditionality. Dancygier (1987) retains the Sufficient Hypothesis. She claims that conditionality operates in the three domains, and that in each domain the Sufficient Hypothesis can be maintained. The following description briefly introduces this classification based on their research:

According to Dancygier (1987), the domains are linked through a metaphor which develops the meaning from the substantially physical domain to the highly-abstract social domains. That is to say, meaning is extended from concrete relations to subjective mental ones. In the content domain relations, causal relations hold between the described events and situations. (p.17) According to Sweetser (1990), the content domain is the source. In this level of conditional, the conditional “if-then” conjunction indicates that the realization of the event or state of affairs in the apodosis (p.114)

Sweetser (1990) asserts that in epistemic conditionals, the conditional “if-then” conjunction expresses the idea that the knowledge and the truth of the hypothetical premise expressed in the protasis would be a sufficient condition for concluding the truth of the proposition expressed in the apodosis. (p.116) In a word, the conditional relation is that between knowledge and a conclusion.

And according to Dancygier (1987) In speech act conditionals, “ $p$ ’s are used as comments on the speech acts performed in  $q$ ’s” (p.34)

Generally speaking, if an event causes another event, the relation is content conditional; if the knowledge of the event causes a conclusion, it is epistemic; if a speech act is performed, it is in the speech-act relation.

Epistemic stance is crucial in the cognitive analysis of conditional. Epistemic stance is the epistemic relationship which the speaker obtains of the world that is represented by the conditional sentence: the speaker might regard it as the actual world, might regard it as distinct from the actual world, Fillmore (1990) notes “or might not know whether the alternative world represented in the conditional sentences is the actual world or not”. (p.142)

Fauconnier (1997) analyzed the epistemic stance, in terms of mental spaces and in English tense and mood. (p. 93)

Mental spaces are seen in Fauconnier (1994) as domains of “backstage cognition” (p.7), that is, the abstract mental constructs that are generally set up on the basis of general scenarios. What is “backstage cognition”? Fauconnier says,

*Perhaps for the first time a genuine science of meaning construction and its dynamics has been launched. This has been achieved by intensively studying and modeling the cognition that lies behind the language and goes far beyond it, but which language reflects in certain ways, and which in turn supports the dynamics of language use, language change, and language organization. Echoing Erving Goffman, I have called this backstage cognition. (Fauconnier, 1994)*

In this sense, mental spaces are actually mental constructs of potential realities which are created dynamically as a “conceptualizer” which is thought to be able to capture a string of speech when people hear a piece of language or a text

when people read. “Examples of these are: the world defined by a picture, a world of fiction, the world of a person’s beliefs and desires, time slices hypotheticals, or ‘umwelts.’”<sup>7</sup>

Basically speaking, the theory of mental spaces can be understood as a theory defining referential structure. In this framework, Coulson (2001) meaning “depends on our ability to delimit the orbit of reference”. (p.25) In the early stage, the theory was originally envisaged by Jackendoff (1975) and Nunberg (1978) respectively to deal with the intricate problems of indirect reference and referential opacity. Therefore the theory has thus been exploited to account for a lot of phenomena of different nature in language and thought. (See Fauconnier 1997 and Fauconnier & Sweetser 1996 for a revision). Among these phenomena, what is most relevant to the present study is the considerations of conditionals and counterfactuals.

In mental space theory, language comprehension and production are considered in Fauconnier (1994), Sweetser and Fauconnier (1996), Dancygier and Sweetser (1996) as involving the setting-up of structured and interconnected cognitive domains and these domains are independent of language. Ferrari (2002) gives the statement of “Linguistic expressions are conceived as surface manifestations of these subjacent and highly abstract constructions” (p.221). The understanding of the use of language comes from the construction of a configuration of spaces hierarchically related and interconnected. During the course of the processing of each sentence in this piece of language, with the help of lexical and grammatical clues, the configuration of spaces is made dynamically active and therefore spaces are shaped into structures by the activation of frames and schematic conceptualizations. Lakoff (1987) names it as Idealized Cognitive Models. What’s more, the processes concerning inference and reasoning help to shape the spaces into structures. As the use of the piece of language goes deeper, new spaces appear as a result of clues given by space-builders, grammatical markers, or pragmatic information.

As to space-builders, they can take various forms: prepositional phrases, connectives, clauses that require complements, and so on. After a general description of the theory of mental spaces, now it’s the turn for the analysis of conditionals in light of the theory of mental spaces. In a mental space analysis of conditional constructions, a configuration of spaces will function as an informational frame with deductive potential. Fauconnier (1985) proposes that the entire *if p, q* construction builds up a single space. Later he puts forward an important revision by developing a formal analysis for dealing with tense, and this proves to be a more refined set of tools for the description of the structural properties of conditional constructions. In the revised analysis system, function and behavior of tense in those constructions are more effectively dealt with, and the nature of space embeddings for subordinate clauses is more subtly described.

As to Sweetser (1996), she tends to treat conditional constructions as setting up two spaces, a space for the protasis and an embedded space for the apodosis. As to her, content level, epistemic and speech act conditionals have quite different conditional relationship and hence a different mental space embedding structure between the two spaces set up respectively for the apodosis and the protasis. She argues that the “normal” tense restrictions, the familiar prescriptive grammar rules apply only to content level conditionals, the non-application of “normal” tense restrictions in epistemic and speech act conditionals is a result of the looser link between the two spaces originally set up for the protasis the apodosis.

#### IV. CI FRAMEWORK

CI is a theory of human reasoning and thought. It’s a result of the studies of a wide range of scientific disciplines, such as philosophy, psychology, logic and linguistics. Its application is also wide-ranged in the above disciplines. Fauconnier and Turner (1998) points out that “conceptual integration or blending serving a variety of purposes is a general cognitive operation on a par with analogy, recursion, mental modeling, conceptual categorization, and framing”. As one of the most influential cognitive theories, CI is the further development of both the theory of metaphor and mental-space theory. According to CI, “conceptual integration is a fundamental cognitive ability taking place at all levels of perception, of understanding, and of memory.” (Fauconnier, 1998). Conceptual blending is a kind of cognitive course when people carry on a conversation or an activity, especially a creative thought or activity. The operation of conceptual integration employs four mental spaces—two input spaces, one generic space and one blended space. The spaces are connected (mapping) to construct a network—conceptual integration network<sup>8</sup>—to carry out the operation. In Fauconnier and Turner’s theory, there are four types of the network: simplex, mirror, single-scope and double scope. Multiple blend networks are also suggested based on them.

1) *Mental spaces* are small conceptual packets constructed as we think and talk, for purposes of local understanding and action. Four spaces are suggested by Fauconnier. (1994, 1998), and Fauconnier and Turner (2002). In the typical CIN, four mental spaces work together—two *input spaces (the inputs)*, one *generic space* and one *blended space*. The input spaces contain some elements where the source of the information happens. Another space is the *generic space*, the structure that is recognized as common of both input spaces is constitutes a generic space. The generic space is not structured by simple duplicating, but reflects some common and more abstract structure shared by the input spaces. The

<sup>7</sup> Methods and Generalizations. In T. Janssen and G. Redeker (eds.). Scope and Foundations of Cognitive Linguistics. Cognitive Linguistics Research Series. The Hague: Mouton De Gruyter.

<sup>8</sup> Shortened as CIN in this thesis

*blended space (the blend)* includes the structure in the generic space, the specific structure in the inputs but not in the generic space and the structure even not in the inputs. Elements are combined and interact to produce new structure.

2) *Cross-space mapping* happens among spaces; mapping is the prerequisite part for blending. Figure 4.1 from Fauconnier and Turner (2002:46) shows these cross mapping relations:

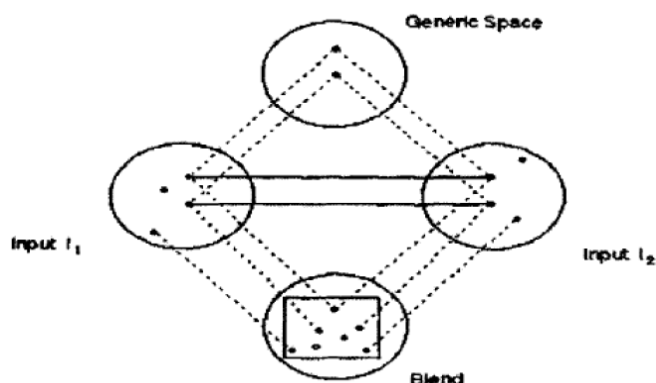


Figure 4.1 Cross-mapping

3) Fauconnier and Turner (1988) suggested that the blend has *emergent structure* not provided by the inputs and this emergent structure is crucial to the performance of the reasoning task. Composition, completion and elaboration lead to emergent structure in the blend. The blend has structure that is not from the inputs (Fauconnier and Turner, 2002).

Respectively, composition of elements from the inputs enables the relations available in the blend that do not exist in the separate inputs; completion brings additional structure to the blend; elaboration is an extended version of completion that results from imaginative mental simulation.

4) The inputs are not only the source of the projections to the blend but also receive reverse-projection from the developed blend. And, not all elements from the inputs are projected. That is to say, the projections from the inputs to the blend are the *selective projection*. *Composition, completion and elaboration* are used here, solely or together.

There are also principles for CI (all in Fauconnier & Turner, 2002):

1) *Access principle* states that an expression that names or describes an element in one mental space can be used to access a counterpart of that element in another mental space. That is to say, if two objects (in the most general sense), *a* and *b*, are linked by a pragmatic function *F*, ( $b=F(a)$ ), a description of *a* (the function expression), may be used to identify *b*.

2) *The combination and interaction among elements and the way how the blending works is called constitutive principle.*

3) *Conceptual blending is subject to an array of competing optimality principles, or constraints for the process to be successful. The principles are in the following terms:*

*Integration: In the blend, scenarios are well integrated.*

*Topology: Elements in the blend should participate in the same kinds of relations as their counterparts in the inputs.*

*Web: The blend and the inputs are closely interrelated in implying the events.*

*Unpacking: The inputs and the network can be reconstructed for the blend.*

*Good Reason: Elements emerging in the blend should be meaningful.*

These principles can be satisfied selectively, and the satisfaction of one may be contradictory to another, they are always satisfied to some extent in the on-line construction of the blend with the competition among the principles.

Network types are another important perspective:

Simplex network is a basic and simplest kind of CIN. One input has an abstract frame and another has the elements to fill in the frame. The cross-mapping is setting the value to the frame (or to be understood as a parameter in mathematics and logic). In the single-framing network, the two inputs consist of the elements essential for the integration. Usually the frame in one input is compatible with the elements in the other input and there are no clashes between the two inputs because only one frame is directly projected to the blended space to organize the blended structure. Fauconnier and Turner say (2002) "a simplex network does not look roughly like a blend at all, but it indeed is a perfect regular integration network, and is predictable from the theoretical principles of blending (p.120).

Mirror network is that when all spaces share an organizing frame. The common frame inheres in a richer frame provided by the blend. This type is a comparatively standard type of integration networks. In this network, all mental spaces, inputs, generic, and blend, share topology given by an organizing frame—a frame that specifies the features of the relevant activity, events and participants. An organizing frame provides a topology for the space it organizes, that is, it provides a set of organizing relations among the elements in the space. When two spaces share the same organizing frame, they share the corresponding topology and so can easily be put into correspondence. Establishing a cross-space mapping between inputs is straightforward when they share the same organizing frame. The input spaces mirror each other for all spaces in the network have the same organizing frame, so does the generic space. While spaces in a frame

network share topology at the level of an organizing frame, they may differ at a more specific level. In the blend, some of the more specific features are present. The blended space also has that frame, in the blend, the common organizing frame of the network inherits in a richer frame that only the blend has. The elaborated frame only exists in the blend. Compression is quite frequent in the mirror network and compression of vital relations facilitates the run of the blend. In a mirror network, there are no clashes between the inputs at the level of an organizing frame, but there will be clashes at more specific levels below the frame level.

Single-scope network has two inputs with different organizing frames, one of which is projected to organize the blend. There are two separate organizing frames contained in the inputs, but only one of them is projected to the blend as its organizing frame. This kind network is the prototype of highly conventional source-target metaphor. The most obvious compression involves the use of pre-existing compression from the framing input. The projection of the source frame to the blend is linguistic construction used to evoke the source frame. Of course, there are projections from target input to the blend that also provide linguistic constructions for the blend, but they refer to elements below the frame level. Since the inputs have different frames, single-scope networks offer a highly visible type of conceptual clash.

Double-scope network differs from the single-scope frame, because its blend has an organizing frame taking parts from each frame from the both inputs. If the inputs are organized by different frames but some topology is projected from both frames to the blend, the network is also called the two-sided network. In this kind of network, both organizing frames make central contribution to the blend, and their sharp differences offer the possibility of clashes. Those clashes offer challenges to the imagination, and thus the blends can be highly creative. The inputs are not simply juxtaposed in the blend; rather, the emergent structure specific to the blend is created in the blend.

It's worth mentioning that these four types are not totally separated and independent from each other, the extension, cooperation of them empower our way of thinking.

Moreover, multiple blends are involved on a more absolute basis in our live thoughts. Fauconnier proposes a more general form of the network, called the multiple blends where a dynamic operation over any number of mental spaces that moreover can apply repeatedly, its outputs becoming inputs for further blending. In this more general scheme, it is still found that the defining features of conceptual integration: cross-space mappings between inputs, selective projection of generic spaces. But there are two main ways in which networks can be multiple blends: Either several inputs are projected in parallel, or they are projected successively into intermediate blends, which themselves serve as inputs to further blends.

Fauconnier (1994, 1998) insisted that conceptual blending exists in nearly all cognitive activities. The counterfactual reasoning and the construction of the unreal are studied by him and other scholars who utilize CI and relevant cognitive reflections. Fauconnier and Sweetser (1996) discussed some aspects of mental space theory and grammar, Dancygier & Sweetser (2005) analyzed conditional constructions in "*Mental Spaces in Grammar*",

King, Keohane and Verba argue that there is no form of causal inference in the social sciences that does not depend upon counterfactual reasoning. Analyzing causality for social events is a matter of contrasting what in fact happened with counterfactual scenarios of what might have happened under different conditions.

(Fauconnier and Turner, 2002:218) According to this view, conceiving of a counterfactual scenario is a simple matter of making a change in the actual world and observing the consequences of that change.

However, Fauconnier and Turner (2002) holds that changing any one element opens up complicated questions of what else would need to be changed in order for that element to differ. Counterfactual reasoning is not a matter of imagining what we would have to change in the real world for the counterfactual scenario to be possible. (pp. 218-219)

Furthermore, counterfactual thought is also taken as causal logic. Extreme idea, as Roses and Olson believes "all counterfactual conditionals are causal assertions". Fauconnier and Turner (2002) argued against this extreme assertion with a "woman-in-coma" example, and exhibited it as logic of propriety. (p. 219)

Counterfactual reasoning is an everyday event that usually goes unremarked. Grammar can also use "plain" forms—with no specific inflexions—to prompt counterfactuality. Varieties of structures are applied to counterfactual thought's manifestation.

Counterfactual spaces, as we commonly believe, are opposite to the "actual" spaces of. We have taken it or granted that counterfactuality is something imaginary, non-actual, not true or fictive.

In Fauconnier's research of CI, this is not right. He (2002) stated "counterfactuality is forced incompatibility between spaces, and when one is thinking about reality, counterfactuality is often a vital relation between spaces that involves some of the same people and same events (the elements in spaces—noted by the author)". (p.230)

He also suggested that counterfactual thought happens in any case, when we mark the spaces as "actual", counterfactuality in counterpart spaces is also involved. As the book's title states, counterfactuality is "the way we think".

Language is thought by the cognitive linguists to provide information that triggers reasoning process. For example, he says (1997) "premises for a deductive argument or the specification of a structure that will be used *analogically*". (p. 99)

As is said (1997), he defines language as an active involvement of "setting up construals, mappings between domains, and discourse configurations, with the fundamental properties of Accessing, Spreading, and Viewpoint. (p.99)

Explicitly, expressions of natural language are only the most economical manifestation that activates complex mental projections among domains. The important mechanism based on which these projections can take place is analogical counterfactual reasoning.

He (1997) asserts “the analysis of counterfactual conditionals is no fussy little grammatical exercise. If it is lack of the means for interpreting counterfactual conditionals, we can hardly claim to have any adequate philosophy of science.” (p. 99) Meanwhile, analogy enables the mappings among spaces and logic connectors to happen between counterparts in different spaces.

Fauconnier and Turner (2002) once set “Watergate in France” (p. 225) as an example as follows:

“In France, Watergate would not have hurt Nixon.” This counterfactual can have many readings, but a typical one contrasts the American and French cultural and political systems. It brings in aspects of the French system from one input and the Watergate scandal and President Nixon from the other. In the blend, we have a Watergate-link situation in France, but running the blend delivers attitudes quite different from those in the American input.

A CIN is set up to explain this counterfactual reasoning:

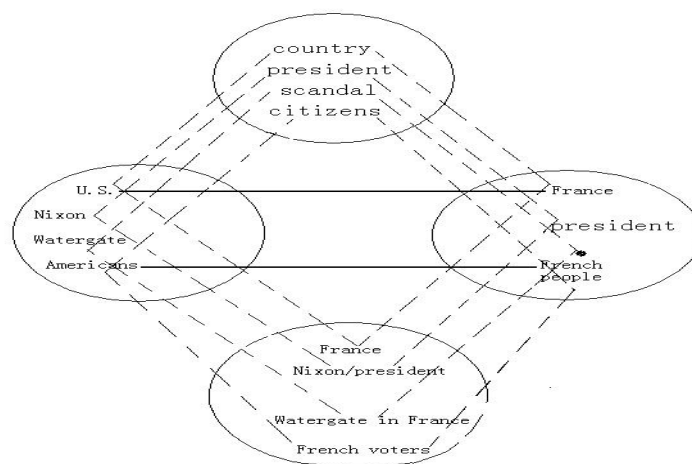


Figure 4.2 Nixon-France Network<sup>9</sup>

A counterfactual frame is stated:

- 1) *country* has *president/leader* elected by *citizens*
- 2) *president* is head of *political party* competing with others for leadership of *country*
- 3) *president's actions* are constrained by *laws, public reaction...*
- 4) *action* brings harm to *president* if
  - it triggers negative *public reaction*
  - it is unlawful and *president* is punished, etc

The epistemic is involved in the reasoning—world knowledge about Watergate, Richard Nixon, break-in, tapes, lies, impeachment and resignation.

The running of the blend is in the emergent structure: French Watergate scandal doesn't harm French president Nixon. Analogy and disanalogy are between the counterparts in the spaces.

Therefore, the real conditional goes as the follows:

1) X: “If the price increases, I won't buy the car.”

(There is a man who plans to buy a car. He has a certain sum of money for the purchase, and the target merchandise has been appreciated. Upon the purchase, the car dealer calls to inform him a possible recent increase of the price, the man replies like above)

Here, the condition of a more expensive price is thought to be “real”, so this sort of conditional is called real conditional. To analyze the meaning of this conditional, we can set up a CIN along the following steps:

1) There the elements in the two input spaces, with counterparts analogized with each other. (“Not buying” vs. “Buying”, “More expensive price” vs. “Maintained price”, the Buyer and the Merchandise), and cross-space mapping take place between the two spaces, as in Figure 4.3 below:

<sup>9</sup> Drawn by the author with a slight change in shape from the original in Fauconnier and Turner, 2002:226; and the tables and figures in this thesis, if not specified, are drawn by the author.



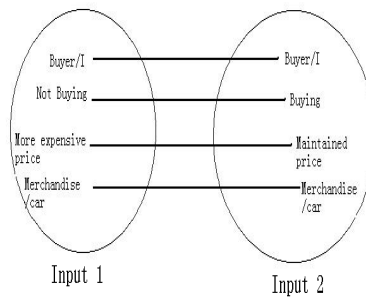


Figure 4.3 Input spaces of car-purchase X

In input 1, there are the following elements: a buyer (I), an action (not buying the car), a price (more expensive) and a merchandise (the car); in input 2, the buyer and the car still in their existence while the action is “buying” instead, and the price is a “maintained price”.

2) In the generic space, the elements are in abstraction, namely “Buyer”, “Action”, “Price” and “Merchandise”, as in Figure 4.4

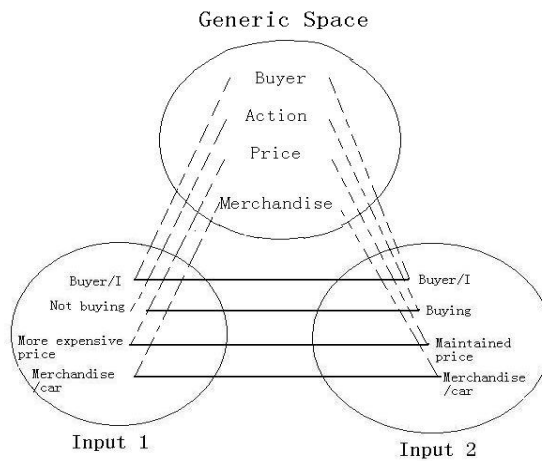


Figure 4.4 Generic space of car-purchase X

3) The frame from the Inputs are projected to the blend, and the blend space is yielding the meaning, the CIN is completed for the reasoning, as in Figure 4.5:

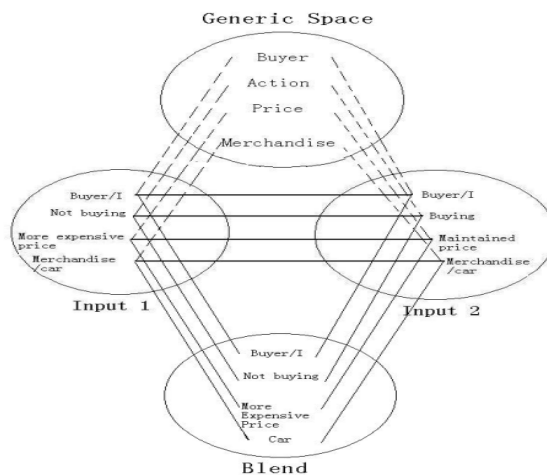


Figure 4.5 CIN of car-purchase X

It is easy to find that projected to the blend are those elements in Input 1, but not those in Input 2. According to the types of networks that we have reviewed in the above chapter, it is obvious that this CIN is a simplex type of CIN. The frame projected to the blend is selected only from one of the inputs.

A question is asked: Why “I won’t buy the car” from Input 1 is selected. The way how the composition/completion/elaboration (see 2.3.4.5) to do must be decided.

Carefully contrasting Input 1 and Input 2 in the car-purchase case, we find that there are relations among the elements, not only through the cross-mapping among the counterparts in each input, but also a certain kind of relation connecting the elements respectively in each input. This relation is what we understand as the frame in the conceptual integration. In this case, the element “more expensive price” is connected with “not buying” to construct a condition frame. A causal relation exists in this frame of two elements.

Obviously between “maintained price” and “buying” exists the same relation, but only the frame in Input 1 is projected to the blend. Observing the case again, it is clear that the frame in Input 1—“more expensive price→not buying”—is explicitly manifested in the language structure—the statement *X*. However, the frame of “maintained price→buying” is an implied condition. It seems that only the explicitly-manifested frame is operated in the blend as to convey the meaning. The process of the projection is shown:

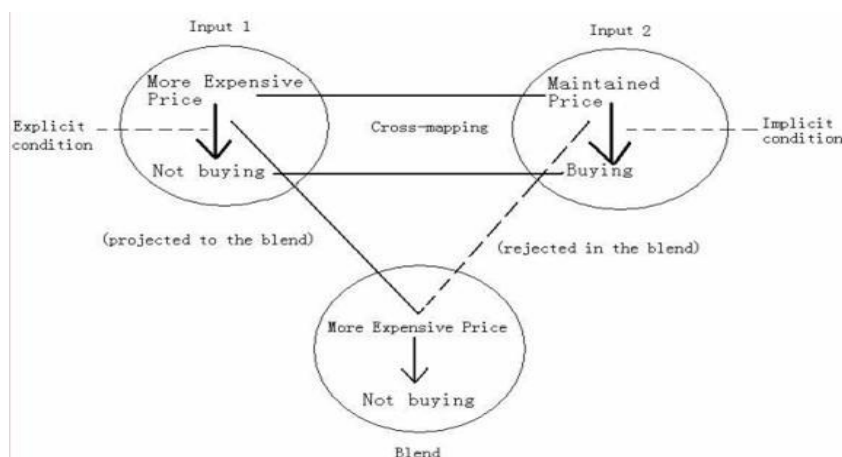


Figure 4.6 Projection of the conditional relation

This selective projection is a matter of “*completion*”, and the selective projection works here. Through the operation of completion, the explicit conditional relation is operated in the blend. Now, we have defined the operational principle in real conditional.

With the study of real conditional, ECC can be analyzed on a more absolute basis. We still use the steps in the previous verse to construct a network, to find the frame and the projection, then to define the principle according to which the counterfactual conditional CIN is to indicate the meaning.

Let’s look at another example

2) *Y: If the price of the car increased, I wouldn’t buy it.*

Statements *Y* is a typical counterfactual conditional based on the pedagogical grammar rules. Specific verb forms are used to indicate that this sentence is of the subjunctive mood. This sentence is a good enough sample for the following analysis.

Now the question is how this ECC conveys the counterfactual meaning. the CIN shown in Figure 3.6 is employ to prepare for further analysis. The blend in the network has an emergent structure which carries a negative meaning that the man will not buy the car. In a word, the action is *negative*.

However, the meaning of the statement *Y* is: 1) the man will buy the car; 2) the increase of the price is believed not to happen. So the network must be re-organized as is shown in Figure 4.7:

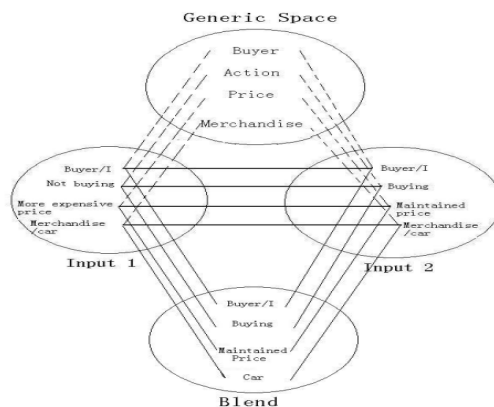


Figure 4.7 CIN of car-purchase *Y*

This time, we choose the implicit conditional relation in Input 2 for the reasoning. If we analyze it, we find that the epistemic stance plays an important role here. Because the man is reassured by the car dealer that the price won’t

increase, in his epistemic stance the condition “more expensive price” and the consequence “not buying” won’t really happen. This is the key of the counterfactual conditional blends.

Furthermore, in the counterfactual conditionals that have specific verb forms, the grammatical features add information to the epistemic stance that we would take into consideration in our reasoning. If the conditionals have no specific forms—the implied counterfactuality—phonological property of the utterance, the pragmatic property, context, and other non-linguistic factors such as culture, psychological status etc. are taken into the epistemic consideration, too.

CI has powerful explanatory capability in reasoning including counterfactual reasoning. Fauconnier and Turner (2002: 150) declared “composition, completion and elaboration lead to emergent structure in the blend. The blend has structure that is not from the inputs...”

Classic CI only enables a “black-box” operation in producing the emergent structure. This thesis attempts to provide a clearer description of the operations in the counterfactual conditional semantics.

Some basics and crucial notions of the blending theory, its researches and the general description of the theory are reviewed in this chapter, with the ambition of sorting out a basic knowledge of CI. After the introduction and elaboration in this chapter, we may have gained some fundamental knowledge about the conceptual integration theory as the necessary preparation for the further analysis of the roles that CI plays in interpreting the counterfactual conditional meanings.

Conceptual integration is in fact a fundamental aspect of all human experience. Fauconnier and Turner claim that integration is involved in everything from perceptual processing, to the experience of physical senses to the knowledge of logic and reasoning.

Many scholarly approaches have studied a large amount of human daily phenomena through CI. As we have discussed in this chapter, conceptual blending is a universal process and is obvious at many levels of analysis, including the conceptual structure of some concepts, grammatical structure in sentences, an overarching level across conceptual domains and meaning construction of gesture. Fauconnier & Turner (1995) explored the multiple-blends by some new examples and showed that formal expression in language is also a way of prompting hearer and reader to assemble and develop conceptual construction and blending. Sweetser (2002) analyzes the blending on performative speech and action. Coulson (2001) develops conceptual integration of rhetorical strategies, noun and adjective compounding. Turner (1996), Oakley (1995), Freeman (1997) apply elaborate analysis of mental space construction and integration in literary narratives, poetry and general rhetoric. Zbikowski (1997) shows how conceptual integration can apply to music.

As the above study indicates, CI can be used to address both the linguistic and non-linguistic domains. It is powerful to enunciate many kinds of language forms and phenomena. It is universal and formidable in human cognition. Some examples have been quoted in this chapter to show the detail process how CI applies in the daily human thoughts, which is reserved for the following analysis on its explanation to ECC.

## V. MAJOR FINDINGS AND SUGGESTIONS

The pattern of constructing counterfactual conditional CIN can be drawn as a principle now:

In CIN of counterfactual conditionals, the implicit conditional frame not in the language is projected to the blended space, because it is valid in epistemic stance. With the contrast in CIN of non-counterfactual conditionals, the explicit conditional frame in the linguistic expressions is projected to the blended space.

It’s worth mentioning that there are fictive elements in the counterfactual inputs. They are fictively analogical to the counterparts. Fauconnier and Turner’s description of counterfactuality (see 2.3.4.2) helps to explain this. Counterfactual thought happens in any case. Though sometimes we mark the spaces as “actual”, we also involve counterfactuality in counterpart spaces. This can explain the occurrence of the fictive elements and the fictive logic.

We can utilize a function logic  $y=F(x)$  to describe counterfactual conditional CIN. We can change variable “ $x$ ” into “ $r$ ” to indicate the explicit conditional relation and “ $-r$ ” for the implicit conditional relation, variable “ $y$ ” is changed into “ $p$ ” for the projection to the blend, and the computer  $F$  is changed into “ $I$ ” for the CI process. Since epistemic stance is involved, we add a dynamic computer “ $e$ ” standing for the epistemic stance attached to “ $I$ ”. So, the principle is formalized into the functions:

In CIN of counterfactual conditionals,  $p=Ie(-r)$ ; with the contrast in CIN of non-counterfactual conditionals,  $p=Ie(r)$ . In these formula, the standard of the projection in the selection of the relations are symbolized and generalized by the two parameters--( $-r$ ) and ( $r$ ); the epistemic stance is indicated by the computer “ $e$ ” and these two aspects of conceptual integration make the cognitive processing in the blends about counterfactual conditional reasoning *apparent*, but not a “black-box”.

This thesis discusses how the counterfactual conditional meaning is conveyed from a cognitive perspective and a few examples are analyzed on the basis of a pattern developed from the CI. The analysis is a gradual course since the reasoning is moved from plain conditional logic to counterfactual logic.

Conceptual integration is a basic mental capacity that leads to new meanings, global insight, conceptual compressions useful for memory and manipulation of otherwise diffuse ranges of meanings. It plays a fundamental role in the construction of meaning in everyday life, in the arts and sciences, in technological development, and in religious thinking. The essence of the operation is to construct a partial match between input mental spaces and to project

selectively from those inputs into a novel blended space, which the dynamically develops emergent structure (Fauconnier 2001: 1). Up to now, it has provided a good explanation in many linguistic and non-linguistic fields.

With the development of cognitive researches on language itself, we find that CI could have possibilities for exploring the hidden mechanism involved in the interpretation of ECC. Conceptual integration has complete networks, which function independently according to set of uniform structural and dynamic principles. The basic operation compromises four mental spaces: two inputs, on generic space and one blended space. In blending, structures from inputs are selectively projected to a separate blended space. Through composition, completion and elaboration, the blend develops structures that are not provided by the inputs.

We suggest a highly formalized framework according to which the projection course is clearly described. Then we analyze some examples to complete the justification of the framework.

In the analysis, CI is utilized as the general principle to explain how meaning is generated and understood. In the use of the framework, variables are valued according to specific ECC semantic elements, specific verb forms and structures. Different kinds of ECCs collected from pedagogical grammar book can all be well explained.

According to the framework, a pair of formula is established form the explanation of the non-counterfactual conditionals to that of ECC.

There are also suggestions for the future research:

Firstly, some limitations inevitably arise due to our limited time and energy. With regard to ECC, its countless studies and theories can not be exhausted by this thesis, as being a brief initial study to the rather complicated phenomenon and its more complex and numerous theories.

Secondly, CI theory is rather a general psychological theory which covers a wide range of mental reasoning phenomena. In the application of it and even intending to further it on such a specific matter like ECC, possible misunderstanding and misuse of it might happen in the description and analysis.

Finally, that the copra is open may also mean that the non-exhausted data can't cover every possibility of ECC, which might lead to a not perfect enough complete conclusion of the research.

We will be very pleased if more studies will be carried on this issue. That CI theory will be profoundly utilized in the further researches to explain away the mist in linguistic issues including the meaning conveyance of ECC is also expected by any research like the author myself.

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Qin Ling (2008). Xun Zi's 'Name' and 'Fact' Notions and the Semantic Causal Theory. (p.176). *Journal of Sichuan International Studies University*.

# Lexical Collocation Instruction and Its Impact on Iranian Non-academic EFL Learners' Speaking Ability

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**Abstract**—Words do not co-occur haphazardly and in fact lexical patterns are different. This difference in the lexical patterning causes potential problems in speaking. The present study intends to see if receiving treatment on the use of lexical collocations affects the pre-intermediate EFL students speaking proficiency. To achieve this aim, 50 pre-intermediate students of Iran Language Institute, Ahvaz branch were chosen and divided into two groups. In the instruction period of ten sessions, the experimental group received instructions on five common lexical collocation patterns such as Verb+ Adverb, Noun+ Verb, Verb+ Noun, Adverb+ Adjective, and Adjective+ Noun. Both groups took the same test before and after the treatment to measure their knowledge of collocation patterning. They also participated in a speaking task to assess their use of lexical collocation and overall oral proficiency. Results showed that the instruction of lexical collocation had a positive effect on the learners speaking proficiency and a moderate effect on their use of lexical collocations. This suggests that receiving instruction on the use of lexical collocation patterning can be effective in the enhancement of EFL students' language skills, specifically, their oral proficiency.

**Index Terms**—lexical collocation, oral proficiency, vocabulary learning

## I. INTRODUCTION

Vocabulary learning and its effective use is usually considered as a crucial component in learning languages. Allen (1983, p.5) emphasized that "lexical problems frequently interfere with communication; communication breaks down when people do not use the right words". Krashen (1989, p.440) pointed out that gaining language proficiency entails expanding one's vocabulary stock. Since vocabulary lies at the center of language learning, great attention should be paid to the issues related to vocabulary learning and teaching because without vocabulary enhancement it is difficult to communicate. Reviewing EFL literature reveals that grammar learning received more attention than vocabulary improvement in language classes since before 1970s; that is to say, centrality was given to the mastery of language structure and phonology then.

With the advent of learner and learning-centered approaches to language learning and teaching, language practioners and researchers began to highlight the role of EFL vocabulary acquisition and recommended vocabulary treatment in classroom practices (Channel, 1981; Lewis, 1993; McCarthy, 1984; Nation, 1990; Nattinger, 1980, etc).

This Change of direction from grammar to vocabulary is right. Still, knowledge of collocation which is regarded fundamental to vocabulary acquisition seems to be a neglected area in EFL syllabus design. A collocation in brief, is a pair or group of words that are often used together. Some collocations are fixed or very strong; others are more open and some are not likely to occur; therefore, knowing which words are used together is an important way of understanding the meaning of a text.

Koosha and Jafarpoor (2006,p.2) claim that there is an abundant stock of phrasal and prepositional combinations in English that represent so many collocations, and mastery over them can affect EFL learners' fluency as well as accuracy in both speaking and writing. They further add that the use of lexical collocations is highly correlated with EFL learners' language proficiency.

For many language learners language proficiency equates the development of speaking skill as they believe mastery of oral skills enables them to function better in different social settings and under varied circumstances (Ganji, 2012).

Chastain (1988) argues that speaking has a definite and important place in the language learning. Language teachers should keep in mind that speaking is not a skill, which they can develop in isolation. Increasing speaking skills depends on the input that L2 learners receive from listening, reading and writing; therefore, by improving the speaking skills we can also help English language students improve their listening, reading and writing.

A number of scholars have suggested that a good command of collocation use can be fruitful in the development of EFL learners' speaking ability. (Ellis & Schmidt, 1997; Nation, 2001; Nattinger & DeCarrico, 1992; Schmitt, 2000 among others).This means that language learners are required to develop their knowledge base of word combinations:

which words are used together and in what patterning. In the same line, this study attempts to examine the Iranian EFL learners' use of lexical collocation instruction and its impact on their speaking proficiency. Our findings may make us more insightful in terms of the effectiveness of lexical collocation familiarity in the development of oral skills. And since the available studies on lexical collocations are set in foreign environment, and not much has been carried out in Iran, this investigation serves to add on to the list of lexical collocations research already carried out.

To pursue the above-mentioned goals, we formulated the following research question:

1. To what extent does the instruction on the use of lexical collocations affect the non-academic EFL learners' speaking proficiency?

## II. BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Research on EFL learners' vocabulary development has mainly focused on the knowledge and production of individual lexical items. However, one main component involved in vocabulary learning, i.e. the problem of word combinability, should be tackled more seriously than before.

It is difficult to form a precise definition of collocations since the definitions are not clearly stated. Still, EFL practitioners have defined collocations from different angles while conducting their investigations on word combinability. Lewis (2000) describes collocation as "The way in which words co-occur in natural text in statistically significant ways" (p.1). Nattinger and Decarrio (1992) note that collocations are "strings of specific lexical items that co-occur with a mutual expectancy greater than chance, such as rancid butter and curry favor" (p.36). James (1998) considers collocations as "the other words any particular word normally keeps company with" (p.152).

Baker (1992) divides collocations into grammatical and lexical collocations. Lexical collocations consist of different combinations of, adverbs, adjectives, nouns and, verbs e.g. advanced students, and word combinations which embody an adjective, a noun, or a verb plus a proposition or a syntactic structure like an infinitive or a clause e.g. take off your coat. Wei (1999, p.5), believes that word combinability includes these categories: 1) Lexical collocations, e.g. a serious problem. 2) Grammatical collocations, e.g. tired of and 3) Idiomatic expressions, e.g. feeling under the weather. Hill (2000) proposed four types of word combinations: 1) unique collocations e.g. foot the bill, 2) Strong collocations e.g. moved to tears; 3) Weak collocations e.g. a good weekend and 4) medium-strength collocations, e.g. do the laundry. Benson, Benson and Ilson (1997) used structure type as a norm in grouping of collocations:

1. Verb +Noun such as in *tie the rope*
2. Adjective +Noun such as in *excruciating pain*
3. Noun +Verb such as in *lions roar*
4. Adverb +Adjective such as in *completely satisfied*
5. Verb +Adverb such as in *apologize humbly*
6. Quantifier + Noun such as *a bit of advice*

Biskup (1992) tried to establish whether lexical collocation posed problem for L2 learners and which subtype(s) were particularly difficult. She tested both perception and production. For perception, no difficulty was seen. However, when it came to producing translation equivalent of L1 collocations, students had a lot of problems. Furthermore, it was found that they experienced much difficulty in the production test concerning Verb Noun collocations. From her study, it was concluded that translation engenders L1 transfer in L2 equivalents performance greater than a natural speech situation. To discover the main factors underlying the observed errors in collocation use, she carried out a cross linguistic research to study the performance of EFL learners whose first language tends to be similar (German) or more different (polish) from that language. This was to see if such a distance would greatly affect the production of word combinations in L2.

The sample population was asked to translate their mother tongue collocations into English. Biskup found out that polish students took advantage more from their L1, although, in total, they came up with fewer wrong combinations than in German. It was noticed that polish learners resorted to transfer strategy, while German learners made use of more creative strategies which ended up in committing other kinds of error.

Bahns and Eldaw (1993) examined the knowledge base of German advanced EFL students of Verb Noun collocation. Two groups of German EFL university students consisting of Fifty-eight members were asked to do a translation task embedded in a cloze test. The first group took a cloze test including ten statements each of which had a Verb Noun collocation with a blank space for the verb. The other group worked on a German-English translation test consisting of 15 sentences; the learners were required to translate Verb Noun combinations in each sentence into English. Results showed that only around half of students were able to produce acceptable English collocations. They suggested that in producing correct English, collocations turned out to be a major problem for advanced students.

Tajalli (1994) conducted a contrastive study on the translation of English and Persian collocations and concluded that such learners do not receive adequate exposure to English collocations, so they experience major difficulty in the correct use of them. To sum up, he confirms that English collocations, in general, and their translation into Persian, in particular, require extensive research and that investigations should be geared towards identification, characterization and classification of the more problematic collocations and finding appropriate Persian equivalents for them.

Lien (2003) investigated the relationship between receiving instruction on collocation and reading comprehension. She conducted a quasi-experimental study at a national university in central Taiwan which lasted four-weeks. The participants were 85 Taiwanese college students (i.e., sophomores, juniors, and seniors) majoring in English. In the first

phase of the study, before reading three different articles of a similar length and difficulty, the learners got involved in three kinds of language practice, namely, vocabulary learning, collocation use and no instruction. Later, they sat for three immediate reading comprehension tests each of which included ten short essay questions. On the basis of findings, she suggested that “collocation instruction had more positive effects on the participants’ reading comprehension than vocabulary instruction and no instruction” (as cited in Hsu, J.Y. & Chiu, Ch.Y. 2008, p.187).

Concerning the speaking skill, Sung (2003) tried to detect the relationship between the knowledge and the use of lexical collocations in relation to speaking proficiency of international students enrolled in a university in Pittsburg area. Participants included 72 non-native English speakers. They completed two tests. The first test assessed the subjects’ knowledge of lexical collocation; the second measured the learners’ use of lexical collocations and their speaking proficiency. The results indicated a significant correlation between the knowledge of lexical collocations and the students’ speaking ability (as cited in Hsu, J.Y. & Chiu, Ch.Y. 2008, p.185).

Hsu (2005) explored the impact of explicit collocation instruction on EFL learners listening comprehension. To achieve the purpose of the study, thirty-four Taiwanese university students were invited to take part in this research. Over a three-week period, each student received three various kinds of practice including single-item vocabulary practice, lexical collocation instruction and no treatment; later, one listening comprehension test was administered after each type of instruction. After four weeks, the participants completed a questionnaire. The results revealed that the learners performed best after receiving lexical collocation instruction. In addition, in response to the questionnaire items, the students pointed out that the collocation instruction was their preferred instruction type and that they were motivated to learn more about lexical collocations; finally, they noted that receiving treatment on lexical instruction improved their listening ability.

Mahmoud (2005) worked on the collocation errors which Arab learners of English committed when practicing collocation use. After data analysis, a total of 420 collocations were tracked in 42 essays written by Arab speaking university students majoring in English. Descriptive statistics revealed that about 64% of collocations used were wrong and 80% of these were lexical collocations compared with grammatical ones. He also noted that 61% of the incorrect combinations could be attributed to negative transfer from Arabic.

Ghonsooli, Pishgaman and Mahjoobi (2008) investigated the interplay between collocation instruction and the development of the writing skill of Iranian EFL learners. Thirty participants from the English Department of Ferdowsi University were involved in the study. The data gathered were analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively. Results showed considerable promotion in the students’ writing performance in terms of vocabulary gain and fluency due to familiarity with collocation use.

Hsu and Chiu (2008) investigated the impact of familiarity with English collocation use on the speaking ability of Taiwanese EFL university learners. Data for the study was collected from 56 junior English majors’ performance on word combinability. These students were required to take three tests: (1) one lexical collocation test (2) one English speaking test and (3) phone pass spoken English test. The results indicated a significant correlation between Taiwanese EFL learners’ knowledge of lexical collocations and their speaking proficiency. However, no significant correlation was found between the subjects’ use of lexical collocations and their language oral skill. There was also no statistically significant correlation between the subjects’ knowledge and use of lexical collocations. More detailed, it was suggested that familiarity with lexical collocations appears to be a better predictor of the learners’ speaking proficiency than their ability to use lexical collocations.

In another study, Hsu (2010) tried to find out if direct collocation instruction influences EFL learners’ reading comprehension and vocabulary learning. Based on three academic levels, three groups of Taiwanese college English majors participated in the study. They were exposed to three kinds of treatment: single-item vocabulary instruction, lexical collocation instruction, and no treatment. Afterwards, the participants took a reading comprehension test and 3 vocabulary recall tests. The results analyzed quantitatively, revealed that the lexical collocation instruction has a positive effect on the learners’ vocabulary gain more than their reading comprehension across all three academic levels.

As mentioned earlier, various studies have been conducted with regards to the impact of familiarity with collocation use on the improvement of language proficiency in different skills. Yet, to the best of our knowledge, no study has been done in Iranian non-academic setting concerning the effect of the lexical collocation awareness on the development of EFL learners’ oral proficiency. Hoping to fill this gap, the present investigation sets out to add empirical support, in relation to the impact of knowledge of collocation patterning on the speaking ability of EFL learners, to the existing literature on collocation.

### III. METHODOLOGY

#### A. Participants

This investigation was conducted at Iran Language Institute (ILI), Ahvaz branch. From among 162 participants who took the ILI placement test (Nick, et al, 2006), 50 pre-intermediate female students with the age range of 20 to 35 were chosen to take part in the study. They were randomly assigned to two experimental and control groups each including 25 learners.

#### B. Instrument



A lexical collocation test (Appendix A) was used as one of the required instruments in this study. The test included 20 multiple-choice items, 20 fill-in-the-blank without choice, five with choice, and an open ended question in which they had to choose 10 out of 15 words given in writing a paragraph on the related topic. The test items were culled from Oxford Collocation Dictionary (2002), and Cambridge English Collocation in use (2005), and it was meant to evaluate the EFL learners' familiarity with word combinability. The same test was administered before and after the treatment program. The next instrument used in the study was a speaking activity. The participants performed the task once at the beginning, before taking the lexical collocation pre-test and once after taking the post-test. They were given a list of ten topics (Appendix B) and almost two minutes to choose two topics to think about before expressing their views. Efforts were made to pose varied questions on different topics so that more natural conversation could be elicited.

### C. Procedure

To conduct the study, a set of procedures were ensued as follows: Firstly, fifty female students from Iran Language Institute, Ahvaz branch, took part in the study and were split up into experimental and control groups, each including 25 subjects. The pre-test was administered in the first session at the commencement of the study. The test required approximately 50 minutes for completion. In rating the test item responses, a correct answer received one mark and the wrong answer was marked "0" However, no mark was deducted for erroneous responses.

Having got through with the pre-test on lexical collocations, both groups participated in the speaking activity in which they were asked to express their views on two topics of their own choice among from ten topics presented to them. Then, their speaking was rated based on Hughes (2003) checklist with addition of a collocation section.

The treatment period consisted of 10 thirty minute sessions. One session, they were taught lexical collocation in addition to their course book material with examples and the other session they were given fill-in-the-blank tests. Afterwards, the various answers that could be given to that test were offered for more practice. This continued over the ten session treatment period while only the course book materials were presented to the control group. To establish fidelity of treatment, other conditions (the teacher, and class period) for the groups were the same. The classes were held two sessions a week and the whole treatment lasted for about 7 weeks.

Both groups of participants sat for the post-test which was administered approximately a week after the end of the treatment sessions. The procedures for administering the post-test strictly resembled those of the pre-test stage; then, the results were compared, analyzed, and interpreted against the pre-test.

Prior to the administration of the pre-test, a 45-item test, comprising 20 multiple choice and 25 fill-in-the-blanks and an open ended question focusing on lexical collocation was designed by the researchers as a pre- and a post test. Then the test items were piloted on a small randomly selected sample of pre-intermediate students from Iran Language Institute. The test was also inspected closely for face and content validity by two experts with high expertise in the area of language testing and teaching. The performed reliability analysis encompassed item difficulty and item discrimination, running KR-21 method; the reliability quotient was tallied to be 0.75. The total test, thus, proved to be at an appropriate and acceptable level of reliability (Hughes, 2003; p.38).

After the post-test, again the participants took part in the oral activity to evaluate their oral language performance in terms of the demonstration of collocation use. Then, their speaking performances- both before and after treatment- were rated based on Hughes (2003) checklist with addition of a collocation section. Their speaking performances were recorded and rated by two raters, once by one of the researchers and then by an EFL instructor.

## IV. RESULTS

In the first phase of data analysis the participants' performances on the pre-test and speaking task was examined. The results are presented in tables one and two below:

TABLE 1.  
LEARNERS' MEAN SCORES ON LEXICAL COLLOCATION PRE-TEST

Group	Stage	Mean	Number	Standard Deviation	Standard Error Mean
Control	Pre-test	15.32	25	4.14	0.82
Experimental	Pre-test	15.72	25	5.90	1.18

TABLE 2.  
RESULTS OF INDEPENDENT T-TEST FOR THE TWO GROUPS' PERFORMANCE ON THE LEXICAL COLLOCATION PRE-TEST STAGE

Stage	Group	Mean Difference	Std. Error	<i>t</i> <sub>observed</sub>	d.f	Sig (2-tailed)
Pre-test	Control-Experimental	0.40	1.44	0.27	48	ns

Table 2 indicates insignificant difference between the mean scores of two groups (control: 15.32; experimental: 15.72) at the pre-test stage. The T-observed value (0.27) turned to be less than the value of T-critical ( $0.277 < 2.021$ ), meaning that in terms of the lexical collocation test, the two groups were homogeneous at the start. Tables three and four display the descriptive statistics run on the scores of speaking activity conducted before instruction period.

TABLE 3.  
LEARNERS' MEAN SCORES ON THE SPEAKING ACTIVITY BEFORE THE TREATMENT PERIOD

Group	Stage	Mean	Number	Standard Deviation	Standard Error Mean
Control	Pre-test	21.52	25	3.77	0.75
Experimental	Pre-test	22.44	25	3.55	0.71

TABLE 4.  
RESULTS OF INDEPENDENT T-TEST FOR THE TWO GROUPS' PERFORMANCE ON THE SPEAKING ACTIVITY BEFORE THE TREATMENT PERIOD

Stage	Groups	Mean difference	Standard Error	<i>t<sub>observed</sub></i>	df	Sig(2-tailed)
Pre-test	Control-Experimental	0.92	1.03	0.88	48	ns

Table 4 displays the results of the students' performance on pretest oral task, which indicates similarity between the mean scores obtained by control and experimental groups. The T-observed value (0.88) was much less than that of the T-critical (0.88 < 2.02), indicative of homogeneity between control and the experimental groups in terms of speaking proficiency. Thus, the researchers felt confident about the existence of no significant gains in lexical collocation between the two groups before the onset of instruction program.

After the treatment, the next step taken was to detect any noticeable change which probably occurred in the performance of the experimental group who received instruction in lexical collocation. In so doing, the results of the performances of the two groups on lexical collocation were compared. Tables 5 and 6 illustrate this analysis.

TABLE 5.  
THE LEARNERS' MEAN SCORES ON THE POST-TEST LEXICAL COLLOCATIONS

Groups	Stage	Mean	Number	Standard Deviation	Standard Error Mean
Control	Post-test	12.40	25	2.54	0.50
Experimental	Post-test	22.00	25	5.97	1.19

TABLE 6.  
RESULTS OF INDEPENDENT T-TEST FOR THE TWO GROUPS' PERFORMANCE ON THE LEXICAL-COLLOCATION POST-TEST STAGE

Stage	Group	Mean Difference	Std. Error	<i>t<sub>observed</sub></i>	df	Sig(2-tailed)
Post-test	Control-Experimental	9.60	1.30	7.38	48	0.00

The results of the independent T-test on the lexical collocation at the Post-test stage-as shown in table 6- revealed that T-observed = (7.38) in this stage, exceeds T-critical = (2.02; P<0.05).The mean score difference between the two groups in the post-test administration is 9.60; this suggests a higher performance on behalf of experimental group compared with the control group. Tables 7 and 8 display the results of two groups' performance on post-stage speaking activity.

TABLE 7.  
LEARNERS' MEAN SCORES ON POST-TREATMENT SPEAKING ACTIVITY

Group	Stage	Mean	Number	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Control	Post-test	21.40	25	4.17	0.83
Experimental	Post-test	23.76	25	3.33	0.66

TABLE 8.  
RESULTS OF INDEPENDENT T-TEST ON THE TWO GROUPS' PERFORMANCE ON THE POST-TREATMENT SPEAKING ACTIVITY

Stage	Groups	Mean difference	Standard Error	<i>t<sub>observed</sub></i>	df	Sig(2-tailed)
Post-test	Control-Experimental	2.36	1.06	2.20	48	0.03

A significant difference was discovered via the statistical procedure of t-test between both groups performance on the post oral activity ability. Table 8 shows that the magnitude of t-observed exceeded t-critical value (t-observed=2.20> t-critical=2.021) at the 0.05 probability value. It can be concluded that lexical collocation practice exerted a great impact on the improvement of experimental groups speaking skill.

To determine if, after receiving the special treatment, any change appeared in the collocation knowledge of the learners in general, and those who received instruction in particular, the performance of each group on collocation test at the pretest stage was compared with its performance at the posttest stage.

TABLE 9.  
RESULTS OF MATCHED T-TEST ON GROUPS' COLLOCATION PERFORMANCE AT THE PRE-TEST AND POST-TEST STAGES

Group	Mean		Number	Standard Deviation	
	TPRE	TPOST		TPRE	TPOST
Control	15.32	12.40	50	4.14	2.54
Experimental	15.72	22.00	50	5.90	5.97

As table 9 reveals, there was a prodigious increase in the mean score of the experimental group after the treatment (from 15.72 to 22.00). A decrease was observed in the mean score of the control group (from 15.32 to 12.40). These fluctuations are indicative of the fact that the experimental group made progress in vocabulary knowledge from the pre-test to the post-test stage, while the control group did not.

To further ensure and determine if, after receiving the specific treatment, any significant improvement appeared in the speaking ability of the learners in general, and the experimental group in particular, the results of the each group performance on oral activity was compared at pre-test and the post-test stage through applying the paired T-test as presented in the following table.

TABLE 10.  
RESULTS OF MATCHED T-TEST ON GROUPS' SPEAKING PERFORMANCE AT THE PRE AND POST-TREATMENT STAGES

Group	Mean		Number	Standard Deviation	
	TPRE	TPOST		TPRE	TPOST
Control	21.52	21.40	50	3.77	4.17
Experimental	22.44	23.76	50	3.55	3.33

As table 10 indicates, there was an increase in the mean score of the experimental group after the treatment (from 22.44 to 23.76), but it was not much significant. Moreover, no great change was observed in the mean score of the control group (from 21.52 to 21.40). This indicates that the experimental group made progress in speaking though not stupendous.

## V. DISCUSSION

The present study, as stated before, intended to find out if the instruction on lexical collocations affects the students' knowledge of these constructions and their speaking proficiency. According to the overall results of data analysis, a positive relationship was detected.

The results in the previous section showed that the teaching of lexical collocations, at least at the pre-intermediate level, helped the students improve their familiarity with lexical word combinations and used them in their oral practice. The findings of this study seems to match those drawn from the previous studies on lexical collocation instruction which have shown the positive effect of such instruction on the improvement of students' language skills, like reading (Hsu2010), listening (Hsu, 2005) and writing (Liu, 1999, Ghonsooli, Pishgaman & Mahjoobi, 2008)

With regard to the use of word grouping in the oral activity, the researchers came to this point that lexical collocation instruction had exercised a moderate effect on the correct use of collocation patterning by the participants while expressing their views orally. Several possible explanations are drawn from this fact. Probably, this may be attributed to the influence of learners' native language, here Persian. Using "color spreads" instead of "color runs" can possibly be the sign of the learners L1 influence.

Second language learners often rely on their native language in trying to communicate. They think that there exists a one-to-one correspondence between L1 and L2 lexical items. This might be of some help to the learners, but it is also a major cause of errors because even equivalent lexical items do not always convey the same meaning in two languages for various reasons including cultural differences which can be seen in the vocabulary of every language. This false assumption causes the learners to use L2 lexical items inappropriately. Even after the learners have mastered single lexical items, they still face difficulty using it properly, especially in uncontrolled speech because they haven't still learned which words go together, So mother tongue influences the way learners comprehend the collocation relations between words and expressions and the way they collocate words in L2.

Martelli (1998) notes that L1 transfer may explain this misunderstanding and the production of incorrect word combinations. In the same line, Shalev (2000) contends that EFL learners would use collocations wrongly in case their mother tongue is different from English. If the role of subjects' first language in choosing collocations is investigated, we would observe instances of first language influence. Since in this study we are not sure if cross linguistic influence in terms of typological distance happened in its true sense, similarity is considered an influence. For example, data analysis in the current study revealed that two students used the expression "new vegetables" instead of "raw vegetables". Here, native language transfer may be suggested as the source of error because in Persian the expression "sabzijate tazeh" is frequently used.

The assumption that learners mother tongue is of influence on collocation is shown in the study by Biskup (1992) in relation to the strategy of transfer (positive and negative). Although EFL learners assume that there is a one-to-one correspondence between L1 and L2, transfer sometimes ends up in correct collocating. That is, L1 transfer may be helping the students in choosing the proper collocates. For example, some of the students used "enough time", for "zamane kafi", "good smell", for "booye khoob", and "traditional food" for "ghazaye sonati".

It can also be argued that learners usually learn L2 words in single format, without attending to ways through which words group together. EFL learners in various proficiency levels often know the words in isolation, but they frequently use them inaccurately in combinations. Hill (1999) explains that most learners with "good vocabulary items" have problems with fluency because their 'collocation competence' is very limited.

Lack of cultural competence might be another factor which prevents learners from producing collocations which are colored culturally. Teliya and Brayina (1998, p.170) claim that there exist limitation on using some word combinations which are culture-specific. The problem is that the culture of the source and target language is different so a source language collocation may not exist in the target language culture at all; i.e., "Sunday dinner" which is "nahare makhsoose rooze yekshanbe".

And the last but not the least reason might be rooted in the fact that students use avoidance strategies when speaking which means they avoid using difficult word or structures, and will use a simpler word or structure instead. While speaking in the current study, it was seen that the students tried hard to use easier lexical collocation types which in this case was (Adj + N) so that they could speak more frequently. the learners in this study used Adj+N subtypes more than the other types; the likely explanation might be that they have the same structure but reversed (N+Adj) in their native language and that they have become familiar with this structure from the beginning levels of learning English; furthermore, the teachers have taught the students this structure by 'contrastive analysis' which means contrasting it with their mother tongue (included in Iran Language Institute teaching curriculum).

One mentionable finding drawn from this research is that, from among the subtypes, the subjects showed the most improvement in learning ADJ+N subtypes and the least in learning ADV+ADJ subtypes. It can be argued that the structure ADV+ADJ is not a frequent pattern in their mother tongue and usually not used so; they have not been exposed to this structure before and, now that they learn it, because they cannot associate it with their mother tongue, they prefer to avoid it. Another reason might be that they have not learned it well during the instruction.

Overall, as indicated in table 10, lexical collocation instruction improves students speaking proficiency though not significantly. This improvement might be attributed to the fact that by learning these collocations and becoming aware of the relationship between the words, they could use words better with their associations in their speech. This is in line with what Ying and Hendrick (2004) call *awareness-raising*.

## VI. CONCLUSION

In the present study, the analysis of the data revealed that the instruction of lexical collocations affected the EFL learners' proficiency positively and the findings further reflected that the treatment had been effective on the use of lexical collocations, though not to a great extent, which might be justified in terms of native language influence, learning collocations in isolation, cultural interference, and avoidance strategies. The analysis also revealed that among sub-classes of lexical word groupings, examined, Adjective+ Noun combinations were easier to use and Adverb+ Adjective collocations were the most difficult.

In broad terms, the students should be made aware of collocations and their subcategories and be given the opportunity to practice collocations in natural situations. Logically, it can be suggested that awareness raising on word collocating turns to be essential for having a good command of English. Furthermore, the teaching of collocations needs to be integrated with the teaching of vocabulary. In addition, dictionaries on collocations can foster the development of collocation competence by providing examples of lexical items with different collocates, highlighting the subtle distinctions between collocations that appear to be structurally similar.

As for pedagogical implications, it is suggested that vocabulary instruction be done through presenting words in collocations. If the students are presented with the words more frequent collocates, they will be less likely to make odd and erroneous word combinations. Gitsaki (1996) suggests that language teachers should introduce items with their most frequent collocations. Furthermore, by exploring the main areas of problems that the learners have with regard to collocations, teachers can identify and then classify the most problematic types of collocations and emphasize them more in their curriculum.

## APPENDIX A SAMPLE USED PRE AND POST TEST

### A: Use the *italicized* words in answering the questions.

1. *Complications* will ..... if the drug **is** not used properly.
  - a) advance
  - b) spread
  - c) happen
  - d) develop
2. Twenty five girls were .....*hostage* for four months.
  - a) confined
  - b) held
  - c) kept
  - d) grasped
3. I've had this .....*headache* ever since I woke up this morning.
  - a) potential
  - b) dominant
  - c) constant
  - d) primitive
4. The students *repeated* the sentences after the teacher .....
  - a) extremely
  - b) heavily
  - c) immediately
  - d) hungrily
5. He *behaved* .....although the rainy weather canceled his going to picnic.
  - a) angrily
  - b) agreeably
  - c) disappointedly
  - d) hurriedly
6. When he came to the party he looked .....*neat*.
  - a) madly
  - b) fairly
  - c) little
  - d) much
7. I like all her novels, but the latest one is ..... *good*. Everybody has to read it.

- |                 |               |
|-----------------|---------------|
| a) chiefly      | c) firstly    |
| b) particularly | d) originally |
8. Sara .....*cold*, developed pneumonia and died.
 

a) caught	c) got
b) attracted	d) acquire
  9. I felt .....*happy* when I heard of your success.
 

a) expressively	c) collectively
b) actively	d) decidedly
  10. David Lawrence's mother was the ..... *influence* in his life.
 

a) temporary	c) dominant
b) primitive	d) constant
  11. Whenever I have to *leave* home.....,I forget to take my watch.
 

a) hurriedly	c) obviously
b) really	d) hardly
  12. 200 people lost their jobs when the company .....*operations*.
 

a) ceased	c) released
b) arrested	d) trusted
  13. It is *raining* .....
 

a) carefully	c) heavily
b) obviously	d) weakly
  14. I was ..... *tired* when I got home.
 

a) correctly	c) closely
b) extremely	d) hopefully
  15. It was unusual to see David .....*faced* and nervous.
 

a) pasty	c) mad
b) untidy	d) minor
  16. The *clock* on the table ..... Twelve o'clock.
 

a) said	c) pronounced
b) announced	d) suggested
  17. Her *horizons* didn't .....beyond his next night out.
 

a) stretch	c) extend
b) expand	d) spread
  18. You must .....your own *feelings* and decide for yourself.
 

a) grow	c) trust
b) raise	d) heal
  19. He is a .....*smoker*. That's why he always stinks of smoke.
 

a) hard	c) big
b) heavy	d) strong
  20. This *color* .....so wash the shirt separately.
 

a) stretches	c) spreads
b) runs	d) extends

**B: Fill in the blanks with proper collocations.**

21. Her work includes ..... the local rainfall.
22. She placed her keys ..... on the table and sat down.
23. For nearly two months the fighting .....
24. Are you ..... aware of the implications of your action?
25. She took a ..... Fall while out riding.
26. The doctor ordered him to take ..... exercise.
27. Hopes of a peace settlement were fading .....
28. He has been asked to ..... a presentative about his work.
29. The prisoner was hanged for ..... murder.
30. A lot of effort ..... making the costumes.
31. We entered a ..... decorated room.
32. Everything in the room was ..... dirty.
33. The morning ..... blue sky and golden clouds.
34. They rode ..... all night.
35. Do I ..... a hint of jealousy in your voice?
36. Invading that country was a/an ..... Stupid thing to do.
37. Will we ever find out why the disaster.....?
38. Mary whispered ..... in John's ear.

39. The titanic sank on it's ..... voyage.  
 40. He was twisting on the ground in ..... pain.

**C: Fill in the blanks with the words given.**

**warmly            major            filled            merged            proudly**

41. She ..... the box with old clothes.  
 42. Nadya Smiled ..... as she watched the children playing happily in the garden.  
 43. Unemployment is a ..... problem for the government at the moment.  
 44. My grandparents have been ..... married for forty five years.  
 45. The two companies ..... in 2003 and now form one very large corporation.

**D: Write a paragraph about the food you like and dislike with ten of the words given below.**

**tasty; starchy; chew; cheap; rich; smell; canned; contain; quality; taste; junk; raw; price; vegetable; traditional**

#### APPENDIX B ORAL ACTIVITY TOPICS

1. If you could start your life again, would you do anything differently?
2. How do you see yourself in ten years time?
3. Are you going to bring your child up any differently to the way your parents did?
4. If you are asked to talk about your family, how would you describe each member?
5. How have weddings changed in recent years?
6. Talk about yourself, your likes, dislikes characteristics, style, etc...
7. Describe the best place you have ever been.
8. Talk about your ideal home.
9. What are your plans for this summer?
10. Talk about anything you want.

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# Relationship between Multiple Intelligences and Writing Strategies

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**Abstract**—This study was conducted to find the relationship between multiple intelligences and writing strategies among Iranian EFL learners. The participants in this study were 120 adult males and females studying at high and advanced levels of Iran Language Institute. They filled two questionnaires during the first sessions of spring semester of 2012. The first questionnaire was a multiple intelligences inventory surveying nine types of intelligences based on Gardner's theory and the second one was a writing skills and strategies questionnaire checking the students' use of general, before, during and after writing strategies. According to the results of a correlational analysis, "logical, existential, kinesthetic, verbal and visual intelligences" correlated with "general writing strategies". Moreover, "naturalistic, logical, kinesthetic and visual intelligences" showed relationship with "before writing strategies". The researcher found that some types of intelligences among females had relationship with some writing strategies while in the male group no relationships were found. Besides, the results of advanced levels showed more significant correlations than those of high levels. Regression analysis, on the other hand, proved that none of the intelligences could predict writing strategies separately.

**Index Terms**—multiple intelligences, Gardner's theory, writing strategies, EFL

## I. INTRODUCTION

This study aimed at finding the relationship between multiple intelligences (MI) of Iranian adult EFL learners and their use of writing strategies (WS). The researcher followed the MI theory proposed by Gardner (1983) and later completed by him in 1990s. According to Gardner there exist nine distinctive types of intelligences. These intelligences are:

1. Naturalist Intelligence (Nature Smart)
2. Musical Intelligence (Musical Smart)
3. Logical-Mathematical Intelligence (Number/Reasoning Smart)
4. Existential (deep question smart)
5. Interpersonal Intelligence (People Smart)
6. Bodily-Kinesthetic Intelligence (Body Smart)
7. Linguistic Intelligence (Word Smart)
8. Intra-personal Intelligence (Self Smart)
9. Spatial Intelligence (Picture Smart)

Collins (n.d.) believes that "Writing Strategies are cognitive and meta-cognitive procedures writers use to control the production of writing". Here, the researcher tries to investigate the students' use of General, Before, During And After Writing Strategies and their relationship with their nine intelligences.

### *Objectives of the study*

The main objective of the present study was to investigate whether there is any relationship between MI and WS among Iranian adult EFL learners. To find the effect of sex and levels of students, the researcher sought to check if any of the intelligence types have any impacts on different kinds of WS used by English learners.

### *Research Questions*

Based on the objectives, this study sought to answer the following questions:

1. Is there any relationship between MI and WS?
2. How do the results change between high and advanced groups?
3. Is the sex of participants a significant factor?
4. Which intelligence type(s) has (have) an impact on WS used by learners?

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Here, some of the major previous studies with respect to multiple intelligences and their relationship with different areas in language learning are reviewed. Then, the research on the relation between multiple intelligences and writing are discussed.



### A. *Studies Done on Multiple Intelligences*

A lot of investigations were conducted on the effect of multiple intelligences on different aspects of language learning, especially reading comprehension.

Ghamati (2011) studied improving reading comprehension and motivation of young Iranian EFL learners through the application of MI. The results of this study revealed that using reading activities based on the multiple intelligences theory can increase reading comprehension and it increases motivation of young EFL learners to read.

Hafez (2010) worked on the relationship between undergraduate English major students' MI and their use of reading strategies. The results obtained from the co relational procedure analysis indicated that there was a meaningful relationship between the subjects' MI and their use of reading strategies. Furthermore, multiple regressions showed that linguistic intelligence was the best predictor of reading strategies and the linguistic intelligence was the only intelligence that had a relationship with the students' gender.

Amiriani (2010) investigated the relationship between foreign language classroom anxiety and MI. She found that there exists a significant negative relationship between anxiety and five intelligence types, namely logical-mathematical, visual-spatial, naturalistic, interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligences while the results of the regression analysis showed that none of the five intelligences or their combinations had the power to predict the variance in anxiety.

Diravidamani & Sundarsingh (2010) studied MI and second language learning. The article examined the use of the multiple intelligence method in teaching a second language and that applying the MI method of teaching helps encourage students' involvement in the process of language acquisition.

Yi-an (2010) worked on MI and foreign language learning to find the role of MI in language learning behavior and performance. Findings showed that MI do relate to students' learning behavior and affected their English performance to some extent.

Sadri (2007-2008) studied the relationship between MI and vocabulary learning knowledge and vocabulary learning strategies among Iranian EFL learners. The findings revealed that there is a relationship between MI and vocabulary knowledge (vocabulary breadth). Moreover, stepwise multiple regression analysis showed that linguistic verbal intelligence is the best predictor of vocabulary knowledge. With respect to the relationship between MI and vocabulary strategies, the results indicated that among five categories of strategies determination, social and memory strategies had significant relationship with bodily, natural and interpersonal intelligences respectively.

McMahon, Rose and Parks (2004) worked on MI and reading achievement. They found that Students with higher scores on logical-mathematical intelligence were more likely to demonstrate at or above grade-level reading comprehension scores compared with students who scored lower on logical-mathematical intelligence.

Burman and Evans (2003) designed an action research to improve reading skills of first grade students. With the implementation of MI and increased parental involvement, students demonstrated a substantial gain in mastery of reading vocabulary words.

Cluck and Hess (2003) investigated motivating ESL learners through MI. As a result of implementing MI and cooperative learning groups, students showed an increased motivation in class work.

Gaines and Lehmann (2002) worked on a project to find the effects of using MI on reading comprehension of graduate students. They found that the student reading comprehension improved through the use of MI.

### B. *Studies Done on Multiple Intelligences and Writing Strategies*

Little research was done on the relationship between multiple intelligences and writing strategies. The only study found in this area was done by Shah and Thomas (2002) who worked on improving the spelling of high frequency words in daily writing through the Use of MI centers. The results revealed an increase in the ability to spell high frequency words conventionally within students' daily writing. This study shed light to a new understanding of how multiple intelligences can enhance the students' learning in all areas of the curriculum.

As it is obvious the relationship between multiple intelligences and writing strategies has been almost neglected. That is why the researcher has focused on finding this relationship to fill this gap.

## III. METHODOLOGY

This part gives information about the method of the study. First, the participants and instruments used in this study are introduced. Then, data analysis procedures are explained.

### A. *Participants*

The participants of this study were EFL learners of Iran Language Institute (ILI) of Shiraz. The researcher used convenience sampling. 120 students were chosen among males and females of adults' branches. Half of these students were males and the other half were females. Thirty students of the male group were studying advanced 3 and the other 30 were studying high 3. The same is true about the female group. They aged from 14 to 33 and the mean of their age was 21.

### B. *Instruments*

To measure the MI of the participants, the researcher used Multiple Intelligences Inventory by McKenzie (1999). This questionnaire has 90 items and consists of 9 sections, each measuring one type of intelligences with 10 items. The reliability and validity of this questionnaire was checked through the previous studies. Cronbach’s alpha showed the reliability of .9 according to Amiriani (2010). The construct validity was calculated through using factor analysis which showed there were nine factors or constructs which proved the nine segments of intelligences.

The questionnaire used to check the writing strategies used by learners was ‘ESLP 82 Questionnaire: Self-Assessment of English Writing Skills and Use of Writing Strategies’ which was taken from the following Internet site of Marquette University on October, 20th (2011): [www.marquette.edu/oie/documentary/ESLPQuestionnaireFa08.pdf](http://www.marquette.edu/oie/documentary/ESLPQuestionnaireFa08.pdf)

Seventy seven items of this questionnaire were used to find WS used by EFL learners including two parts. The first part was a Self-Assessment of English Writing Skills with 36 items. The researcher used this part to find the General writing strategies used by learners. The second part dealt with the learners’ use of Before, During and After writing strategies with 12, 14, and 15 items respectively. The reliability of this questionnaire was calculated through the use of Cronbach’s alpha which .93 which indicates that the instrument was reliable.

The two questionnaires were given to English learners of the ILI on the second session of spring semester of 1391 (April, 2012) and they were collected during the next sessions.

C. Data Analysis

In order to analyze the data, the 16<sup>th</sup> version of Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software was used. To find the relationship between MI and WS, a series of correlations was run. To find the effect of sex and level the researcher split the files and used correlation. Finally, linear regression was used for finding which intelligence types have more impact on writing strategies.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this part the findings of this study are presented. After answering the research questions, the similarities and differences between the results of this study and some of the major previous studies are discussed.

A. Is There Any Relationship between MI and WS?

To find the relationship between MI and General, Before, During and After Writing Strategies, Pearson correlation was carried out. According to the results, five intelligences (Logical, Existential, Kinesthetic, Verbal and Visual) were correlated with General Writing Strategies. Moreover, four intelligences (Naturalistic, Logical, Kinesthetic and Visual) were correlated with Before Writing Strategies. None of the intelligences were correlated with During or After Writing Strategies.

TABLE 1:  
CORRELATIONS BETWEEN MI AND WS

		General Writing	Before Writing	During Writing	After Writing
Naturalistic	Pearson Correlation	.178	.180	.014	.163
	Sig.	.052	.050	.881	.079
Musical	Pearson Correlation	.026	.005	.000	-.023
	Sig.	.775	.954	.999	.804
Logical	Pearson Correlation	.261**	.212*	.125	.063
	Sig.	.004	.020	.173	.495
Existential	Pearson Correlation	.263**	.048	.022	.112
	Sig.	.004	.603	.809	.223
Interpersonal	Pearson Correlation	.150	.166	.029	.119
	Sig.	.103	.070	.754	.195
Kinesthetic	Pearson Correlation	.217*	.203*	.029	.066
	Sig.	.017	.026	.753	.474
Verbal	Pearson Correlation	.266*	.123	.024	.066
	Sig.	.003	.181	.797	.471
Intrapersonal	Pearson Correlation	.093	.086	-.051	-.054
	Sig.	.314	.352	.581	.561
Visual	Pearson Correlation	.198*	.222*	.008	.072
	Sig.	.030	.015	.929	.438

B. How Do The Results Change between Intermediate and Advanced Groups?

To find the effect of proficiency level on the results of this study the researcher split the file and ran correlation again. According to the findings, the results in the high level showed that three types of intelligences (Existential, Kinesthetic and Verbal) were correlated with General Writing Strategies. Only one type of intelligences (Intrapersonal) had relationship with After Writing Strategies. None of the intelligences were correlated with Before and During Writing Strategies. Advanced results revealed that more intelligences were correlated with WS. Three of the intelligences (Logical, Verbal and Visual) had relationship with General Writing Strategies. Seven intelligences (Naturalistic, Musical, Logical, Interpersonal, Kinesthetic, Verbal and Visual) were correlated with Before Writing Strategies. Two of

the intelligences (Musical and Logical) had relationship with During Writing Strategies. None of the intelligences were correlated with After Writing Strategies in the advanced group.

TABLE 2:  
CORRELATIONS BETWEEN MI AND WS IN HIGH LEVEL

		General Writing	Before Writing	During Writing	After Writing
Naturalistic	Pearson Correlation	.239	.121	.000	.147
	Sig.	.066	.359	.998	.262
Musical	Pearson Correlation	-.050	-.238	-.200	-.163
	Sig.	.702	.067	.126	.215
Logical	Pearson Correlation	.209	.015	-.014	-.032
	Sig.	.109	.912	.913	.808
Existential	Pearson Correlation	<b>.427**</b>	.070	.121	.146
	Sig.	.001	.593	.357	.267
Interpersonal	Pearson Correlation	.170	.020	-.012	.160
	Sig.	.193	.882	.929	.223
Kinesthetic	Pearson Correlation	<b>0.31</b>	.157	.127	.025
	Sig.	.018	.230	.333	.849
Verbal	Pearson Correlation	<b>0.25</b>	.033	.039	.161
	Sig.	.049	.802	.769	.218
Intrapersonal	Pearson Correlation	-.068	-.062	-.133	<b>-.026</b>
	Sig.	.608	.638	.312	.043
Visual	Pearson Correlation	.108	.062	-.086	-.083
	Sig.	.410	.639	.511	.526

TABLE 3:  
CORRELATIONS BETWEEN MI AND WS IN ADVANCED LEVEL

		General Writing	Before Writing	During Writing	After Writing
Naturalistic	Pearson Correlation	.008	<b>0.26</b>	.034	.095
	Sig.	.951	.047	.794	.469
Musical	Pearson Correlation	.156	<b>0.35</b>	<b>0.26</b>	.166
	Sig.	.233	.006	.044	.204
Logical	Pearson Correlation	<b>0.33</b>	<b>0.46</b>	<b>0.29</b>	.156
	Sig.	.009	.000	.024	.233
Existential	Pearson Correlation	.003	.008	-.109	.048
	Sig.	.979	.949	.405	.717
Interpersonal	Pearson Correlation	.106	<b>0.37</b>	.082	.049
	Sig.	.421	.004	.535	.712
Kinesthetic	Pearson Correlation	.103	<b>0.26</b>	-.073	.073
	Sig.	.433	.048	.581	.580
Verbal	Pearson Correlation	<b>0.29</b>	<b>0.26</b>	.002	-.065
	Sig.	.025	.042	.989	.621
Intrapersonal	Pearson Correlation	.221	.244	.034	.036
	Sig.	.089	.060	.794	.787
Visual	Pearson Correlation	<b>0.31</b>	<b>0.43</b>	.125	.223
	Sig.	.016	.001	.340	.087

### C. Is The Sex of Participants a Significant Factor?

To find the role of sex on the findings of the study, sorting the cases according to sex the researcher split the file and carried out correlations again to find if the results would change among males and females. The results of Pearson correlation revealed that, none of the intelligences were correlated with any of the writing strategies among males. Some significant relationships were found in the female group. Four intelligences (Logical, Verbal, Interpersonal and Visual) had relationship with General Writing Strategies, two intelligences were correlated with Before Writing Strategies and one intelligence (Logical) had relationship with During Writing Strategies.

TABLE 4:  
CORRELATIONS BETWEEN MI AND WS IN MALES

		General Writing	Before Writing	During Writing	After Writing
Naturalistic	Pearson Correlation	.157	.146	-.077	.073
	Sig.	.232	.264	.557	.580
Musical	Pearson Correlation	-.129	-.108	-.120	-.094
	Sig.	.324	.410	.363	.474
Logical	Pearson Correlation	.203	.156	.028	.051
	Sig.	.120	.233	.829	.698
Existential	Pearson Correlation	.242	.074	.037	.169
	Sig.	.063	.573	.780	.197
Interpersonal	Pearson Correlation	.131	.089	.011	.049
	Sig.	.317	.499	.933	.710
Kinesthetic	Pearson Correlation	.184	.229	.080	.143
	Sig.	.159	.083	.546	.274
Verbal	Pearson Correlation	.056	.111	-.072	.001
	Sig.	.671	.398	.582	.992
Intrapersonal	Pearson Correlation	-.103	.013	-.185	-.240
	Sig.	.435	.923	.156	.065
Visual	Pearson Correlation	.103	.211	-.119	-.003
	Sig.	.435	.106	.363	.981

TABLE 5:  
CORRELATIONS BETWEEN MI AND WS IN FEMALES

		General Writing	Before Writing	During Writing	After Writing
Naturalistic	Pearson Correlation	.159	.203	.094	.235
	Sig.	.224	.120	.475	.070
Musical	Pearson Correlation	.151	.119	.115	.024
	Sig.	.251	.363	.382	.858
Logical	Pearson Correlation	<b>0.32</b>	<b>0.29</b>	<b>0.26</b>	.059
	Sig.	.014	.026	.047	.655
Existential	Pearson Correlation	.251	-.028	-.046	.015
	Sig.	.053	.834	.728	.908
Interpersonal	Pearson Correlation	.196	<b>0.27</b>	.050	.191
	Sig.	.197	.034	.705	.144
Kinesthetic	Pearson Correlation	.222	.165	-.067	-.032
	Sig.	.088	.209	.612	.805
Verbal	Pearson Correlation	<b>.450**</b>	.100	.084	.090
	Sig.	.000	.448	.522	.493
Intrapersonal	Pearson Correlation	<b>0.27</b>	.154	.082	.116
	Sig.	.035	.240	.532	.377
Visual	Pearson Correlation	<b>0.28</b>	.220	.163	.135
	Sig.	.028	.092	.213	.305

D. Which Intelligence Type (S) Has (Have) an Impact on Writing Strategies Used By Learners?

Here the researcher seeks whether the intelligences that correlated with Writing Strategies could also predict them. Since the results of the first research question showed that some of the intelligences were correlated with General and Before writing strategies, two series of Regression were run to find the possible predictions.

E. Impact of Intelligences on General Writing Strategies

First General Writing Strategies were taken as dependant variables while Logical, Existential, Kinesthetic, Verbal and Visual were taken as independent variables or predictors. Regression analysis showed R Squared=.125 and according to ANOVA table, the results were significant. This proves that only 12.5% of the variance in general writing strategies can be explained by the combination of six intelligences. Yet, from the coefficients results we conclude that none of the intelligence types can separately predict general writing strategies.

TABLE 6:  
REGRESSION ANALYSIS FOR GENERAL WRITING STRATEGIES

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.354	<b>.125</b>	.079	16.32412

TABLE 7:  
ANOVA RESULTS FOR GENERAL WRITING STRATEGIES

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	4315.587	6	719.265	2.699	<b>.017</b>

TABLE 8:  
COEFFICIENTS RESULTS FOR GENERAL WRITING STRATEGIES

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
Naturalistic	-.009	.095	-.011	-.098	.922
Logical	.130	.101	.139	1.291	.199
Existential	.133	.096	.140	1.383	.169
Kinesthetic	.095	.099	.101	.952	.343
Verbal	.130	.098	.145	1.318	.190
Visual	-.024	.093	-.031	-.258	.797

#### F. Impact of Intelligences on Before Writing Strategies

In this part Before Writing Strategies were taken as dependant variables while Naturalistic, Logical, Kinesthetic and Visual were taken as independent variables or predictors. Regression analysis showed R Square=.033 which is very low. The ANOVA table presented no significant effect from the independent variables on the dependent variable. We conclude that the combination of intelligences cannot predict before writing strategies. On the other hand, surveying the Coefficient table, we conclude that none of the intelligence types can separately predict before writing strategies.

TABLE 9:  
REGRESSION ANALYSIS FOR BEFORE WRITING STRATEGIES

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.354	.125	.079	16.32412

TABLE 10:  
ANOVA RESULTS FOR BEFORE WRITING STRATEGIES

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	561.397	6	93.566	1.672	.134

TABLE 11:  
COEFFICIENTS RESULTS FOR BEFORE WRITING STRATEGIES

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
Naturalistic	.030	.044	.076	.690	.491
Logical	.054	.049	.129	1.167	.246
Existential	-.037	.044	-.088	-.0852	.396
Kinesthetic	.053	.046	.126	1.161	.248
Verbal	-.007	.045	-.017	-.151	.880
Visual	.033	.043	.096	.769	.443

#### G. Discussion

The present study found that MI have a positive relationship with WS and most of the previous studies have come to a similar conclusion. Ghamati (2011), Hafez (2010), McMahan, Rose and Parks (2004), Burman and Evans (2003) and Gaines and Lehmann (2002) all found a positive relationship between MI and Reading. Yi-an (2010), Sadri (2008), Cluck and Hess (2003) and Shah and Thomas (2002) also found a positive correlation between MI and Foreign Language Learning, Vocabulary Knowledge and Strategies, Motivating ESL Learners and Improving Spelling respectively. The only contradiction was found in the findings of Amiriani (2010) who came to a negative relationship between MI and anxiety. This study and three previous studies tried to find the prediction of MI. The researcher found that none of the intelligences could predict WS. This is in agreement with the results of Amiriani (2010) who found that none of the intelligences could predict the variance in anxiety. But Hafez (2010) and Sadri (2008) found that linguistic intelligence could predict reading strategies and vocabulary strategies respectively. This study found that sex was a significant factor which is in agreement with the results of Hafez (2010). The researcher has made a table to summarize the comparison of the most related previous studies.

TABLE 12:  
SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS STUDIES

Topic	Researcher	Relationship	Prediction of intelligences	Effect of sex and level
MI & Reading Comprehension and Motivation	Ghamati (2011)	+relationship		
MI & Reading Strategies	Hafez (2010)	+relationship	√(linguistic)	Sex(significant) level(significant)
MI & Anxiety	Amiriani (2010)	- relationship	No Prediction	
MI & Second Language Learning.	Diravidamani & Sundarsingh (2010)	+relationship		
MI & Foreign Language Learning	Yi-an (2010)	+relationship		
MI & Vocabulary Knowledge and Strategies	Sadri (2008)	+relationship	√(linguistic)	
MI & Reading Achievement	McMahon, Rose and Parks (2004)	+relationship		
MI & Reading Skills	Burman and Evans (2003)	+relationship		
MI & Motivating ESL Learners	Cluck and Hess (2003)	+relationship		
MI & Reading Comprehension	Gaines and Lehmann (2002)	+relationship		
MI & Improving Spelling	Shah and Thomas (2002)	+relationship		

V. CONCLUSION

The researcher came to the following conclusions:

1. MI of the students have relationship with S with General and Before Writing Strategies used by learners. None of the intelligences are correlated with During or After Writing Strategies.
2. MI in advanced students have more significant relationship with WS than among high levels.
3. There exists some relationship between some of intelligences and some WS used by females Interestingly, none of the intelligences are correlated with any of WS among males.
4. Although the combination of intelligences can slightly predict general writing strategies none of the intelligences can separately predict any of WS.

*Pedagogical Implications*

The findings of this study can make the researchers, managers, material designers, and teachers aware of how multiple intelligences could influence WS used by learners which proves the individuality of the students. This encourages them to take the necessity of using a variety of ways in teaching into a more careful consideration. The teachers are more likely to care about the strength and weakness of different intelligences among different students when teaching. Being exposed to a variety of teaching ways, the amount of learning will definitely increase. Knowing about how their intelligences act, the students themselves would also know how to improve themselves most efficiently through using different types of intelligences best. Moreover, by being aware of the WS used by students, both teachers and students would know which strategies are almost learned and used most and which strategies need more emphasis and practice which is going to help improve the students' writing.

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# A Study on Flow Theory and Translation Teaching in China's EFL Class\*

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**Abstract**—Flow or flow experience, a positive psychology concept, is characterized by intense focus, cognitive efficiency, a perceived skills-challenge balance, immediate feedback, merging of action and awareness, a sense of control, enjoyment, the opinion that time passes quickly, clearly defined task objectives and a lack of self-consciousness. The application of flow theory in foreign language teaching is a new subject worth studying. The concept and components of flow, the conditions that flow occur, flow model and its application are introduced. The flow model and the principles in creating and achieving flow in foreign language teaching and learning is then presented. Flow theory is later applied in translation teaching, in which the translation course design and task requirement, the translation teaching and learning environment, learners' performance and the roles of learners and teachers are discussed. Flow experience emerged from the well-designed translation tasks will significantly improve the students' English learning intrinsic motivation and overall level. In the design of the translation teaching syllabus and students' translation tasks, teachers should have the "flow state" into consideration, in order to make the effect of translation teaching reach optimization.

**Index Terms**—flow theory, translation teaching, flow experience, optimal experience, foreign language teaching

In 2004, the Ministry of Education of China promulgated the "College English Curriculum Requirements (For Trial Implementation)" (2004) which marks the beginning of a new round of college English teaching reform. "College English Curriculum Requirements" (2007) specified that the goal of college English teaching is to develop students' English language proficiency, so that they can communicate effectively in English in their future study, work and social interaction. Colleges and universities should improve the traditional teacher-centered teaching pattern, and put forward new tasks for teaching content and methods, which will make English teaching develop towards personalized, self-learning direction.

Translation teaching, as an important branch of applied translation, has long been a research focus for scholars at home and abroad. Traditional translation teaching mode, not attaching importance to students' autonomy, has gradually emerged drawbacks and is no longer suitable for the development of modern translation teaching. With the use of modern educational technology in the translation classroom teaching, teachers' teaching methods and media will be increasingly rich, and put forward higher requirement for teachers to organize the class. Therefore teachers should improve students' interest in learning, and pay attention to the reaction of the students to stimulate students' flow experience, allowing students to dedicate themselves to feeling the joy of knowledge accumulation, acquiring the professional quality of a successful translator.

## I. INTRODUCTION TO FLOW THEORY

### A. Flow

The notion of "Flow" was first proposed by famous American psychologist Mihály Csikszentmihályi (1975) in his book "Beyond Boredom and Anxiety: Experiencing Flow in Work and Play" in 1975. "Flow, a positive psychology concept, is the mental state of operation in which a person performing an activity is fully immersed in a feeling of energized focus, full involvement, and enjoyment in the process of the activity, and has been widely referenced across a variety of fields" (Csikszentmihályi, 1990).

In his work, "Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience" (Csikszentmihályi, 1990), Csikszentmihályi outlines his theory that people are happiest in a state of flow, in which people are so involved in an activity that anything else seems to be insignificant, and people are completely concentrated or absorbed with the task or activity.

The flow state is an optimal state of one's intrinsic motivation (Csikszentmihályi, 1990), in which people are completely immersed in what they are doing. It is a feeling that everyone has sometimes, which is characterized by a feeling of great absorption, engagement, satisfaction, and skills, during which temporal concerns are usually ignored. (Csikszentmihályi, 1990)

### B. Components of Flow

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Nakamura and Csikszentmihalyi (2009) identify the following nine factors of an experience of flow. (Wright, 2012)

(1) To have clear goals.

In many situations, there are conflicting requirements and sometimes it's unclear about what you should do. But in a flow experience, people have a clear aim and know well what to do next.

(2) To need immediate feedback to one's performance.

When you're in a state of flow, you know how well you're doing because you can get immediate feedback from others around.

(3) To reach a balance between challenges and skills.

If a challenge is too difficult for your own skills, you will get frustrated and depressed. But if a challenge is too easy, you will feel boring. In a flow experience, you will feel engaged but not overwhelmed by the challenge, characterized by a balance between your own skills and the demands of the tasks and activities.

(4) To merging action and awareness.

People often consider things that are not quite related to the current tasks. But in the flow, you will focus your attention on what you are doing.

(5) To concentrate on the present moment intensely and focusedly.

Because of your absorption in the activity, you only mind what's related to the task at hand, and you don't consider irrelevant things. With the focus on activities, uneasy feelings which can lead to anxiety and depression are set aside.

(6) To have a sense of self-control over the task or activity.

The possibility for learners to exercise control in learning, especially in difficult situations, is considered to be essential in the flow experience.

(7) To get a loss of reflective self-consciousness.

People often spend a lot of energy on how they seem to others. In a state of flow, you're so engaged in the activity that you will not care about yourself.

(8) To experience subjectively that time is altered.

Time flies when you're really involved in the activity. Time may also seem to slow down the time you are performing some activities or tasks in which you've practiced and developed a high degree of skills.

(9) To experience intrinsic rewarding in the activity, also referred to as "autotelic experience".

Some activities are done for people's own sake, because they will find the enjoyment in the experience like most art, music, or sports. Other activities are done for people's future goals, like things they have to do as part of their jobs. But some of these object-oriented activities can also become ends in themselves, and enjoyed for their own sake (Wright, 2012).

### C. Conditions for Flow

A balance must be reached between the challenge of the task at hand and the performer's own skills. To achieve a flow state, if the tasks are too easy or too difficult, flow can't occur. Both the levels of skill and challenge must be high and matched; if they are low and matched, then apathy results (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997).

People cannot force themselves to enter a state of flow. It just happens. A flow state can be entered when performing any task, although it is most likely to occur when one is heart and soul performing a task for intrinsic purposes. (Csikszentmihalyi, 1988; Snyder & Lopez, 2007)

Flow theory postulates three conditions in order to achieve a flow state: (Csikszentmihalyi, 2005)

(1) People must be involved in an activity with clear task aims.

(2) Clear and immediate feedback must be given to the task at hand, which will help people to discuss any changing requirements and allows them to adjust their performance timely to keep the flow state in them.

(3) People must have a good balance between the challenges of a task at hand and their skills, and must have self-confidence in their own abilities to do the task.

### D. Flow Model

In 1997, Csikszentmihalyi (1997) published a more scientific and reasonable flow model (as seen in Fig.1), which describes the relationship between the challenges of a task and people's skills. The figure shows a further aspect of flow, which is more likely to occur when the challenge of the task at hand is higher than the average (above the center point) and people have skills above the average (to the right of the center point (Csikszentmihalyi, 1988). The center point of the figure indicates the average levels of challenge and skill of the people in all activities performed in their daily life. The further from the center an experience is, the greater the intensity of that state of being (whether it is flow or anxiety or boredom or relaxation) (Snyder & Lopez, 2007).

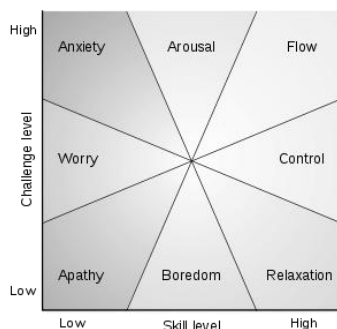


Figure 1. Csikszentmihalyi's flow model

E. Applications of Flow Theory

Recent studies show that Flow Theory is widely applied in the discussion of improving performance in areas as diverse as music improvisation, sport psychology, computer programming, and human-computer interaction (Parncutt & McPherson, 2002; Young & Pain, 1999; Webster, Trevino & Ryan, 1993). Chan & Ahern (1999) studied the theory of "flow" in education design. Theory and practice have proved that the "flow" experience exists in educational activities, such as reading and using a computer. Grabe and Stoller (1997) have suggested that in the language learning classroom, carefully planned teaching content will produce "flow". Abbott (2000) concluded that the "flow" experience can inspire learners to make language learning more efficient.

II. APPLICATION OF FLOW THEORY IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING

Foreign language learning is a complex cognitive activity involving variety of psychological phenomena, such as information identification, attention distribution, memory, and thinking (Lin, 2000). The application of Flow theory in the implementation of foreign language teaching can effectively develop learners' interest in learning, stimulate their motivation, and effectively improve their participation in foreign language teaching. Optimal English input should arouse learners' interest in learning, which should be the exploratory materials attracting learners to learn continuously. During their exploration, attracted by the meaning and context, they forget the presentation forms of the input content, but knowing English input content directly.

A. Flow Model in Foreign Language Teaching and Learning

Figure 2 shows a model of the relationship between flow and language acquisition by Egbert (2003). The model suggested that the well-designed task and learners' skill in target language and tools can lead to flow. Flow, in turn, leads to learners' improved performance; then leads to changes in the learners' skills. In other words, although flow is individual experience not occurring in isolation; it depends on individual skills, the tasks the teachers assigned, the environment and other participants. In this model, the target language tasks take on a central play a very important role in the proposed relationship between flow and foreign language learning, which should be appropriate and interesting with clear goal. Learners will have control and can focus on the task, obtaining immediate feedback. Also in this model, skills are not limited to language modes (speaking, listening, reading, and writing), but include the use of tools such as computers or networks that may affect both flow and learning.

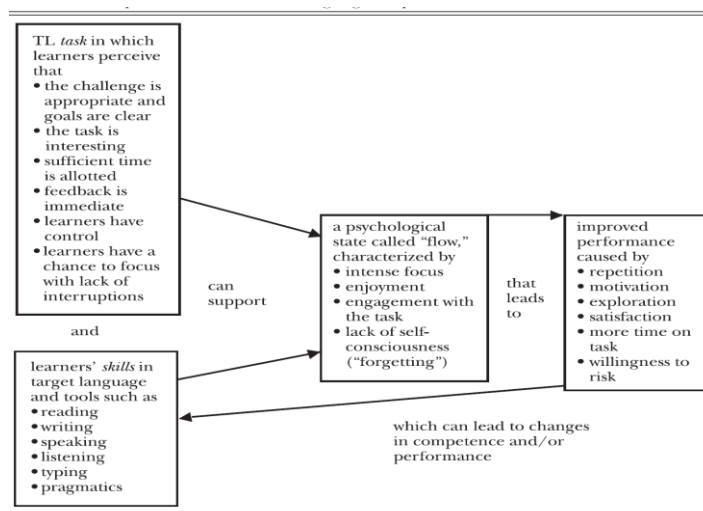


Figure 2. Model of the Relationship between Flow and Language Acquisition

### *B. Principles in Creating and Achieving Flow in Foreign Language Teaching and Learning*

#### (1) Task design in foreign language teaching and learning.

Flow theory requires teachers to provide clear, interesting, and achievable task. Clear goals and a balance between challenges and skills are very important.

In every step a clear goal is needed by learners, in order to stimulate learners' learning motivation. Interest is the main factor of motivation, is the positive reaction that the cognitive structure makes on stimulus, and can arouse and maintain the learners' curiosity.

An appropriate grasp of the balance between the difficulty of the tasks and the learners' skill levels can promote learners to achieve flow experience, to make learning achieve optimal effect.

#### (2) The environment in which the learning task completed.

Flow theory requires learners to reasonably distribute attention, eliminate interference, to achieve the optimal learning state. Learners need to concentrate on what you're doing. Time flies when you're really engaged. Students need certain independence without any interference from their teachers and classmates.

The task that can stimulate flow experience should be what learners think is important and meaningful, but must base on the premise that it will not produce anxiety.

#### (3) The performer of the learning tasks.

Learners need to only be aware of the task at hand and need to have a sense of self-control over the situation or the activity.

The learning process is also a process of internalizing the external information. Feedback is a kind of stimulation, and also continuous strengthening of information. Flow theory demands synchronous feedback in learning, that is, learners must be always aware of their progress, so as to constantly adjust learning objectives and plan, to produce flow experience. Immediate feedback is needed for one's actions, including teachers' feedback and students' feedback. We should also pay attention to the principal role of the participants.

### III. TRANSLATION TEACHING AND LEARNING WITH FLOW THEORY

Some scholars think that the flow model in foreign language teaching consists of three parts: flow antecedents, flow experience and flow consequences. (Chen, 1999; Hoffman & Novak 1996)

Flow antecedents can be divided into three aspects: foreign language learning task, foreign language teaching and learning media and methods and foreign language learners. The teaching and learning media refer to computer assisted language teaching and learning based on modern information technology. The first two aspects will directly affect the third aspect, thereby affecting the flow experience and learning effects of learners.

To create flow experience, the following elements are required: (1) to determine a clear goal with controllable rules; (2) to create the opportunity to adjust activities to fit learners' potential; (3) to provide learners with accurate information on how to operate; (4) to shield from interfering factors, allowing learners to concentrate. Therefore, in foreign language teaching and learning teachers should create opportunities suitable for learners' ability, on the basis of teacher-learner's interaction to create good teaching and learning environment.

Flow experience will lead to the increase of learning behavior and the enhance of exploratory behavior, having a positive impact on foreign language learners, increasing learners' interest in learning foreign language and promoting the occurrence of repeated learning behaviors, so that learners are willing to spend more time on foreign language learning and upgrade their skills and abilities ultimately.

#### *A. Course Design and Task Requirement*

Teachers should make the task target in advance to avoid the waste or transfer of students' attention. Therefore, teachers need to carry out the pre-task preparation and mobilization to help students be familiar with and clear about the objectives. Teachers should have clear requirements for the translation tasks, for example the translation of a certain text style, so that students could think in this style, which will help students to concentrate, and avoid diffuseness and randomness.

Teachers should choose proper translation tasks. Too difficult or too many tasks will make students "overloaded", and produce anxiety, but too easy tasks may be dull, which can affect the balance between the challenge and students' skills. Therefore, teachers should choose tasks with appropriate degree of difficulty which won't give students too much pressure. For example, before assigning a task of translating an abstract of technical paper, teachers need to teach students the skills of word and sentence translation (English verb, noun, adjective, preposition, clauses, etc). With all these basic translation skills, students won't be afraid of the passage translation task too much. Moreover, teachers need to make clear the tasks, the target, and the content, letting students understand what to do, what kind of request to achieve, through which process. In the above example, teachers also need to explicitly tell students that in today's lesson the teaching goal is to learn the translation principles and skills of science and technology abstract, then they will be assigned a task on abstract translation.

Because of the network users most often enter into the flow state in information seeking situation, teachers could properly assign some tasks concerned with the teaching content. Learners need to inquire the tasks online, which will

increase students' interest in learning English, so that they could enter the flow state. But this kind of tasks should be to be able to let students feel delighted, worthy and challengeable but can finish the tasks with efforts.

### *B. Translation Teaching and Learning Environment*

Teachers must choose the tasks which the learners have a strong interest in, and refrain from interfering during task. Autonomy-supporting environments are most likely to generate flow in learners. Independent learning outside class which maximizes freedom to use their learning strategies will make students feel learning initiative, immersing in translation activities, maintaining a good motivation. What's more, in order to know students' level and organizing classroom with target, real-time monitoring and timely feedback is essential. In other words, teachers can use the LAN in multimedia classrooms conduct real-time monitoring of the translation process of the students, to control their translation process and provide timely comment.

As for the translation tools, a dictionary or electronic dictionary is not enough to meet the requirements of a professional translator. Network dictionary, parallel corpus, background knowledge base and other auxiliary facilities may create an authentic translation workshop, allowing students to meet the challenges with morale and enthusiasm and experiencing flow in the engrossed translation.

With the development of informatization of education, English teaching has undertaken great changes. Traditional English teaching consists of teachers, students, and teaching material; while in the modern teaching environment a new element—the teaching media—should be added. In the modern teaching environment (especially in network teaching environment), the "teaching content" is no longer limited to the traditional teaching material, but also includes tapes, videos, CNO courseware, multimedia courseware and various kinds of information resources from the Internet. Therefore, teachers could use all these means in their classroom teaching and instruct students to use all these means, especially the internet resource to help them with their tasks. Teachers can also design an online translation teaching and learning platform, on which lots of translation-related skills, knowledge or resources can be uploaded for students to search and learn. In addition, teachers can design an interaction forum, in which students can exchange ideas and with each other, and they can also be given immediate and non-evaluative feedback from their teachers and classmates. This kind of learning environment can sustain students' interest in learning and can be more natural to stimulate learners' flow experience, and they will be the main body of learning. Computer interface can help learners to focus on limited range through all sorts of different, novel, and surprising stimulation to arouse learners' learning curiosity to maintain lasting motivation.

### *C. Learners' Performance*

When students are in a state of flow, they are working to master the activity at hand. They must seek increasingly greater challenges to maintain that flow state, and they will make their skills extended by attempting these new and difficult challenges.

In specific course, teachers need to have a goal for each step, being able to guide the students to move forward to the target step by step, to blur the boundaries of teachers and students, willing to be an assistant, to provide them with convenience as much as possible, so that they will complete teaching content in the ongoing exploration. Therefore the teaching of all the courses should be inspiring, student-centered and assisted by the teachers. Students will be more active in teaching activities in a relatively loose, autonomous environment to give full play to their skills.

Students in the same group need to have a sense of teamwork, cooperating with and assisting each other. Each group member needs to fulfill his own part of the task first, and then revise and proofread other's translation by giving immediate feedback.

### *D. Roles of Learners and Teachers*

Teachers, as assists to the students participating in the challenge, need to fully understand the students' practical skill levels and provide challenge activities in line with their levels. Students, the main body of learning, need to complete the task independently under the teacher's guide so as to achieve an automatic state gradually.

Taking translation classroom exercises and after-school translation task for an example, teachers need to take full account of the actual levels of the students and their interest while choosing exercises and tasks which should be closely related to their lives to stimulate students' interest in learning. The exercises and tasks shouldn't be too easy or too difficult so as not to make students feel dull, tired, or anxious.

Teachers need to comprehensively understand their students, designing translation activities of moderate difficulty and being interest to students, arousing the imagination of students. Also they need to pay attention to their overall English level balances the level that activities require, spur them on to the generation of individuals flow and collective flow to promote English learning.

## IV. CONCLUSION

The quality of flow experience is characterized by intense focus, cognitive efficiency, a perceived skills-challenge balance, immediate feedback, merging of action and awareness, a sense of control, enjoyment, the opinion that time passes quickly, clearly defined task objectives and a lack of self-consciousness.

The application of flow theory into translation teaching is a new attempt. In foreign language learning, students' flow experience depends on whether their skills and challenges are balanced, whether there is a clear learning objective, and whether they can get synchronous feedback on the process of task, excluding outside interference.

An appropriate translation task of practical texts could encourage students to enter a state of flow, experiencing pleasure in engrossing in the translation activities and a sense of accomplishment after the activities. Meanwhile, the flow experience emerged from the translation practice improves the students' English learning intrinsic motivation and overall level significantly.

Due to the experience of joy and satisfaction in learning, learners will continue to repeat to complete tasks, and their learning motive will be stronger and will put in more time, willing to challenge more difficult tasks.

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# Adopted vs. Adapted EFL Textbooks in Iranian Context: Focusing on Gender Representation and Teacher Beliefs

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**Abstract**—Gender, as a socially constructed variable, seems to spread in to every corner of the language classroom including the syllabus. Studies show that most of textbooks are biased in a way that they present stereotypical female images. A gap in literature is disfavoring women by under-representing or linguistically marginalizing females. In the light of this gap, this study has an analytic quantitative comparison of discursive features of conversations in Interchange series (as authentic textbook series) with a nationally produced centralized syllabus for a semi-state control language education in the Iranian context. Results showed an encouraging level of gender fairness in each series and comparing to each other. The EFL teachers' perception about gender representation in the textbooks has been studied in the form of correlational KAP (i.e. knowledge, attitude, practice) survey and the result showed that female teachers scored better in knowledge items and that teachers' overall practice in the classroom is correlated to their attitude more than their knowledge. Implications of the study are discussed.

**Index Terms**—English textbooks, gender representation, biased gender image

## I. INTRODUCTION

Gender is so naturalized in our life that it has become invisible but at the same time our social life is suffused with gender (Sunderland, 2000a). In every culture or society some specific roles or characteristics are attributed to either men or women, and thus two genders are considered different. Gender differences are, actually, a fundamental fact of sociolinguistic life and it is not surprising that they are reflected in language. In other words, there are certain forms of language which are appropriate only for use by men and other forms which only women may use. "In some cases, these differences depend not only on the ... [gender] of the addresser, but also on the ... [gender] of the addressee" (Ansary and Babaii, 2003, p.1).

Since 1970s, sociolinguists have become interested in the relationship between language and gender, and they consider all the behavioral variations, achievements in foreign languages included, explicable by cultural factors, hence by socially constructed gender differences (Sunderland, 2000b). "Gender spreads into every corner of the language classroom" (Sunderland, 2000a) and this is in accordance with our perception of "gender as something not always apparent but always present" (Sunderland, 2000b, p.203).

Sunderland (2000b, p.205) cites Catalán who states that "gender in contrast with such variables as age, motivation and learning style, is neglected in well-known and widely-cited textbooks on second language acquisition." On the other hand, Female learners experience various sorts of educational disadvantages such as "male dominance in the classroom; differential teacher treatment by gender, by which males get more and better teacher attention than females; and representation in textbooks in which female characters are variously stereotyped, trivialized, or rendered relatively invisible" (Sunderland, 2000a). Language education atmosphere is not in favor of girls either. Along with the various studies on gender and language education, there have been many studies in the last 30 years that showed imbalance in gender representation in language textbooks. Sunderland, Cowley, Rahim, Leontzakou, and Shattuck (2000) cited many 1980s and 1990s studies on ESL/EFL textbooks in which a) males were overrepresented, b) men were likely to take more powerful and greater range of occupational roles than women, c) both males and females were given gender stereotypical roles and activities, and d) in dialogs, females were found to speak less and perform a narrower range of discourse roles, etc. Sunderland et al. (2000) believe that, by having progressive texts in terms of gender representation, teachers' behavior in relation to texts, which is called "teacher talk around the text" or "mediation", should be the focus of newer studies. However, the lack of data from developing countries, where English language teaching is pervasive and where gender and educational opportunities is still the matter of concern, makes gender representation still an intriguing issue to SLA practitioners and researchers.

Gender lies among the social factors which contribute to language learning. Languages may sometimes be seen as a 'girls' subject' because girls, in spite of male dominance, differential teacher treatment and imbalance in textbooks, tend

to choose languages, and nowadays the female postgraduates in languages outnumber males. In Iran, as well, the results of universities entrance exams, the number of literature and language students, and the number of those attending to language learning institutes, testify that proportionally girls are more than boys in number. Thus, having in mind that everybody in the society should be provided with an equal opportunity for learning, it seems sensible to study imbalance in gender representation in EFL textbooks.

Conversations in ESL/EFL textbooks are chosen to be studied in terms of imbalanced gender representation as they are instances of real life conversations and they can be made use of in different ways in classroom context, i.e. being role played, extended, or personalized by students. In other words, this study attempts to find out to what extent do the conversations in ESL/EFL textbooks marginalize female learners?

By knowing to what extent an EFL textbook is marginalized in favor of either gender, teachers and practitioners can tactfully maneuver their teaching in order to get the best result. On the other hand, Iranian organizations that are in charge of production and publication of EFL materials may use the result in order to make the textbooks less imbalanced in respect of gender representation. The present study specifically addresses whether cross-gender conversations of EFL textbooks used in Iranian outside school English courses portray any kind of imbalance in gender representation quantitatively and in terms of some discourse features?

Scholars believe that gender has a significant role in our social interaction. Research has shown that gender influences our perception of ourselves and others (e.g. Chavez, 2001). Moreover, in the society people's behavior is assessed through gender norms. As Holmes (2006) stated:

One dimension on which we are constantly, if generally unconsciously, assessing people's behavior is that of contextual appropriateness in relation to gender norms. As with all social norms, this is often most evident when a person breaks or challenges the taken-for-granted assumptions about the way women or men 'should' behave. (p.5)

This gender stereotyping or better saying gender roles given by the society to either men or women, has pervaded our lives and is reflected in every corner of the society. "Gender is simultaneously everywhere and nowhere" (Sunderland, 2000a. p.8). Everywhere, because, as human beings, our social experience is intertwined inextricably with gender; and nowhere, because gender is often so taken-for-granted that it becomes invisible. "Because gender is so wide-ranging, it spreads into every corner of the language classroom and indeed of language education" (Sunderland, 2000a. p.8). Therefore there is a need for research in order to raise teachers' and students' awareness of gender issues and to increase the chance of equal education opportunity.

There has always been a debate that educational system is not equal for boys and girls. While one of the objectives of the education is to enable students to realize their capabilities and reach their full potentials, it seems it will not be possible unless in a gender equitable environment where fair opportunities, access, benefits, and resources are provided for both male and female students. In fact, upon entering school, girls perform equally and sometimes better than boys on almost every measure of achievement, but by the time of graduation from high school, they have fallen behind (Sadker and Sadker, 1994). Sunderland (2000a) states that:

Much research on gender and education has focused on different sorts of educational disadvantages experienced by women and girl learners, for example male dominance in the classroom; differential teacher treatment by gender, by which males get more, and arguably better, teacher attention than females; and representation in textbooks in which female characters are variously stereotyped, trivialized, or rendered relatively invisible. (p.8)

A great deal of research on education and gender has been conducted throughout the world and similar results are elicited from them. Swann (2005) reviewed some of those findings that girls and boys had different speaking styles and they wrote in different ways and about different topics; That boys' speaking styles allowed them to dominate classroom interaction, so that girls had less opportunity to contribute; and that textbooks and other resources used in schools contained many more male than female characters and examples. She even introduces some remedies to counteract such imbalances and inequalities.

The policy and practice of education is challenged by a shift in conceptions of language and gender. The postmodern shift, which focuses on gender diversity, on context and performativity and on uncertainty and ambiguity, is being applied to the recent studies of education and gender.

Gender bias in education is an insidious problem that causes very few people to stand up and take notice. Teachers are generally unaware of their own biased teaching behaviors because they are simply teaching how they were taught (Sadker and Sadker, 1994). Female and male students nowadays are receiving separate and unequal educations due to the social generalization that takes place in the schools. Unless teachers are made aware of the gender socialization and the biased messages they are unintentionally imparting to students every day, and until teachers are provided with the methods and resources necessary to reduce gender bias in their classroom, girls will continue to receive an inequitable education (Erden, 2009).

As stated in the previous sections, in first language (FL) settings, males tend to dominate the ground and are more secure and self-confident than females. Similarly in a first language academic environment, male students are reported to perform better and receive more teacher attention and get better grades. In contrast, females are the queens of the realm of language studies, particularly a foreign language. Languages may be seen as female's subjects because girls tend to choose languages; even statistics from academic settings show that females enroll in language courses more than males and female post-graduates in languages outnumber males. Chaves (2001) has given reasons to study gender in the

foreign language classroom. The first reason she states is that investigations into the role of gender in foreign language can draw on the existing research in first language. Second reason is that, insights from gender studies can be applied in an actual language classroom setting. The third reason for the study of gender is that these studies can serve as a link to the larger area of gender studies. And as the last reason for gender studies she states that “communicative competence is thought to include pragmatic aspects and knowledge of target language sociolinguistic conventions as well as the component of cultural competence. As such, linguistic gender roles in the target language are part of the body of the knowledge to be acquired in the foreign language class, at least at the advanced level” (Chaves, 2001, p.14).

Teachers’ perception of gender issues in the classroom affects students’ learning. Teachers should always be aware of what goes on in the classroom, what a textbook is going to induce into the minds of students, and how students feel about the textbooks and teaching / learning process. Researches show that teachers’ attitudes about gender specific performances of the students can bias their teaching and therefore students’ learning.

So teachers’ biased perception of students’ performance may result in wrong or diverse interpretation. Sunderland et al (2001) explored teacher’s influence in the classroom and regarding gender biased textbooks. They name it as ‘teacher talk around the text’ or teacher’s ‘mediation of the text’ and they believed it may play a role in shaping student response, learning opportunities, and gender identity.

## II. GENDER REPRESENTATION AND STEREOTYPES IN TEXTBOOKS

The way gender is represented in the textbooks will have an effect on learners’ gender identities and language learning opportunities (Sunderland, 2001). Sunderland et al. (2001) reviewed researches in 1970s and 1980s that had performed content analyses of gender representation in foreign language textbooks. These studies found out that males were overrepresented, that men occupied more powerful and greater range of occupational roles than women, that both males and females were represented in stereotypical roles, and that women tended to be stereotypically emotional.

Stereotypical representation of either gender is another issue in the EFL/ESL textbooks. The situation seems less dire as regards gender representation in the textbooks nowadays. It can be a consequence of the change in publishers’ and writers’ awareness and values, along with those of teachers and students as the consumers of the textbooks (Sunderland et al., 2000). Still textbooks are affluent with gender bias and stereotypical representations of females and males thus a need for research.

### A. *Imbalance in Gender Representation*

Sunderland (2000a) and Sunderland et al. (2001) believe that gender bias in the texts has influences on gender identity of the learners, language learning opportunities, and teaching/learning process. There are researches that explored gender bias or in other words imbalanced representation of females in the EFL textbooks. Ansary and Babaii (2003) explored the status of sexism in two ESL/EFL textbooks (Right Path to English I & II) in Iran. They analyzed gender visibility in both texts and illustrations and female/male topic presentation in dialogs and reading passages and found both textbooks completely sexist which underrepresented females. Besides, their qualitative inquiry into gender-linked job possibilities and activities depicted a passive, traditional and stereotypical picture of women which was in contrast with women’s stance in Iranian society, especially in urban areas. They concluded that women often appeared less visible than men in the textbooks; that English was basically taught through the presentation of male-orientated topics and females were more visible in indoor passive activities, and were placed in traditional stereotypical roles.

Özdoğan, Aksoy, Erdoğan, and Gök (2004) carried out a content analysis of the presentation of gender roles in Turkish elementary school “Turkish” and “Life Studies” textbooks. Their result is surprisingly very close to that of the Iranian study cited earlier; traditional and indecisive women characters, doing house chores, raising children and, being compassionate, what the authors believed were the traditional Turkish female traits; and self-confident, decisive and adventurous male figures.

Holmqvist and Gjörup (2006) investigated the representation of gender and gender roles in six English textbooks, two of which were published in the 1970s. They analyzed books in terms of gender imbalance within the three categories of authors, occupations, and illustrations and the result showed that there was a tendency in all the textbooks to promote males and diminish females.

Harashima (2004) conducted a quantitative case study on one unit of an EFL textbook and found that the unit in questioned contains a far greater number of male referents than female, male characters preceded the female ones when they are introduced in text or exercises, male characters were more often associated with higher social status than the female ones, and there are some expressions in text and in illustrations which are derogatory towards women.

As are seen from different studies, gender bias and imbalanced gender representation is still common in the EFL/ESL textbooks.

### B. *Conversations in the Textbooks and Gender Representation*

Conversations and dialogs in EFL/ESL textbooks are of utmost importance especially in a communicative syllabus design. Martha Jones, Catherine Kitemu and Jane Sunderland (1995) stated that:

One ‘genre’ of a language textbook for which it is possible to hypothesize actual uses in the classroom is the dialogue, i.e. a written or taped conversation between two or more people. Among other ways, a dialogue can be used:



- (a) As an 'oral model', to be demonstrated by two or more students and listened to by other class members;
- b) As a basis for oral, pair or group work for the whole class, to be 'parroted' and/or adapted or extended through such activities as role play, simulation or dramatization;
- (c) As a model in the textbook which can be extended by the students in writing;
- (d) As a model to be read silently in the textbook, or listened to on tape; and
- (e) For the oral completion of a gapped conversation (e.g. in a language laboratory, where dialogues can be used by individual students).

These ways can be used alone or in combination. (electronic version)

The question that comes into mind here is: does gender imbalance exist in textbook conversations as it appears to do in language textbooks in general? Very few researches of gender bias in EFL materials have in fact looked at the ways in which the male and female characters in their conversations use language differently, either qualitatively or quantitatively.

Jones et al. (1995) argue the pedagogical implications of gender imbalance in textbook dialogs. They continue that another probable disadvantage of imbalanced gender representation in the textbook dialogs is that it can predispose language learners to make assumptions about the gendered nature of verbal behavior of native speakers of the language they are learning and they may continue to imitate this in class accordingly. Jones and et al. (1995) conducted a quantitative study on the number of male and female characters in the dialogs, the number of times either gender initiated the conversation, and the number of words spoken by either gender. They studied three ESL textbooks which were published between 1987 and 1994. They found that there was some gender bias in the textbook dialogues but on the whole, the bias was not extreme.

As mentioned before, the way teachers and students think of gender representation in textbooks has a great impact on language learning and teaching process. Yepez (1994) studied four teachers behavior in terms of gender biased behavior found in the classroom and concluded that all four teachers put emphasis on gender equity while teaching. The way teachers handle the imbalanced textbooks, and as Sunderland et al. (2001) put it 'consume' the textbook, is very crucial too. So teachers' awareness of imbalanced gender representation in the EFL/ESL textbooks can promote the quality of teaching learning process.

The above mentioned studies show that there is a necessity for research in this area especially in Iranian context. Much work has been done on gender stereotyping in textbooks for foreign language teaching around the world. However, little has focused on the language of conversations, which are a characteristic feature of EFL/ESL textbooks.

### III. METHOD

After reviewing the relative literature, establishing the framework for gender representation in the textbooks, and going through the relevant theoretical and empirical explanations in the previous chapter, now it is the time for discussing the experiments conducted for this study on examining gender representation in adapted and adopted EFL textbooks and teachers' perception about it.

In this section, the procedure to collect and analyze the data is explained. In other words, this chapter is concerned with the material, participants, methodology, and the process of computing and calculating the data.

In order to answer the two research questions – represented below – this section is divided into two parts.

#### A. Materials

Two series of EFL textbooks, which represent adopted and adapted EFL textbooks, are chosen from among many books which are being taught in Iranian private English courses. The representative of adopted textbooks is 'Interchange Third Edition' published by Cambridge University Press, in four volumes including 'Interchange Intro', 'Interchange 1', 'Interchange 2', and 'Interchange 3'. This series will be simply referred to as 'Interchange series' in the rest of this research. The reason for choosing Interchange series is its popularity in EFL institutes in Iran. The representative of adapted textbooks is the latest impression of 'Iran Language Institute (ILI) Series', which is locally produced by ILI as a centralized institute with nationwide branches and is considered one of the popular and respected language institutes in Iran. The reason for choosing this series is that it is the most well-established source, from authorities' point of view, among the books produced and published in Iran. ILI series senior courses include four levels namely 'Pre Intermediate', 'Intermediate', 'High Intermediate', and 'Advanced'. Due to not having any conversations the 'Advanced' books are excluded. There are three books for each level so nine books are examined.

The cross gender conversations in these two series are the targets of this study. The coding method of the conversations and the way some of their discursive features are derived are explained in the following sections.

#### B. Procedures

The cross gender conversations in each series are marked and addressed for quick reference. The series are coded for the next analyses. In order to find out how much a series is biased in terms of gender representation, in each series the number of cross gender conversations is counted and their ratio to all the conversations is calculated. Besides, the number of words that each gender used in each conversation is counted. All the words including articles, prepositions, and interjections such as 'wow' or 'oh' are counted as one word. Words with hyphen in between and a person's first

and last name – if uttered together – are counted as one word. Some conversations in Interchange series has a part which is not displayed in the textbook and are designed for listening comprehension; even these parts are examined through their transcripts in the teachers’ book.

From among the discursive feature of a conversation, conversation initiation and ending, number of pauses or hesitations by each gender, depicted in the scripts by ‘...’ or ‘Um’ ..., and number of apologies by each gender, as a sign of subordination, are studied in each conversation. In order to have a cultural look at conversations the relationship between female and male character is derived from each conversation.

There were 22 cross gender conversations in ILI series which is coded as group 1, and 76 cross gender conversations in Interchange series which is coded as group 2. All the collected data are tabulated (see Appendix A) and analyzed by SPSS 11.5. The approach taken for data analysis and the results are represented in the next chapter.

IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

This part deals with the second research question. The EFL teachers’ perceptions were studied through a questionnaire and the results would be statistically analyzed using SPSS 11.5.

A. Participants

A total of 30 EFL teachers, 15 female and 15 male teachers, from Pardis-e-Goldis language institute in Tabriz were randomly selected to participate in this study. Their teaching experiences vary from 1.5 years to 21 years. Their minimum academic education in ELT was Bachelor of Arts (BA) in TEFL or English literature with a local background of TTC following which they had been certified to teach at the institute. Besides, all had the experience of teaching to both male and female students.

B. Procedures

A questionnaire containing 34 questions, 3 of which are demographic questions and are not included in the analysis, was prepared (see Appendix B). Question 1 asks the participant’s gender and questions 5 to 34 are ‘Likert scale’ items on a 1-5 scale. These 30 items evaluate teachers’ knowledge, attitude and practice on gender representation in the textbooks. In order not to give hints to the participants the items are distributed in the questionnaire (see Appendix C for classified items). To find out whether the questionnaire is reliable or not the ‘test-retest’ approach was administered. “Test-retest reliability is usually estimated by administering the same test twice to a group of subjects and then calculating a correlation coefficient between the pairs of scores from the two administrations” (Brown, 1988, p.99). 10 of the participants answered to the questionnaire twice within a week and the correlation coefficient was calculated between two administrations for each item. Among 30 items, items 30 and 33 did not pass the correlation evaluation with correlation coefficient of 0.37 and 0.59 respectively. The two items were simply excluded and the new questionnaire was administered to the participants (see Appendix D).

After data collection, the descriptive statistics are calculated for each group and the data are examined in terms of following a normal distribution using SPSS. By doing One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov test for the data it turns out that they do not represent a normal distribution. So, the non-parametric approaches will be taken in order to analyze data.

Before data analysis it is good to have a look at descriptive statistics of the data. In ILI series, there are 22 cross gender conversations and 44 same gender conversations; while in Interchange series there are 76 cross gender conversations and 21 same gender conversations. These are illustrated in figures 4.1 and 4.2 and Table 4.1.

In ILI series the mean of word count for females and males are 54.91 and 60.32, respectively. As is seen word count mean for males is greater than that for females. In the analysis it will be seen whether this difference is significant or not. In Interchange series the word count mean for females and males are 60.25 and 55.76. (Table 4.2)

TABLE 4.1  
FREQUENCIES AND PERCENTAGE OF CROSS GENDER AND SAME GENDER CONVERSATIONS IN ILI AND INTERCHANGE SERIES

		Cross Gender Conversations	Same Gender Conversations	Total
ILI Series	N	22	44	66
	Percent	33	67	100
Interchange Series	N	76	21	87
	Percent	78	22	100

TABLE 4.2  
THE MEAN OF WORD COUNTS IN ILI AND INTERCHANGE SERIES FOR FEMALE AND MALE CHARACTERS

	Word Count Mean	
	Females	Males
ILI Series	54.91	60.32
Interchange Series	60.25	55.76

The word count mean for females is greater than that of males. By comparing male and female word count means in two series it turned out that they were very slightly different. The significance for these differences is examined through statistical analyses as well.

First NH1 was being examined. In order to compare female and male word count means of the two independent series and see whether the differences are significant, 'independent-samples T-test' is a good aid. As the data did not follow a normal distribution, the non-parametric counterpart for independent-samples T-test which is 'Mann-Whitney U test' came in handy. By applying Mann-Whitney U test to the female word count mean in the both of the series, the p-value was 0.627 which is greater than 0.05 and this means that the difference between two series in terms of female word count mean is not significant. The same test was applied to the male word count mean in both series and the derived p-value was 0.848 which is greater than 0.05 and therefore the difference between two series is not significant in terms of male word count mean.

In order to examine whether each series represented imbalance in terms of gender, 'paired-samples T-test' should have been applied to female and male word count means in each group. As the data were not normally distributed, the non-parametric counterpart for paired-sample T-test which is 'Wilcoxon signed rank test' was applied to data in each group. By applying Wilcoxon test to female and male word count means in ILI series, the derived p-value was 0.961 which is greater than 0.05 and therefore the difference between female and male word count means in ILI series was not significant and this series was not biased in favor of any gender. The same test was applied to both means in Interchange series and the derived p-value was 0.171 which is greater than 0.05, so as well as ILI series, the Interchange series did not contain gender bias. In other words, the null hypothesis NH1 is supported and there is no significant difference between two series in terms of gender bias in favor of either gender and none of the series represent gender bias either.

In order to find out whether there are any kinds of imbalance in discourse features of the textbooks in terms of gender or not, NH2 was established. Among the 22 cross gender conversations in ILI series the means for female and male pauses were 0.14 and 0.05, respectively. For 76 cross gender conversations in Interchange series those of female and male pauses were 0.12 and 0.22 respectively. The means for female and male apology in ILI series were 0.23 and 0.14 and in Interchange series were 0.11 and 0.16 respectively (Table 4.3). Figure 4.4 illustrates them in bar diagrams.

TABLE 4.3  
THE MEANS OF PAUSES OR HESITATIONS AND APOLOGIES IN ILI AND INTERCHANGE SERIES FOR FEMALE AND MALE CHARACTERS

	Mean of pauses or hesitations		Mean of apologies	
	Females	Males	Females	Males
ILI Series	0.14	0.05	0.23	0.14
Interchange Series	0.12	0.22	0.11	0.16

As the variables were not normally distributed (Kolmogrov-Smirnov Test result), Mann-Whitney U test and Wilcoxon signed ranks test will be used for inter- and intra-series analyses, respectively. By applying Mann-Whitney U test to the mean of females and males pauses and apologies, the p-values were 0.822, 0.25, 0.098, and 0.988 for female pauses, male pauses, female apologies and male apologies, respectively. As all these p-values are greater than 0.05, the differences between means are not significant and the observed differences are by chance. By applying Wilcoxon signed ranks test to the means of female and male pauses and apologies in each series separately, the p-values for pauses and apologies in ILI series were 0.317 and 0.414 and for pauses and apologies in Interchange series were 0.284 and 0.415 respectively. As all these p-values are greater than 0.05 the observed differences are not significant and none of the series are imbalanced in gender representation in terms of these discourse features relatively.

The other discursive feature which is studied here is the initiation and ending of a conversation. Table 4.4 shows the frequencies of the two variables in each series.

TABLE 4.4  
FREQUENCIES OF FEMALE AND MALE CONVERSATION INITIATION AND ENDING IN EACH SERIES

	Initiation		Ending	
	Female	Male	Female	Male
ILI Series	10	12	8	14
Interchange Series	31	45	32	44

It is derived from the table that the numbers of males' conversation initiation and males' conversation ending were greater than those of females in both series, but whether this difference was significant or not was the most crucial question here. To find out this the 'Chi-Square test' had been applied to the data. By performing Chi-Square test, it turned out that the p-values for conversation initiation and conversation ending, for two series, were 0.696 and 0.629, respectively. Both calculated p-values were greater than 0.05; so the differences were not significant and two series could be considered equivalent in terms of conversation initiations and endings for both genders.

The tests performed on the pauses, apologies and conversation initiations and endings supported NH2 and this means there were no significant differences between two series in terms of discursive features.

When looking at the relationships in both series, it turned out that in ILI series, female and male characters in conversations were mostly relatives (husband and wife) or they had a customer / service provider relationship in which the female character was always the customer.

After the questionnaire was administered to the participants and the answers were elicited, the collected data were tabulated using SPSS 11.5 and means of each category and the mean of questionnaire were calculated for each participant. Now each participant had 4 score, i.e. K\_MEAN, A\_MEAN, P\_MEAN, and Q\_MEAN representing means of knowledge, attitude, practice, and Questionnaire score, respectively. The statistical analyses would be done on these four scores. The means and SDs of the data are shown in Table 4.5 and Table 4.6.

TABLE 4.5  
MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS OF SCORES FOR FEMALE TEACHERS

	K_MEAN	A_MEAN	P_MEAN	Q_MEAN
Valid N	15	15	15	15
Mean	3.97	3.16	3.38	3.47
Std. Deviation	0.36	0.47	0.32	0.31

TABLE 4.6  
MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS OF SCORES FOR MALE TEACHERS

	K_MEAN	A_MEAN	P_MEAN	Q_MEAN
Valid N	15	15	15	15
Mean	3.37	2.89	3.28	3.16
Std. Deviation	0.48	0.41	0.59	0.41

As are seen the means of females scores were greater than those of males scores and the attitude score is less than the others for both females and males. Besides, males' scores were more dispersed than females' scores. The diagram in figure 4.5 illustrates the data better.

Before conducting any statistical analyses, it was compulsory to evaluate the data in terms of being normally distributed. By applying One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov test it turned out that the data followed a normal distribution therefore in order to compare means, Independent samples T-test will be conducted.

In order to see whether the differences between means for females' and males' scores were significant, Independent samples T-test is applied to the means in both females and males groups. By conducting T-test using SPSS 11.5, the p-values for four variables are as the table below.

TABLE 4.7  
P-VALUES FOR KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDE, PRACTICE, AND QUESTIONNAIRE MEANS

	K_MEAN	A_MEAN	P_MEAN	Q_MEAN
p-value (2-tailed)	0.001	0.118	0.566	0.029

P-values for knowledge and questionnaire were less than 0.05 and therefore the observed mean differences were significant in these two cases and so female teachers' knowledge and overall perception can be considered more than those of male teachers' in this subject -matter.

In order to evaluate the go-togetherness of knowledge, attitude and perception of teachers, a Pearson correlation test is conducted between K\_MEAN and A\_MEAN, K\_MEAN and P\_MEAN, and A\_MEAN and P\_MEAN. The correlation coefficients are as in table 4.8.

TABLE 4.8  
CORRELATION COEFFICIENTS FOR KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDE, AND PRACTICE MEANS

	K_MEAN*A_MEAN	K_MEAN*P_MEAN	A_MEAN*P_MEAN
Pearson Correlation Coefficient	0.535	0.421	0.636
p-value (2-Tailed)	0.002	0.020	0.000

As is shown in the table, correlations are significant and among all the correlation coefficient between A\_MEAN and P\_MEAN is greater than the others so these two are the most correlated variables. This means that teachers' practice is more related to their attitude than their knowledge.

### V. CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

Research Question 1: Do the cross-gender conversations of EFL textbooks used in Iranian outside school English courses portray any kind of imbalance in gender representation quantitatively and in terms of some discourse features?

Looking back at the results of part 1 it is obvious that the ratio of cross gender conversations to same gender conversations in Interchange series is far greater than that of ILI series. Besides in ILI series the relationship between males and females in the conversations are of relative (mostly spouses) kind or a costumer / service provider kind which can be considered a cultural bias in the textbook. On the other hand, the women in the conversations are the costumers and men are the service providers. From this point of view ILI series has a traditional stereotypical presentation of women; being a wife or daughter or a house maker doing shopping, etc. which is in contrast with women's stance in Iranian society. This is in line with what Ansari and Babaii (2003) concluded from their study about gender

representations in Right Path to English I and II. (See also Dominiguez , 2004, Law and Chan, 2004 & Florence, 2004) that showed stereotypical representation of genders.

Results indicated that no differences were detected regarding word count, frequency of pauses, hesitations, apologies, and initiation and ending patterns. The word count was performed in order to see whether any of the series are biased in favor of either gender or not. Although descriptive results showed a difference between females' words per conversations and that of males, and ILI Series can be considered as having imbalance in gender representation in favor of males and Interchange Series in favor of females, the statistical analysis did not confirm this difference as true. Although comparing these results to those of Harashima (2004), Johansson and Malmsjö (2009), Florence (2004), and Jones, Kitetu, & Sunderland (1995), the results of this study goes along with Jones et al. (1995) and others reported biased textbooks in terms of gender representation in conversations.

The last part which dealt with the firstness of characters in the conversations and its ending showed the following results. In both series, males won the ground; the number of the times males initiated a conversation and ended it was greater than those of women's. The result partly goes with that of Jones et al. (1995), but the difference observed was not significant.

Although it was predicted by the author that ILI Series, in contrast to Interchange Series, may contain imbalance in gender representation, and descriptive analyses confirms it, the result is far unpredictable. The insignificances observed for the differences can be due to the fact ILI Series are adapted from other original EFL/ESL textbooks and although are adapted to the Iranian culture, it still carries the features of original books.

Research Question 2: How do the teachers, who use these textbooks, think of the representation of gender?

By comparing the scores calculated for each teacher and their means (illustrated in Figure 3.5), it is seen that females have better overall perception about gender representation in the textbooks. But when the means are compared through statistical devices, it turns out that only the differences between the means of knowledge and overall questionnaire are significant. This shows that female teachers' knowledge in the issues concerning gender representation is higher than that of male teachers'. The difference and significance observed for the questionnaire scores can be due to those of knowledge as questionnaire score is related to the other three scores. It can be derived from the result that raising the teachers' knowledge changes their perception about gender representation in the textbooks. As Erden (2009) showed, the education of teachers has a great influence on their awareness about gender issues in the classroom and Chavez (2001) stated that as teachers become aware of gender imbalance in the textbooks they can mediate the content of the book in the way that it is less harmful.

By doing correlational tests on the means two by two, it turned out that teachers' practice is related to their attitude than their knowledge. It shows that teachers' belief system plays a great role in their classroom behavior. So as it is mentioned that the education of teachers improves their overall perception about the subject matter, this education should be in the way that it changes the attitude and belief system of the teachers.

Judging from the results above, we understand that, although improves are seen, still there are a big gap in gender representation studies in Iran. Our results about gender representation in textbooks, depicted in chapter 3, show that although the differences observed between two series are insignificant, still differences are seen and ILI Series, especially in terms of stereotypical representation can be considered imbalanced in gender representation. From the firstness point of view, again, in spite of insignificant differences, both series are in favor of males and teachers should consider this in their teaching that they can mitigate it by changing the roles, or giving opposite sex roles to the students, or taking other policies according to their creativity. What is obvious here is that the textbooks still need teachers' mediation as Chavez (2001) described. As some discursive features are studied here (i.e. number of pauses and hesitations, number of apologies and conversation initiation and ending) shows males and females status from authors' view, teachers should be aware if they consider bias to the disadvantage of either gender. Besides because conversations carry a high stance in communicative language classroom, the more teachers become aware of their imbalance in terms of gender representation, the more beneficial their teaching would be. On the other hand teachers should raise students' awareness about this subject when seen in the books in order to reduce the impacts of this imbalance. It is good to be mentioned here that as ILI Series is not communicative and they totally have fewer conversations than Interchange series, teachers of these textbooks should be conscious about other parts of the textbooks (reading, vocabulary, grammar ...) which are not studied here.

The second part of our research, dealt with a KAP study, evaluating teachers' knowledge, attitude and practice, in terms of gender representation in the textbooks. The results showed that female teachers got better score than male teachers. It was actually predictable that females are concerned more than males in gender issues. Still as the differences between means are not significant in all three categories but in knowledge, it is implicated that both female and male teachers not only should increase their knowledge about this subject matter, but also should change their attitudes and classroom behavior accordingly. The correlation part of the study shows that teachers' practice is related to their attitude than their knowledge. The implication here is that the organizations, universities, and language institutes that are in charge of training language teachers, should have a program to teach gender issues to the up and coming teachers and should raise their awareness of imbalance in gender representations in the textbooks.

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# The Effect of Collaborative Writing on EFL Learners Writing Ability at Elementary Level

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**Abstract**—The present study examines the effect of group work and collaborative writing on EFL learners' writing ability at elementary level. Convenience sampling is used in this research. 64 learners in two groups (treatment & control) participated in the study. The Learners in treatment group wrote their writings collaboratively while the other group wrote them individually. The writing samples were rated based on the TOEFL iBT task 2 writing scoring rubric (ETS, 2006). The results showed that both the treatment group and the control group improved significantly from the beginning to the end of the instruction as assessed through the use of two paired samples t tests (Treatment Group  $t(30) = -26.42, p = .000$ ; Control Group  $t(32) = -15.70, p = .000$ ). However, the two groups showed a significant difference in their posttest ( $t(62) = 2.64, p = .01$ ).

**Index Terms**—cooperative learning, writing, cognitive skills

## I. INTRODUCTION

### Cooperative learning

Cooperative learning can be defined as a variety of concepts and techniques for enhancing the value of student - student interaction (Tan, 1999).

Keyser (2000) introduces cooperative learning as one variety of active learning which structures students into groups with defined roles for each student and a task for the group to accomplish.

The purpose of cooperative learning is to enhance cognitive and social skills via a set of known techniques. Interdependence, accountability, group formation, social skills, and structure are all built the sequence and communicated to the students in multiple ways.

### Research on merits and demerits of cooperative learning

Numerous studies indicate that compared to competitive or individualistic learning experiences, cooperative learning is more effective in promoting intrinsic motivation and task achievement, generating higher order thinking skills, improving attitudes toward the subject, developing academic peer norms, heightening self - esteem, increasing time on task, creating caring and altruistic relationships, and lowering anxiety and prejudice. (Ghaith & Yaghi, 1998)

By thinking and writing in a group, we are likelier to develop our ideas more fully and more creatively. Peter Elbow explains, "Two heads are better than one because two heads can make conflicting material integrate better than one head can. It's why brainstorming works.

However, sometimes conflict arises from group members' failure to meet schedules, or to complete their share of the work. Personality conflicts, although less common, are also problematic. Brumberger (1999) mentions that collaborative writing does not seem to consistently result in a better product, nor does it necessarily result in visibly improved writing skills.

### Heterogeneous grouping

According to cooperative - learning research outside the L2 field, structured forms of teacher - assigned heterogeneous grouping can enhance relations among classmates, promote learner to learner tutoring, increase tolerance, decrease prejudice, and promote cross cultural understanding (Kagan, 1985) although such grouping involves increased thought, effort, and energy on the part of the teacher. Heterogeneous grouping can be done on the basis of language proficiency, language background, ethnicity, gender, or other factors. Similarly, Brumberger (1999) states that learners are grouped into heterogeneous groups in order to enhance social skills and other non - cognitive outcomes such as inter - ethnic relationships, self - esteem, liking of school and so forth.

It is true that less profitable interaction is found within peer groups, sometimes because of the participant's lack of trust in the accuracy, sincerity, and specificity of the comments of their peers (Zhang 1995). Certainly the often promoted affective advantages of peer response over teacher response (less threatening, less authoritarian, friendlier, more supportive, and so on) have not been immediately recognized by students, nor indeed supported by research. In several studies, peer feedback has been judged by the participants as less helpful than the teacher's feedback, and in one case even less useful than a native speaker friend or grammar book (Leki, 1991).

### Good groups and bad groups

In a good group, your idea will be received with the understanding that it's necessarily preliminary and tentative, and you won't have to worry about being punished for it. In a bad group, you'll quickly realize that your major task is to turn your associates into a good group.



A good group is accepting and supportive. In this group good ideas are rewarded. Members look forward to participating because their ideas are respected. Everybody pitches in, and everybody wins.

"Group IQ" is higher in a good group. Group IQ is a product not only of the sum of the group's intelligence but the sum of the group's social skills. Intelligence without social skills - or social skills without intelligence - handicap a group severely (Goleman, 1996).

Brumberger (1999) states that comments often focused on group members are: "hard to work with", "control freak", and "unreliable" were typical comments in groups that had problems; and "helpful", "dependable", "enthusiastic", and "good attitude" were common in more successful groups.

Good group members constantly remember that their own personal interest is interdependent with the interests of other members: "One for all" not "All for one".

#### **High-achieving students VS. Low-achieving students**

There is more conflicting evidence in the literature regarding whether cooperative learning is equally beneficial to students at all levels of prior achievement. Some maintain that High-achievers would benefit most from cooperative learning because they provide frequent elaborated explanations. Johnson (1985) asserts that the learning of high - achieving students usually benefited and never suffered when they were grouped with lower - achieving peers.

However, Ghaith (2001) argued against the use of cooperative learning with gifted students based on the assumption that the high achievers could be held back by having to ensure the learning of their low - achieving team mates. Consequently, the researcher proposes that cooperative learning could be beneficial for the low -achieving learners who make learning gains at the expense of the high achievers.

In a different investigation by Li and Adamson (1992) gifted secondary students tended to like individualistic learning (and sometimes competitive learning).

However, Johnson (1985) asserts that the learning of high - achieving students usually benefited and never suffered when they were grouped with lower - achieving peers.

#### **Application of social constructivism to collaborative learning in the L2 classroom**

The purpose of cooperative learning is to enhance cognitive and social skills via a set of known techniques. Interdependence, accountability, group formation, social skills, and structure are all built the sequence and communicated to the students in multiple ways.

Lev Vygotsky, a Russian psychologist, contributed significantly to social constructivist epistemology. Like Dewey, Vygotsky recognized that ideas have social origins; they are constructed through communication with others. He also introduced the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), that is, the realm of potential learning that each learner could reach within a given developmental span under optimal circumstances and with the best possible support from the teacher and others in the environment (The modern language journal, 1997).

For Vygotsky (1986), the teacher acts as a facilitator or guide and the provider of assistance. Teachers perform a great service to students by providing any and all forms of assistance that might help students develop their language and cultural skills.

Therefore, the L2 learning process is situated in a particular social context. It involves becoming part of the culture of the learning community.

#### **Factors that affect cooperation**

Jacobs (1988) believes many factors can affect cooperation; They include the grading system used, students' previous educational experiences, types of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation among students' friendships between students, and social norms.

He also maintains that another step in the preparation of the class for cooperative learning was to talk about some of the skills necessary to productive group functioning. These include making sure everyone participate; paying attention when others speak; pointing out good points in compositions, not only mistakes; and criticizing the draft, but not the person who has written it.

#### **Process Writing**

According to Rao (2007), Instead of focusing on teaching students how to produce correct writing products, university EFL teachers should adopt a process – based approach, providing their students with opportunities to interact with each other. This is particularly important when learners lack ideas and information for a writing task. Since peer help and cooperation are of paramount importance in the use of brainstorming strategy, strategy training should emphasize team work.

Spacks (1998) suggest a process – centered course around text – based or data – based tasks in which written language acts as a medium of learning something else. Students should learn general inquiry strategies, rhetorical principles, tasks that can transfer to other course work.

#### **Responding to writing**

Writing is a complex and multifaceted activity. When we assess writing, we engage in another complex and multifaceted activity. Different techniques can be used in correction process. We can correct errors; code errors; locate errors; indicate the number of errors. Holistic scoring is used in this research.

#### **Collaborative writing**

Ferris (1994) believes that "inadequate content", "poor organization", and "stylistic inappropriateness" are weaknesses

of student writers. Therefore it is assumed that the students can improve their writing by working in groups.

In this research, it is believed that confident student writers can give confidence to those who lack self confidence. In this regard Zimmet (2000) expresses that:

Collaborative work and small group discussion seem to give even the shyest students enough security to participate more frequently.

She also shows how collaboration helped take their thinking further than it might otherwise have gone.

Kirkland and Saunders (1991) maintain that the activities in collaborative writing can begin orally and progress to collaborative written exercises in which students supply topic sentences and main idea sentences. Such activities typically begin with concrete material and move to more abstract content. They also state that as we work on super ordination, modeling or demonstrating our own thinking process aloud for students can be very helpful in clarifying our expectations in terms of cognitive and meta-cognitive operations.

## II. METHODOLOGY

### Participants

38 female and 26 male EFL learners of differing majors studying at the University of Tehran, Kish International Campus took part in the present study. The treatment group consisted of 31 students (17 female and 14 male), while the control group consisted of 33 students (21 female and 12 male) students. They took the writing course as part of an English package offered to every new student at that university. Their age ranged from 20 to 37, with an age mean of 26.

### Materials

The main material used was a number of TOEFL iBT writing prompts chosen from the ETS TOEFL Writing Prompts Official Booklet available at ETS website.

### Procedure

All new students, before being admitted, have to take an English proficiency test designed by the English department at the Faculty of Foreign Languages and Literatures, University of Tehran, Iran. This test is generally known as U-Test or UTEPT. It consists 100 items. The first 30 items measure learners' knowledge of grammar and written expressions. The second 30 items measure vocabulary through different item formats including multiple choice items and Cloze tests. Finally, the last 40 items are devoted to assessing learners' reading comprehension. There is no listening, speaking or writing section in this test. However, after this test, each candidate is interviewed with a two person team of teachers who have been teaching at that university for a long enough time to be quite familiar with the requirements and objectives of the English program there.

Based on the results of the U-test and the interview done, students are either exempted or grouped into 3 levels. Those scoring below 25 are assigned to group C, which roughly equals the basic level. Those scoring between 25 and 40 are assigned to group B, which is roughly equivalent to the elementary level. Those scoring between 41 and 75 are assigned to group A, which matches the intermediate level in language institutes. Finally, those scoring above 75 are regarded as advanced learners of English and are exempted from the program. Only groups A and B receive writing instruction as part of the package offered to them. Those in group B are taught 'paragraph writing' only, while those in group A received instruction on essay writing as well. The participants in this study were those taking writing instruction as part of their English program in group B. As such, by using the term 'elementary' in the title of the study, the researcher means those assigned to group B through the procedure described above.

Convenience sampling was used in the present study. In other words, the treatment and control groups were intact groups. There were 3 writing classes available, and 2 were randomly chosen first. Then, the two classes were randomly assigned to control and treatment groups.

It was a 2 unit writing course held in the second semester. During the semester, 12 sessions were actually held, one of which was devoted to the final exam. In the first session, a topic was given to both groups, and they were given 30 minutes to write a paragraph of at least 120 words. This was taken as their pretest. During the first 4 sessions, the basics of paragraph writing were taught. A process approach to writing was followed. Students were taught to go through different stages of writing starting with brainstorming and outline making for the given topic. Then, they were required to pre-write observing the rules taught about including a topic sentence, supporting sentences, and conclusion. Next, they had to revise it. Finally, they were taught how to edit their writing samples for spelling, punctuation, and grammatical mistakes. In the rest of the semester, one topic was chosen for each session and students were required to go through all these stages under the supervision of their teacher during the class time.

Up to this point everything was the same for both groups. However, from the 6th session, students in the treatment group were divided into groups of three and were required to go through the different stages of writing together. They were required to do the brainstorming together. Read each other's outlines and first drafts and give feedback to each other. After writing the revised version, each member of the group had to read his/her friends' revised version and help them edit their writings. The students in the control group, however, had to go through these stages individually. At the end of each session, students' writing in both groups were collected and commented on by the teacher. Learners' final exam was taken as their posttest. The writing samples were rated based on the TOEFL iBT task 2 writing scoring rubric (ETS, 2006).

In order to avoid the effects of handwriting on the raters, all the gathered samples were typed by the researcher. The researcher was cautious to type them as they were actually written by the participants, i.e., all misspellings, wrong punctuations, and other types of mistakes were typed exactly as they had appeared in the scripts.

The samples were then given to two experienced university faculty members to be rated. Before rating the samples, a meeting was arranged with both raters and the procedure and the type of scoring guide were explained to them. However, they were not clued in on the purpose of the study.

In case the scores given by the two raters differed by two band scores, a third rater was used and the average between the third rater and the one closer to his score was taken as the final score. In case of the rest of samples, the average between the two raters was taken into data analysis.

### III. DATA ANALYSIS

The null hypothesis was tested through two different procedures. In one method, learners' pretest and posttest were compared with each other, and then their post tests were compared through the use of independent samples *t* test. Also, each group's pretest and post test were compared with each other to see if the two groups had improved over time.

#### Rater Reliability

The inter-rater and intra-rater reliability indices were calculated through the use of Pearson product-moment correlation. An estimate of .93 was obtained in the case of inter-rater reliability. Also after having raters re-rate 25% of the randomly selected samples; the researcher calculated the correlation coefficient between the scores given by the raters in their first and second attempts. The obtained correlation coefficient for rater 1 was .96 and for rater 2 was .89.

When the raters are trained to judge based on a scale rubric, the consensus estimates including the percent exact agreement and adjacent agreement between raters could act as the best measures of agreement. The percent exact agreement obtained was 83% and the adjacent agreement index was 94%.

#### Examining the Null Hypotheses

The null hypothesis implies that team work makes no significant difference between the treatment group and the control group in case of their writing proficiency. To test this hypothesis, the two groups were first checked for their pretest scores to see if they were comparable at the onset of the study. The independent samples *t* test showed no significant difference between the two groups ( $t(62) = -.47, p = .64$ ). Both the treatment group and the control group significantly improved from the beginning to the end of the instruction as assessed through the use of two paired samples *t* tests (Treatment Group  $t(30) = -26.42, p = .000$ ; Control Group  $t(32) = -15.70, p = .000$ ). However, the two groups showed a significant difference in their posttest ( $t(62) = 2.64, p = .01$ ).

Our sample is almost normally distributed because the Skewness and Kurtosis statistics obtained do not deviate that much from zero.

Some scholars (e.g. Hatch & Lazaraton, 1991) believe that in such cases one needs to compare the two groups' gain scores (post test – pretest). This way any differences in the two groups at the onset of study are controlled for. Although the two groups did not differ significantly in the pretest as shown above, the data was analyzed using this approach. It was observed that the treatment group significantly outperformed the control group ( $t(62) = 4.56, p = .000$ ).

The effect size (eta squared) was calculated for this comparison. It turned out to be .25, which according to Cohen (1988) is very large.

### IV. DISCUSSION

The results obtained in chapter four showed that both groups significantly improved over time, which shows that the instruction has been successful for both groups. However, while being almost the same at the pretest, the two groups significantly differed from each other at the end of the instruction. The treatment group outperformed the control group by almost half a band score on TOEFL iBT task 2 writing scoring rubric. This improvement shows that team work can help learners improve their writing ability in English.

However, a more precise examination of the written samples collected from the students in both groups during the semester showed a much wider range of differences between the two groups. By the end of the semester, those in the treatment group appeared to have a better topic development, most probably due to the collaboration they had with their peers and team in brainstorming and outline writing. Having practiced doing so together, the learners seem to have learned how to do brainstorming and outline making even when they have to do them individually in an exam session. They were also observed writing longer paragraphs, which seems to be another consequence of brainstorming and outline preparation together with their peers.

While the writing samples written by the control group were mostly characterized with short sentences and excessive use of 'and' as a connector, the paragraphs written by learners in the treatment group were observed writing longer and complex sentences. Even when they used simple sentences, they could connect them together more logically with the use of a variety of connectors. There were even more cases of the use of subordination in the writing samples of the treatment group than those of the control group. This could be explained by the peer feedback and peer correction they had received during their team work.

In addition, the accuracy in the written samples of the treatment group was much more noticeable, which could be

due to the team work on the revising and editing of their written paragraphs.

#### V. PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

Today most of the scholars assert that collaborative writing has the potential to be far superior to individual writing because the weaknesses and inadequacies of individuals are caught by one another, while the strengths of the individuals are pooled. As such, the first implication this study may have applies to language teachers. The results showed that group work is more effective than working individually, at least in case of writing skill. Therefore, teachers teaching writing can use the findings of this study to improve their learners' writing ability. Teachers can ask students to write collaboratively in their classes. This way, students do not merely write down their ideas, but are engaged in discussions and receiving information from their group mates. Moreover, the students can get help and feedback as much as they can help others. As such, learners can view writing from a wider perspective, that is, that of a writer as well as a reader.

Syllabus designers can also benefit from the results of this study. Incorporating group work as part of the instruction can be very helpful to learners participating in any language program. Material developers are the third group who can use the obtained results. Incorporating those findings into the materials they develop can help learners learn much more with their classmates than they can alone.

#### VI. SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The written samples were rated using a holistic scoring rubric which gives a single score as an indicator of the learners' overall writing proficiency. It can be a good idea to do the same story using an analytic scoring rubric such as the one used by IELTS. This way, one can get a profile of scores which help have a better picture of learners' writing ability.

In the present study, students were divided into groups of three. The results might be different if the grouping pattern changes. Pair work might be either more or less helpful, but only further research can tell us which one is the case.

A separate study is also needed to check the effect of peer feedback and correction on different aspects of learners' writing ability. Grammatical accuracy, lexical diversity, and topic development are only some of the aspects needing more attention.

Finally, the same study can be replicated with other proficiency levels. The results may be different if collaborative writing is studied with advanced learners of English.

Note:

##### **Definition of the important terms**

**Cooperation/collaboration:** (in learning) working together with one or more peers to solve a problem, complete a learning task, share information or get feedback.'

**Process approach:** (in teaching composition) an approach which emphasizes the composing processes writers make use of in writing (such as planning, drafting and revising).

**Holistic Scoring:** A method of scoring students' composition in which one or more evaluators read the paper as a whole, assigning a single score based on the total impression of a composition as a whole text or discourse.

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# On Social Reality behind the Absurdity of Barthelme's *The Glass Mountain*

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**Abstract**—Donald Barthelme's *The Glass Mountain* is listed as one of the most representative postmodern fictions, but behind the absurdity lies social reality. This essay analyzes it in three different perspectives, i.e. structural, linguistic and narrative perspectives, finding that the fiction closely reflects the social facts, including the disorder of the capitalist system, people's spiritual conflicts and struggle for peace and order, and the abnormality and indifference between acquaintances, which simultaneously embodies the author's inner poignancy to the existing social reality of the age on the one hand, as well as his sincere wishes for the harmonious and natural social relationship on the other.

**Index Terms**—Barthelme, *The Glass Mountain*, absurdity, reality

## I. INTRODUCTION

During the Second World War, America made a large fortune by offering the warring countries financial aids and in the meantime, the whole country enjoyed a great development in its material wealth. After the war, the USA and the USSR, the two greatest powers representing the two opposites from the West and the East, entered the period of the Cold War, lasting a quarter-century. In addition, America launched Korean War and Vietnam War, which influenced American people's attitude toward the wars greatly. More such influential historical events as the atomic bombings, the murdering of Martin Luther King and the assassination of President Kennedy took place in America, which, to a great extent, played an important role in influencing American people's spiritual life and their views of cultural values.

In 1960's, there emerged a type of "New Fiction" that seriously challenged and attempted to subvert the very foundation of the accepted concept of literature, and a decade later, the phenomenon of postmodernism became a matter of heated academic discussion (Yu, 2010). *The Glass Mountain*, written by Donald Barthelme, is regarded as one of the most representative postmodern fictions. This fiction is categorized into the Theater of Absurdity, but literature is a mirror of the times; therefore, it inevitably more or less reflects the social reality of the age.

## II. THE ABSURDITY OF THE FICTION

*The Glass Mountain* was originally a traditional fairy tale included by Andrew Lang in his *The Yellow Fairy Book*. Barthelme's short story "The Glass Mountain" is a parody of the tale, with the direction of the story line and the setting being dramatically altered. The story goes: On a glass mountain grew a tree with golden apples. Anyone who picked a golden apple would be able to go into the golden castle where an enchanted princess lived. Many knights had tried and failed, because the castle was guarded by a fierce eagle. A brave lad killed a lynx and climbed with its claws attached to his feet and hands. When the eagle came to attack, he seized its feet and was carried up the rest of the way. He cut off its feet, landed on the apple tree, managed to go into the castle and rescued the princess. Finally, he married the princess and they lived happily ever after.

In Barthelme's short story of the same title, the glass mountain is in fact not a real mountain at all but a high office building located at the corner of Thirteenth Street and Eighth Avenue in America. Throughout the story, it is inserted with fragments of the fairy tale to make it look distracted, decentralized and disconnected not only in structure but also in logic and content. With the fairy tale as the background, no trace of anything heroic or romantic can be found, nor is a happy ending possible in this postmodern rewriting. By means of collage technique --- piecing together little fragments, and by numbering sentences, the author presented a picture of an absurd man doing absurd things in an absurd world.

## III. REALITY AND SOCIAL CRITICISM BEHIND THE ABSURDITY

Postmodern fiction is understood by Gerhard Hoffmann (2005) as a very serious, sometimes desperate, but also playful attempt to cope with the accumulated dubieties, insecurities, vagaries and skepticisms of our time. Fredric Jameson, a famous scholar, calls Postmodernism "the cultural logic of late capitalism." (cited from Yu, 2010, p.115) Both of them make it clear the close relationship between postmodern literature and the existing society or reality.

### A. Structural Perspective

Barthelme superficially narrates us readers a story about a modern man climbing comically a modern glass

skyscraper, thinking about absurd things time and time again in the course of climbing. We may easily find the word games played by the fictionist, seemingly nonsense and discontinued at all.

#### 1. The explicit ordering with numbers

Contrary to the traditional literary works, what impresses us readers at first glance is the numbering of the paragraphs, each of which is composed of only one sentence, with the shortest sentence consisting of only one single word and the longest one of 151 words including the source of literature in the brackets.

The arrangement of the hundred numbers gives an impression of a neat order and an ideal integration with the number of 100. Taking the discontinuity and illogic of the story into consideration, the numbering undoubtedly constructs an explicit conflict between the form and content, reflecting the controversy between the human expectation and the chaotic society and also the extreme irony to the social reality.

After World War II, science and technology developed quickly and economy boomed in America and as a result, American people were enjoying a wealthy material life. Entering the period of the Cold War, the USA made every effort to compete with the Soviet Union in nuclear weapons, spending an enormous amount of money on atomic race. At the same time America waged two invasive wars in Asia, forcing thousands of young American people to fight in the battlefields for a long time. Within the country, a series of social movements such as Civil Rights Movement, Women's Movement and Youth/Antiwar Movement emerged, demonstrating a great dissatisfaction with the present society and system. People began to feel skeptical about the state government and the existing moral criteria and subsequently started counter-culture movements, which unfolded the real picture of the 1960's in America, everything in a chaotic order. On the other hand, the numbering shows the artist's hope and dream of living a normal and orderly life.

#### 2. The ending

The last four paragraphs serve the ending of the story. Here, the symbol turns out to be a beautiful princess, a huge discrepancy between the expectation and the experience, disenchanting the narrator's ideal and pursuit as well. The narrator seeks to escape from his ugly, hostile surroundings to the realm of art but what he finds is just more conventions and more clichés, which indicates the social reality that individual power is far from enough in the world to make reform probable.

The unexpected result in sentence 98 helps us to know that Barthelme as an artist himself, conscious of the struggles and the boredom of an ordinary man, tries to reflect this mood 'in new revitalized literary forms, with new methods such as verbal fragmentation and free association to break down the familiar sense of order and to stay on the surface refusing to explain the deep meanings' (McCaffery, 1982, p.101). The narrator's extreme disappointment and his strong determination to destroy the conventional symbol are made clear in the ending part by throwing the beautiful princess headfirst down the mountain, which behavior reflects profoundly the artist's actual removal of conventions.

What's most significant is the last paragraph, an inverted-order sentence guided by "Nor", containing three negative elements to end up the whole fiction with a definite subversion of the human expectation. The way the story ends shows that 'Barthelme tells us about the predicament of the artist, envied, hated and alienated from his society for having dedicated himself to his art --- a task as precarious and unrewarding as climbing a glass mountain' (Araz, 1999, p.88) in the story. In the meantime, this ending exhibits the narrator's ultimate disillusion of the social reality and the conventional narration as well.

### B. Linguistic Perspective

Language is the essential part for readers to understand a piece of literary work. In "The Glass Mountain", Barthelme plays with the meanings of words, relying on poetic intuition to spark new connections of ideas buried in the expressions and conventional responses.

#### 1. Transition between the past and the present tense

The majority of the short story uses the past tense form, describing the past happenings---my climbing the glass mountain. Excluding the direct speeches and the citations in the double quotation marks, it's found that the present tense form appears in sentences 2, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 27, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 58, 59, 62, 67, 80 and 100, twenty sentences in total among the hundred.

Writers generally use either the past tense or the present tense to tell a story, supposed to keep one tense form in conformity throughout the writing. Reading carefully the sentences using the present tense, we find they are related to some hard facts, for example, sentence 2 "The glass mountain stands at the corner of Thirteenth Street and Eighth Avenue." states the location of a real modern glass skyscraper; or to some hot issues prevailing in the society, such as sentences 58 "Does one climb a glass mountain, at considerable personal discomfort, simply to disenchant a symbol?" and 59 "Do today's stronger egos still need symbols?" to start an implied discussion with the climber himself or with the masses; or to some routines like sentences 62 "The best way to fail to climb the mountain is to be a knight in full armor---one whose horse's hoofs strike fiery sparks from the sides of the mountain." and 80 "The conventional means of attaining the castle are as follows..." to draw our readers' attention to the traditions or conventions; or to the final but permanent disillusionment as the last sentence shows us "100. Nor are eagles plausible, not at all, not for a moment."

The usage of the present tense in the fiction frequently alternated with the past tense usage leads to the association with the transition between the imagined world and the real world, i.e. the absurdity of the inner mind. The greater proportion of the past tense implies the larger amount of imagination, or illusion. In contrast, the present tense connotes the reality. The story begins with the past tense and ends with the present tense, reflecting the struggle or

competition between imagination and reality, between expectation and un-expectation, between illusion and disillusion, and ultimately coming back to the real society to deny all the fictive world.

## 2. Lexical hints reflecting the real world

It's usually concluded that the postmodernist deals with the absurd or meaningless confusion of contemporary existence with a certain numbed or flippant indifference, favoring self-consciously depthless works of fabulation, pastiche, or aleatory disconnections. Following this thought, the postmodern fiction "The Glass Mountain" is fancied rather than realistic. However, such words and expressions as Thirteenth Street and Eighth Avenue (see sentence 2), the VWs and Valiants (see sentence 31), Anton Ehrenzweig (see sentence 56), M. Pompidou (see sentence 66), the Band aids (see sentences 82, 84, 85, 86), John Masefield (see sentence 87) and the like, are all true marks for the real tangible world, reminding people of the reality as the larger background as compared with the conventional fairy tale. It's undoubted that we can feel and even touch the reality behind the absurdity while taking this into consideration.

## 3. Utterance reflecting the screwy personal relationship

In the course of the narrator's climbing the building, his acquaintances give him encouragement like "Shithead." and "Asshole." Here is established an obvious conflict between expressions of encouragement and those of poignancy, or an irony reflecting the social fact that people show no much concern with each other, indifference instead, even between acquaintances in the capitalist society. The same contrast lies also in sentences 35 "Better than a kick in the crotch.", 36. "Better than a poke in the eye with a sharp stick.", 37. "Better than a slap in the belly with a wet fish." and 38. "Better than a thump on the back with a stone."

They care about nothing but money or the valuables, which can find solid evidences in sentences 65 "My acquaintances moved among the fallen knights, collecting rings, wallets, pocket watches, ladies' favors." and 78 "My acquaintances were debating the question, which of them would get my apartment?" Sentences 39 "Won't he make a splash when he falls, now?" and 40 "I hope to be here to see it. Dip my handkerchief in the blood." tell us the naked coldness between one and the other. They play it to the extreme at the very moment when their acquaintance is confronted with peril or even death.

We may come to a safe conclusion that the masses below whom the narrator calls "my acquaintances" are thoroughly savage and aggressive blood-suckers who greedily wait for the fall of the climber to rob him, to get his apartment, to see if he makes a splash when he falls and to dip their handkerchiefs in his blood as they did to the ones who have fallen before. Hence, the panorama of the contemporary mass society of that certain age and of the present capitalist system can be penetrated clearly here via Barthelme's focuses on the narrator or the artist who tries in vain to escape from the society and system.

## C. Narrative Perspective

A short story usually concentrates on a single incident and portrays a single character or a few characters. In nature, a story is indeed a narration, composed of such essential elements as the narrator, the plot, the setting, the theme and the character.

### 1. Usage of "I"

*The Glass Mountain* is characteristic of the first-person narration, beginning with "I was trying to climb the glass mountain." to tell us what was happening to the narrator. "I" inside the story presents himself as the narrator, the main character and also a participant, unfolding in front of us readers a more convincing picture of incidents as the story is told by "I" personally.

The perspective of using the first person gives us an impression of Barthelme's efforts to connect the story with the reality. But this, at the same time, forms a contrast between the story and the reality. Does anyone in the real life climb a glass mountain for a so-called symbol? As a matter of fact, the glass mountain is not a real mountain but a modern skyscraper in New York. Does anyone like "I" exist in the real society? Based on the two questions in mind, we can easily feel the symbolic, ironical and metaphorical senses of the fiction.

### 2. Collage

Barthelme's stories typically avoid traditional plot structures, relying instead on a steady accumulation of seemingly-unrelated detail, i.e. the discontinuity in narration. By subverting the reader's expectations through constant non sequiturs, Barthelme creates a hopelessly fragmented verbal collage. *The Glass Mountain* is no exception.

Throughout the story, the climbing incident is interwoven with the fragments of the fairy tale. It is the seemingly-unrelated detail that makes the story sound absurd. The collage form of writing here produces a grotesque mixture of scattered bits without a center or a logical line, symbolic of the mixed or messy cultural order because of anarchy. This writing technique reflects the disorder of human minds at that time and in that society when and where American people felt uncertain or even skeptical about capitalism, life, values, morality and the like.

### 3. The sequence arrangement of citations

There are used altogether five citations in the story, i.e. sentences 56, 66, 71, 80 and 87, among which three (56, 66, 87) are famous sayings by renowned people in the real material world while the other two (71, 80) are from a dictionary or a book. The former group (i.e. Sentences 56, 66 and 87) are inserted into the story totally abruptly and seemingly at random, deepening the story's fragmentation and furthering its absurdity. Anton Ehrenzweig is a philosopher and a professor in University of Houston, the same school which Donald Barthelme once studied in. To cite somebody real



and near helps draw the story nearer to the reality. The occurrence of the name reminds us readers of Barthelme's being drafted into the Korean War in 1953 when he was still a student in University of Houston.

M. Pompidou is the president in France from 1969 to 1974, that is to say, *The Glass Mountain* was written within Pompidou's presidency. By means of this association we are aware of the purposeful selection made by Barthelme. In this respect, we could not deny that reality does indeed lie behind the absurdity. Following the two citations, sentences 71 and 80 are presented related to conventions, turning to a dictionary or a book for reliable explanative support, which implies the right attitude towards literature creation.

The last citation is from John Masefield, the laureate poet in Britain. "In some centuries, his [man's] imagination has made life an intense practice of all the lovelier energies." indicates the significant and long-term role of imagination in human life. Considering the arrangement from a professor to a president and last to a poet, we may realize the meaningful transition of perspective in terms of themes from the existing secular life to politics and eventually to art. In other words, the story is originated from life, reflexive to certain social system but resorting to art in the end. The glass mountain is symbolic of the highly-developed industry and the narrator was trying to climb the mountain to disenchant a certain convention because of his dissatisfaction with the present social situation but at last the symbol on the top turned out to be still the cliché, no more free choice to make but only to rely on imagination, the artistic means to make the artist's voice heard.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

The glass mountain itself is significant in the story as a symbolic representation of achievement and the isolation of an individual from the masses of the working class in industrialized capitalist American society. Here Donald Barthelme rejects traditional chronology, plot, character, time, space, grammar, syntax, as well as the traditional distinctions between fact and fiction. Adequate analyses show that he doesn't intend to offer an orderly reflection of, or comment upon a stable, external world through the fiction, but to unfold in front of us the real picture of people's chaotic and absurd ideological world as well as that of the existing social contradictions. "The Glass Mountain," however, envisions a mountain removed from nature as a modern high office building, an edifice that embodies the degradation of an emerging American society in the 1960s that is in search of "the American Dream" through material or monetary gains, but in the end encounters disillusion at the sacrifice of failure.

#### APPENDIX THE GLASS MOUNTAIN BY DONALD BARTHELME

1. I was trying to climb the glass mountain.
2. The glass mountain stands at the corner of Thirteenth Street and Eighth Avenue.
3. I had attained the lower slope.
4. People were looking up at me.
5. I was new in the neighborhood.
6. Nevertheless I had acquaintances.
7. I had strapped climbing irons to my feet and each hand grasped sturdy plumber's friend.
8. I was 200 feet up.
9. The wind was bitter.
10. My acquaintances had gathered at the bottom of the mountain to offer encouragement.
11. "Shithead."
12. "Asshole."
13. Everyone in the city knows about the glass mountain.
14. People who live here tell stories about it.
15. It is pointed out to visitors.
16. Touching the side of the mountain, one feels coolness.
17. Peering into the mountain, one sees sparkling blue-white depths.
18. The mountain towers over that part of Eighth Avenue like some splendid, immense office building.
19. The top of the mountain vanishes into the clouds, or on cloudless days, into the sun.
20. I unstuck the righthand plumber's friend leaving the lefthand one in place.
21. Then I stretched out and reattached the righthand one a little higher up, after which I inched my legs into new positions.
22. The gain was minimal, not an arm's length.
23. My acquaintances continued to comment.
24. "Dumb motherfucker."
25. I was new in the neighborhood.
26. In the streets were many people with disturbed eyes.
27. Look for yourself.
28. In the streets were hundreds of young people shooting up in doorways, behind parked cars.
29. Older people walked dogs.

30. The sidewalks were full of dogshit in brilliant colors: ocher, umber, Mars yellow, sienna, viridian, ivory black, rose madder.

31. And someone had been apprehended cutting down trees, a row of elms broken-backed among the VWs and Valiants.

32. Done with a power saw, beyond a doubt.

33. I was new in the neighborhood yet I had accumulated acquaintances.

34. My acquaintances passed a brown bottle from hand to hand.

35. "Better than a kick in the crotch."

36. "Better than a poke in the eye with a sharp stick."

37. "Better than a slap in the belly with a wet fish."

38. "Better than a thump on the back with a stone."

39. "Won't he make a splash when he falls, now?"

40. "I hope to be here to see it. Dip my handkerchief in the blood."

41. "Fart-faced fool."

42. I unstuck the lefthand plumber's friend leaving the righthand one in place.

43. And reached out.

44. To climb the glass mountain, one first requires a good reason.

45. No one has ever climbed the mountain on behalf of science, or in search of celebrity, or because the mountain was a challenge.

46. Those are not good reasons.

47. But good reasons exist.

48. At the top of the mountain there is a castle of pure gold, and in a room in the castle tower sits...

49. My acquaintances were shouting at me.

50. "Ten bucks you bust your ass in the next four minutes!"

51. ...a beautiful enchanted symbol.

52. I unstuck the righthand plumber's friend leaving the lefthand one in place.

53. And reached out.

54. It was cold there at 206 feet and when I looked down I was not encouraged.

55. A heap of corpses both of horses and riders ringed the bottom of the mountain, many dying men groaning there.

56. "A weakening of the libidinous interest in reality has recently come to a close." (Anton Ehrenzweig)

57. A few questions thronged into my mind.

58. Does one climb a glass mountain, at considerable personal discomfort, simply to disenchant a symbol?

59. Do today's stronger egos still need symbols?

60. I decided that the answer to these questions was "yes."

61. Otherwise what was I doing there, 206 feet above the power-sawed elms, whose white meat I could see from my height?

62. The best way to fail to climb the mountain is to be a knight in full armor--one whose horse's hoofs strike fiery sparks from the sides of the mountain.

63. The following-named knights had failed to climb the mountain and were groaning in the heap: Sir Giles Guilford, Sir Henry Lovell, Sir Albert Denny, Sir Nicholas Vaux, Sir Patrick Grifford, Sir Gisbourne Gower, Sir Thomas Grey, Sir Peter Coleville, Sir John Blunt, Sir Richard Vernon, Sir Walter Willoughby, Sir Stephen Spear, Sir Clarence Vaughan, Sir Hubert Ratcliffe, Sir James Tyrrel, Sir Walter Herbert, Sir Robert Brakenbury, Sir Lionel Beaufort, and many others.

64. My acquaintances moved among the fallen knights.

65. My acquaintances moved among the fallen knights, collecting rings, wallets, pocket watches, ladies' favors.

66. "Calm reigns in the country, thanks to the confident wisdom of everyone." (M. Pompidou)

67. The golden castle is guarded by a lean-headed eagle with blazing rubies for eyes.

68. I unstuck the lefthand plumber's friend, wondering if--

69. My acquaintances were prising out the gold teeth of not-yet dead knights.

70. In the streets were people concealing their calm behind a façade of vague dread.

71. "The conventional symbol (such as the nightingale, often associated with melancholy), even though it is recognized only through agreement, is not a sign (like the traffic light) because, again, it presumably arouses deep feelings and is regarded as possessing properties beyond what the eye alone sees." (*A Dictionary of Literary Terms*)

72. A number of nightingales with traffic lights tied to their legs flew past me.

73. A knight in pale pink armor appeared above me.

74. He sank, his armor making tiny shrieking sounds against the glass.

75. He gave me a sideways glance as he passed me.

76. He uttered the word "*Muerte*"<sup>4</sup> as he passed me.

77. I unstuck the righthand plumber's friend.

78. My acquaintances were debating the question, which of them would get my apartment?

79. I reviewed the conventional means of attaining the castle.

80. The conventional means of attaining the castle are as follows: "The eagle dug its sharp claws into the tender flesh of the youth, but he bore the pain without a sound, and seized the bird's two feet with his hands. The creature in terror lifted him high up into the air and began to circle the castle. The youth held on bravely. He saw the glittering palace, which by the pale rays of the moon looked like a dim lamp; and he saw the windows and balconies of the castle tower. Drawing a small knife from his belt, he cut off both the eagle's feet. The bird rose up in the air with a yelp, and the youth dropped lightly onto a broad balcony. At the same moment a door opened, and he saw a courtyard filled with flowers and trees, and there, the beautiful enchanted princess." (The Yellow Fairy Book)

81. I was afraid.

82. I had forgotten the Band aids.

83. When the eagle dug its sharp claws into my tender flesh--

84. Should I go back for the Band aids?

85. But if I went back for the Band aids I would have to endure the contempt of my acquaintances.

86. I resolved to proceed without the Band aids.

87. "In some centuries, his [man's] imagination has made life an intense practice of all the lovelier energies." (John Masefield)

88. The eagle dug its sharp claws into my tender flesh.

89. But I bore the pain without a sound, and seized the bird's two feet with my hands.

90. The plumber's friends remained in place, standing at right angles to the side of the mountain.

91. The creature in terror lifted me high in the air and began to circle the castle.

92. I held on bravely.

93. I saw the glittering palace, which by the pale rays of the moon looked like a dim lamp; and I saw the windows and balconies of the castle tower.

94. Drawing a small knife from my belt, I cut off both the eagle's feet.

95. The bird rose up in the air with a yelp, and I dropped lightly onto a broad balcony.

96. At the same moment a door opened, and I saw a courtyard filled with flowers and trees, and there, the beautiful enchanted symbol.

97. I approached the symbol, with its layers of meaning, but when I touched it, it changed into only a beautiful princess.

98. I threw the beautiful princess headfirst down the mountain to my acquaintances.

99. Who could be relied upon to deal with her.

100. Nor are eagles plausible, not at all, not for a moment.

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# A Critical Evaluation of PNU ESP Textbooks

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**Abstract**—Having paramount importance in any ESP classroom, textbooks are known as one of the most visible parts of any ESP teaching program. Playing a crucial role, especially in societies where English is used as a foreign language, such textbooks should have some features on which the needs and objectives of an ESP teaching program are met. Concerning such an importance, making use of McDonough and Shaw's (2003) model, this research intends to critically evaluate the current status of the Iranian ESP textbooks developed and published by Payam Nour University (PNU), as the second ESP textbooks developer in Iranian academic setting. Obtaining such an end, it tries: (1) to present the importance of ESP materials development as well as evaluation; (2) to introduce the essential drawbacks which PNU textbooks suffer from; and (3) to present some practical suggestions and solutions to tackle the significant problems and drawbacks of such ESP textbooks.

**Index Terms**—materials development, ESP textbooks, PNU

## I. INTRODUCTION

English for specific purposes (ESP), as an approach to English language teaching (ELT) which aims to meet the needs of particular learners, is now well established as an important and distinctive part of ELT. As a trend in the broader framework of ELT, ESP is mostly known as a material-led movement (Dudley-Evans and St John, 1998) which aims at providing and developing textbooks to satisfy the learners' needs and interests as well as the program's objectives (see Iranmehr, et al, 2010a).

ESP textbooks as one of the most visible parts of any ESP teaching program, especially in societies where English is a foreign language and consequently ESP classroom may be almost the only source of English, play a crucial role in exposing learners to the language and certainly the Iranian society as an EFL context is not an exception to this rule.

Today, the increasing growth of ESP in Iranian academic setting has led to an increasing number of specialized textbooks used in Iranian universities.

Referring to the ESP textbooks developed in these years shows that in spite of great global breakthroughs in the realm of ESP textbooks development, as one of the most characteristic features of ESP in practice (McDonough and Shaw, 2003), the locally developed ESP textbooks suffer from some notable drawbacks which has been documented more or less in some recently published works as Farhady (2006), Hashemi (2005), Iranmehr et al (2010b), Soleimani (2006), etc.

Given that PNU, as the largest university with more than 500 branches nationwide, is known as the second ESP textbooks development in Iranian academic context, the necessity of evaluation of its ESP textbooks seems undeniable. Due to this importance, this study aims at highlighting the needs for evaluating PNU's ESP textbooks through a scientific evaluation approach.

## II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In Dudley-Evans and St John's (1998) words, materials evaluation is a key stage in ESP. According to Hutchinson and Waters (1987, p. 96) "evaluation is a matter of judging the fitness of something for a particular purpose". While as Tomlinson (2003) asserts that most of the literature on materials development has so far focused on materials evaluation and useful advice on conducting evaluations can be found in many works, referring to ESP position in Iranian academic setting reveals that ESP materials evaluation seems to be a missing link in this arena.

Since ESP textbooks serve as the basis for much of the language input learners receive and the language practice that takes place in the classroom, ESP textbooks development as well as their evaluation, especially in our society in which English is taught as a foreign language, should gain much attention. In other words, as Lotfi (2005) asserts, one of the aspects of successful language teaching is providing students with appropriate textbooks and they should be designed in a way that cause a match between what is taught and what is learned. Since, as Baleghizadeh and Rahimi (2011) note, one of the methods which can help us in achieving the goals in any ELT program is the evaluation process, Sheldon

(1988) introduces evaluation as a tool in recognizing the weaknesses and strengths of textbooks and Ellis (1997) argues that evaluation can be a form of professional empowerment and improvement.

Although, as noted, during the recent years some critical studies and evaluations have been conducted and published about SAMT ESP textbooks, lack of such evaluations about PNU ESP textbooks, as one of the most important sources of ESP profession in Iranian academic setting, is completely obvious.

Due to the strong role of ESP textbooks on the one hand, as well as the need to rethink and redesign the current ESP textbooks (see Farhady (2006), Iranmehr, et al (2010a) and Soleimani (2006)) on the other hand, ESP textbooks assessment on the basis of developing some criteria for such an evaluation can be a first but essential step in enhancing the position of ESP in Iranian academic setting in general and PNU in particular.

Undoubtedly, despite the increasing growth of ESP textbooks developed by PNU system, at the first glance, it seems that the qualitative features as well as their systematic evaluation have not gained enough attention.

Thus, the purpose of this research is to reflect on present directions of ESP textbooks developments in PNU. To do so, firstly, a brief historical account of ESP in Iranian academic setting in general and PNU in particular is provided. Second, the theoretical principles of ESP textbooks development and evaluation are introduced. Third, based on the new trends and approaches in textbooks evaluation, the current PNU ESP textbooks are critically evaluated. Finally, some suggestions for modifications of these books are proposed.

### III. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Materials selection, adaptation, or development is an important area in ESP, providing learners with materials that will equip them with the knowledge they will need in their future business life.

In Bernard and Zemach's (2003) terms, selecting appropriate language, responding to the needs and wishes of the students and paying attention to effective learning strategies are all the elements which are vitally important when preparing ESP materials. According to Dudley-Evans and St John (1998), selecting ESP materials involves making choices and decisions and to make good choices, people need to have good criteria on which to base people's decisions. ESP textbooks serve as the basis for much of the language input learners receive and the language practice that takes place in the classroom; ESP textbooks development as well as their evaluation, especially in societies in which English is taught as a foreign language, should gain much attention. In other words, as Lotfi (2005) asserts, one of the aspects of successful language teaching is providing students with appropriate textbooks and they should be designed in a way that cause a match between what is taught and what is learned. Chosen from authentic texts and materials (Day, 2003), variety in texts in terms, topics and themes, enjoying, stimulating and motivating texts and activities (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998), having appropriate and meaningful activities and tasks (Bernard & Zemach, 2003), and having an appropriate physical appearance and organization (Riazi, 2005) are only some important ESP textbook features which should be considered and applied in every ESP textbook development.

As Ellis and Johnson (1994, p.115) emphasize, the choice of materials has a major impact on what happens in the course. This impact is demonstrated on the following three levels:

- It "determines what kind of language the learners will be exposed to and, as a consequence, the substance of what they will learn in terms of vocabulary, structures, and functions";
- It "has implications for the methods and techniques by which the learners will learn";
- Last but not least, "the subject of or content of the materials is an essential component of the package from the point of view of relevance and motivation".

### IV. MATERIALS EVALUATION

Materials evaluation is an important part of materials selection as well as the materials development process. In both cases, evaluation is primarily "concerned with relative merit. Brown (1989, p. 231) defines evaluation as "the systematic collection and analysis of all relevant information necessary to promote the improvement of a curriculum, and assess its effectiveness and efficiency, as well as the participants' attitudes within the context".

#### A. Tomlinson Model

In Tomlinson's (2003) words, materials evaluation is a procedure that involves measuring the value of a set of learning materials. In his words, there are many types of materials evaluation. He classifies the most important types of materials evaluation as follows:

##### a) *Pre-use Evaluation*

Pre-use evaluation involves making predictions about the potential value of materials for their users. It can be context-free. Often pre-use evaluation is impressionistic and consists of a teacher flicking through a book to gain a quick impression of its potential value.

##### b) *Whilst-use Evaluation*

This involves measuring the value of materials whilst using them or whilst observing them being used. It can be more objective and reliable than pre-use evaluations; it makes use of measurement rather than prediction. In his words, exactly what can be measured in a whilst-use evaluation is controversial, but it can be included the following:

- Clarity of instructions
- Clarity of layout
- Comprehensibility of texts
- Credibility of tasks
- Achievability of tasks
- Achievement of performance objectives
- Practicality of the materials
- Teachability of the materials
- Flexibility of the materials
- Appeal of the materials
- Motivating power of the materials
- Impact of the materials

### **c) Post-use Evaluation**

Post-use evaluation as a valuable, but least administered type of evaluation tries to measure the actual effects of the materials on the users. It can measure the short-term effect as regards motivation, impact, achievability, instant learning, etc. and also it can measure the long term effect as regards durable learning and application. It can answer such questions as:

- What do the learners know which they did not know before starting to use the materials?
- What do the learners still not know despite using the materials?
- What can the learners do which they could not do before starting to use the materials?
- What can the learners still not do despite using the materials?
- To what extent have the materials prepared the learners for their examinations?
- To what extent have the materials prepared the learners for their post-course use of the target language?
- What effect have the materials had on the confidence of the learners?
- What effect have the materials had on the motivation of the learners?
- To what extent have the materials helped the learners to become independent learners?
- Did the teachers find the materials easy to use?
- Did the materials help the teachers to cover the syllabus?
- Did the administrators find the materials helped them to standardize the teaching in their situation?

In other words, it can measure the actual outcomes of the use of the materials and thus the data on which reliable decisions about the use, adaptation or replacement of the materials can be made.

### **B. Rea-dickens and Germaine Model**

Rea-Dickens and Germaine (1992) believe that teaching materials should be defined in the following manner before they are evaluated:

1. What can materials mean to teachers?
  - a) Does the teacher confine herself/himself solely to the textbook or does the teacher refer to other sources like a teacher's guide, video, listening tapes, etc.?
  - b) Does the teacher distinguish between traditional materials meant for teaching/ learning purposes and authentic materials?
  - c) Does the teacher use materials created by teachers and learners?
2. The relation between materials and the social context:
  - a) What roles are the materials likely to play?
  - b) What goals and objectives are the materials likely to accomplish?
3. How are the materials to be used?
  - a) Are the materials the only resource for teaching?
  - b) Are they one of several other resources?

### **C. Candlin & Breen Model**

Candlin and Breen (1979) divide materials evaluation into two stages or phases. The first phase focuses on the usefulness of materials. The second phase focuses on selection and use of materials in ways that are sensitive to the language classroom.

#### **- Phase one**

The three major concerns to evaluate the usefulness of materials are listed below:

1. What learners need to know should be matched with what learners will be able to do with the materials.
2. How language is best learnt should be matched with the kinds of learning actually offered by the materials.

The above questions open up the weak points of the materials with regard to teachers' freedom to adapt the materials. Moreover, this analysis can reveal whether the materials force the teacher to take inappropriate roles and isolate classroom activities in the materials.

#### **3. The conditions to determine the usefulness of materials before evaluation are based on:**

- a) The contribution of the teacher to classroom work

- b) The resources provided by the learners
- c) The contributions of the classroom.

- Phase two

Breen and Candlin (1987) propose the following questions to evaluate the usefulness of materials that are sensitive to language learning:

1. How the materials synchronize with the learners' perception of language needs?
2. Can learners perceive for themselves whether the materials can meet their language needs?
3. Do the materials relate to learners' values, attitudes and feelings?
4. Do the materials capture learners' attention?
5. Are the materials divided in a principled manner?
6. Are they continuous?
7. Can the learners impose their own sequencing and division on the materials according to their needs?
8. Are the materials flexible enough to accommodate teachers' and learners' preferences?

#### D. *Robinson Model*

Robinson (1991, cited in Baleghizadeh and Rahimi, 2011) distinguishes between three types of materials evaluation: a) preliminary (before an ESP course begins), b) summative (takes place at the end of the course), and c) formative (conducted while the course is ongoing). She states that evaluation can be carried out by both outsiders and insiders. A further distinction made by Robinson is between process and product evaluation. The former addresses teaching and learning processes, strategies, administrative and decision-making processes, while the latter is concerned with the students' product such as examination results, essays, etc. By insiders she means teachers, students, and course designers. Robinson lists a number of tools used to carry out evaluation: questionnaires, checklists, rating scales, interviews, observation, and records.

#### E. *McDonough & Shaw Model*

McDonough & Shaw (2003) examine the criteria of evaluation in two stages: an external evaluation that offers a brief "overview" of the materials from the outside (cover, introduction, table of contents), which is often followed by a closer and more detailed internal evaluation.

##### a) *External evaluation*

In a more precise word, they introduce the external evaluation in this way:

By external evaluation, the evaluator attempts to examine the organization of the materials as they stated explicitly by the author/publisher by looking at:

the blurb, or the claims made on the cover of the book the introduction and table of contents that should enable the evaluator to assess "what the books say about themselves". It is also useful to scan the table of content page I that it often represents a "bridge" between the external claim made for the materials and what will actually be presented "inside" the materials themselves. At this stage we need to consider why the materials have been produced.

According to McDonough & Shaw (2003, p. 63) the claims made for the materials by the author/publisher can be quite strong and will need critical evaluation in order to see if their claims can be justified. From the "blurb" and the "introduction" we can normally expect comments on some/all of the following:

The intended audience: We need to ascertain who the materials are targeted at, be it teenagers aged 13 and upwards or adults, for example. The topics that will motivate one audience will probably not be suitable for another.

The proficiency level: Most materials claim to aim at a particular level, such as false beginner or lower intermediate. This will obviously require investigation as it could very widely depending on the educational context.

The context in which the materials are to be used: We need to establish whether the materials are for teaching general learners or perhaps for teaching English for Specific Purposes (ESP). If the latter, what degree of specialist subject knowledge is assumed in the materials?

How the language be presented or organized into teachable units /lessons: The materials will contain a number of units / lessons and their respective lengths need to be borne in mind when deciding how and if they will fit into a given educational program.

The author's view on language and methodology and the relationship between the language, the learning process and the learner.

Are the materials to be used as the main "core" course or to be supplementary to it?

Is a vocabulary list/ index included?

What visual material does the book contain (photographs, charts, diagrams) and is it there for cosmetic value only or is it integrated into the text?

Is the layout and presentation clear or cluttered?

Is the material too culturally biased or specific?

Is it essential to possess the extra material (audio/visual) in order to use the textbook successfully?

The inclusion of tests in the teaching materials (diagnostic, progress, achievement); Would they be useful for the particular learners?

In this model, after completing this external evaluation or the “macro-evaluation”, we can continue with our internal or more detailed evaluation known as “micro-evaluation”.

#### **b) Internal evaluation**

In this stage of evaluation procedure, the essential issue is to analyze the extent to which the aforementioned factors in the external evaluation stage match up with the internal consistency and organization of the materials as stated by the author/publisher. In this stage, to perform an effective inspection of the materials, we need to examine at least two units (preferably more) of a book or set of materials to investigate the following factors:

The presentation of the skills in the materials.

The grading and sequencing of the material. This criterion is an important one and merits some investigation as it is not always patently clear what the principle is. Some materials are quite “steeply” graded while others claim to have no grading at all.

The relationship between tests and exercises to (a) learner needs, and (b) what is taught by the course material.

Do you feel that the material is suitable for different learning styles? Is a claim and provision made for self-study and is such a claim justified?

Are the materials sufficiently “transparent” to motivate both students and teachers alike, or would you foresee a student/teacher mismatch?

To sum up, as McDonough and Shaw (2003) write, in the internal evaluation stage we have suggested that as evaluators we need to examine the following criteria: the treatment and presentation of the skills, the sequencing and grading of the materials, the type of skills contained in the materials, appropriacy of tests and exercises, self-study provision and teacher-learner “balance” in the use of the materials.

### V. PURPOSES OF MATERIALS EVALUATION

According to Tomlinson (1999), the objectives, the types and the instruments for the evaluation determine the reasons for evaluating materials. For instance, if the evaluation aims to improve materials then the evaluator will investigate learners’ problems through classroom observation sessions. Therefore, the instruments for evaluation depend on the objectives of the evaluation. Tomlinson (1999) lists the following reasons for evaluating materials:

1. To select a textbook for a course
2. To select materials to supplement a coursebook
3. To select materials from different sources in an eclectic manner.
4. As a basis for adaptation of materials in order to make them more suitable for a particular course.
5. As a basis for improving materials (trailing or piloting materials).
6. In order to edit materials produced by others.
7. In order to review proposed materials for a publisher.
8. In order to review published materials for a journal
9. In order to help teachers or trainee teachers develop their understanding of methodology and/or materials writing.
10. In order to recommend a coursebook for an institution or a ministry of education.
11. As part of a research experiment.

The classification of criteria is not uniform among evaluators, but still consistent within an evaluation. The classification of criteria helps the evaluator to group generalizations of a similar nature, and move on to specific issues within that category. This study has the following types of criteria:

a) Physical aspects: In this section, importance is given to the presentational aspects of the coursebook like layout, design, print quality etc.

b) Functional aspects: Here the focus is on learning objectives, whether importance is given to all the four skills, are the activities analytical or experiential.

Sheldon (1988, cited in Baleghizadeh and Rahimi, 2011) has suggested several reasons for textbook evaluation. He states that the selection of a textbook is indicator of an educational decision in which there is considerable professional, financial, and even political investment. Through evaluation, teachers will become familiar with the content of available textbooks and recognize the weaknesses and strengths of each.

One more reason for evaluation is suggested by Cunningsworth (1995) and Ellis (1997). They argue that evaluation can be considered as a means of conducting action research as well as a form of professional empowerment and improvement. It can also be a component of teacher training courses in which prospective teachers become aware of important features which they should search in textbooks.

### VI. THE PRESENT STUDY

The model applied in this research was mostly McDonough & Shaw’s (2003). According to Baleghizadeh and Rahimi (2011), this model mostly involves two stages. First, external evaluation that examines the organization of materials stated by the author or the publisher including claims made on the cover page and information in introduction and table of contents. This kind of evaluation gives information about the intended audience, the proficiency level, the context of use, presentation and organization of materials, and authors’ opinion about language and methodology, use of



audio-visual materials, vocabulary list and index, cultural aspects, tests and exercises included in the book. Second, internal evaluation in which the following factors are examined: a) the presentation of the skills, b) the grading and sequence of the materials, c) authenticity or artificiality of the listening materials, d) authenticity or artificiality of the speaking materials, e) appropriateness of tests and materials, and f) appropriateness of the materials for different learning styles and claims made by the authors for self-study.

## VII. MATERIALS

Upon the researchers' teaching experiences as well as the positions of some ESP textbooks, the PNU ESP textbooks to be evaluated are:

- Persian Literature (1)
- Psychology (1)
- Mathematics
- Social Sciences (2)

## VIII. PROCEDURE

After selecting 4 ESP books, they were evaluated one by one. Following the selected model, first of all, each one was externally evaluated, then internally. The four books selected to be evaluated here one by one:

### 1) Title: **ESP (1) for the Students of Persian Literature**

*Author: Nilipour, Reza*

*Date of publishing: 1992*

*Imprint number: 15*

This book was chosen because it is known as the first ESP textbook developed and published in PNU. During the 18-year use, it has been reprinted many times and is known as one of the most usable books in PNU. Here this book is evaluated in the framework of the selected model:

#### - External Evaluation:

Looking at the claims made in the preface of the book reveals that the author aims at familiarizing the students with first-hand texts and researches written by foreign writers. In his claim, the students will be able to study and analyze the literary texts.

In his words, this book is divided to two parts. The first part includes ten passages which try to introduce some essential concepts, terminology and issues of language and literature.

In the following, the external factors are checked:

<i>Intended audience</i>	Students of Persian Language & Literature
<i>Context</i>	PNU
<i>Presenting &amp; Organizing</i>	10Units / Two parts
<i>Core &amp; Supplementary</i>	Core
<i>Vocabulary list/index</i>	Included but incomplete
<i>Visual materials</i>	Nothing
<i>Layout</i>	Cluttered
<i>Audio/video Materials</i>	Nothing
<i>Tests</i>	Nothing

#### - Internal Evaluation:

##### a) The presentation of skill(s):

While ESP in Iran in general and in PNU in particular is mostly based on reading skill, reviewing this book reveals that such a skill is not supported. Although the author claims that this book is to teach the students reading skill to enable them to use English to study their specific subject area, lack of any specific and efficient reading strategy is evident.

##### b) The grading & sequencing:

Reviewing the units shows that no specific and clear grading is seen. While the last unit is more difficult than the previous ones, there is no difference between the first nine ones. Thus, we can claim that there is no grading at all.

##### c) The type of material:

Studying the source of the passages reveals that the first nine ones have been selected from an old book entitled *The Educated Imagination* (1964). The book is a series of speeches of Northrope Frey, a Canadian writer. Although, Nilipour claims that the text introduces some basic concepts of literature, reviewing these cluttered passages shows that they are not related to language and literature especially Persian literature. Using some similar passages in the third part of "Translation of Simple Texts" a two-credit course for the PNU students majoring English translation by the same author and introducing them as simple not specialized ones is the best reason to reject the author's claim.

##### d) Tests and exercises:

Reviewing the exercises shows that they are outdated and inflexible.

Lack of many effective skills and strategies like scanning, skimming, guessing meaning from context, predicting, reading for main ideas, prior or background knowledge, etc. are clearly obvious.

**e) Transparent enough to motivate both students & teachers:**

In this case, Cunningsworth (1995) maintains that such a book must take account of the students' needs and facilitate their learning processes. According to McDonough and Shaw (2003) such a book should be attractive for both teacher and learner. Reviewing this book as well as referring to the researchers' experiences indicates that this book cannot meet the learners' needs. Moreover, as noted its appearance and the exercises are not motivating and attractive at all.

2) **Title: ESP (1) for the Students of Psychology**

*Author:* Davood Kordestani & Hossein Zare

*Date of publishing:* 2010

*Imprint number:* 1

This book was chosen because it is known as one of the latest ESP textbooks developed and published in PNU. It is used by many students majoring psychology and educational sciences. Here this book is evaluated in the framework of the selected model:

**- External Evaluation:**

In the following, the external factors are checked:

<i>Intended audience</i>	Students of Psychology and Educational Sciences
<i>Context</i>	PNU
<i>Presenting &amp; Organizing</i>	15 units
<i>Core &amp; Supplementary</i>	Core
<i>Vocabulary list/index</i>	Included but incomplete
<i>Visual materials</i>	Nothing
<i>Layout</i>	Cluttered
<i>Audio/Video Materials</i>	Nothing
<i>Tests</i>	Nothing

**- Internal Evaluation:**

**a) The presentation of skill(s):**

Although the authors claim that this book is to teach the students reading skill to enable them to use English to study their specific subject area, lack of any specific and efficient reading strategy is evident. In fact, there is no specific strategy for reading. In each passage, they claim that the students can develop skimming and scanning but we cannot see any appropriate exercise to cover this claim. Certainly providing some multiple-choice questions cannot meet this expectation. Moreover, reading strategies are not limited to these strategies at all.

**b) The grading & sequencing:**

Reviewing the units shows that no specific and clear grading is seen. For example, the unit 8 is too long, consisting more than 50 new words, but for example unit 11 is shorter and easier than unit 3 or four.

**c) Tests and exercises:**

Reviewing the exercises shows that they are some fixed and inflexible ones. Lack of many effective skills and strategies like scanning, skimming, guessing meaning from context, predicting, reading for main ideas, prior or background knowledge, etc. are clearly obvious.

**d) Transparent enough to motivate both students & teachers:**

3) **Title: Mathematical Passages in English**

*Author:* Mohammad Hassan Bizhanzadeh

*Date of publishing:* 1992

*Imprint number:* 2 (with edition)

Here we evaluate a Basic sciences textbook which its format is different from most of the PNU ESP textbooks. Moreover it is one of the rare books in PNU which has been revised. It is used by all students majoring mathematics. Here this book is evaluated in the framework of the selected model:

**- External Evaluation:**

In the following, the external factors are checked:

<i>Intended audience</i>	Students of Mathematics
<i>Context</i>	PNU
<i>Presenting &amp; Organizing</i>	18 units
<i>Core &amp; Supplementary</i>	Core
<i>Vocabulary list/index</i>	Included
<i>Visual materials</i>	A few
<i>Layout</i>	Partially clear
<i>Audio/Video Materials</i>	Nothing
<i>Tests</i>	Nothing

**- Internal Evaluation:**

**a) The presentation of skill(s):**

Reviewing the current textbook reveals no specific skill has been supported. Its strong emphasis on word formation and etymology as well as translation has turned this book into a bilingual ESP textbook. While reading ESP books involves mastering reading strategies especially in such a context, this skill is not supported.

While ESP aim is familiarizing students with English learning strategies and skills to make them proficient while facing specialized texts, reading the preface of every unit except the first and tenth units show that the author attempts to teach students mathematics not English.

**b) The grading & sequencing:**

As noted, since this book is a source of teaching mathematics not English, any decision on its grading is difficult.

**c) The type of material:**

Misunderstanding of its author has turned this book into a one which its aim is the teaching of scientific subject matter in English. Unfortunately, as Farhady (2006) maintains, the idea of specific purpose has been mistaken for the subject matter area. Thus, it is strongly claimed that it is not an ESP textbook.

**d) Tests and exercises:**

Leafing through the book shows that only two types of exercise (multiple-choice & fill-in-the-blank) are integrated. Since there is no specific skill and strategy in this book, lack of any purposeful exercise is natural. In sum, its low quality in this section is really evident.

**e) Transparent enough to motivate both students & teachers:**

It is believed that it is not an ESP textbook and naturally dealing with this criterion is not reasonable.

1) **Title: English in Social Sciences (2)**

*Author:* Gholamreza Arjmandi, Abdulali Rahimi & Hassan Khalili

*Date of publishing:* 1387

*Imprint number:* 2

**- External Evaluation:**

In the following, the external factors are checked:

<i>Intended audience</i>	Students of Social Sciences
<i>Context</i>	PNU
<i>Presenting &amp; Organizing</i>	10 units
<i>Core &amp; Supplementary</i>	Core
<i>Vocabulary list/index</i>	Included but incomplete
<i>Visual materials</i>	Nothing
<i>Layout</i>	Partially clear
<i>Audio/Video Materials</i>	Nothing
<i>Tests</i>	Nothing

**- Internal Evaluation:**

**a) The presentation of skill(s):**

According to its authors' preface, this book like most of other ESP textbooks aims at developing reading and comprehension skills. While it is claimed that it is a book for developing reading comprehension, reviewing the book shows that it is a book of developing vocabulary rather than reading comprehension. The absence of any reading strategy including scanning, skimming, guessing meaning from context, predicting, reading for main ideas, prior or background knowledge, etc.

Is the best evidence for this claim. In addition, its emphasis on different vocabulary exercises enhances this assumption that there is no clear understanding of reading comprehension skill among the authors.

**b) The grading & sequencing:**

Regarding the size and the amount of new words, the units are more or less similar.

**c) Tests and exercises:**

As noted, in this book vocabulary learning is supported. Therefore, different kinds of vocabulary exercises are provided. The great deal of word formation practice seems disturbing.

**d) Transparent enough to motivate both students & teachers:**

Its low face validity, its clichéd and inflexible pattern of vocabulary exercises, inattention to reading skill and strategies and the great size of Vocabulary Help part might turn this book into a boring one. One of the researchers' experiences in teaching this book verifies this claim.

## IX. CONCLUSIONS

In this paper, four ESP textbooks were chosen as a sample for ESP textbooks evaluation. Since most of the ESP textbooks developed in PNU especially the ones in humanities more or less are similar, it is believed that evaluating these ones can provide a clear picture of the general atmosphere of common ESP textbooks developed and taught in PNU.

Reviewing the findings of this research shows that the main shortcomings and drawbacks of the current ONU's ESP textbooks can be classified as following:

### A. *Low Face Validity*

Visual features and aids of ELT textbooks and especially ESP ones are among the most important characteristics of such materials. Their importance has been discussed in many works. According to Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998), key graphic representations such as lists, columns, tables, matrices, tree diagrams, flow charts and mind maps can be very helpful in extracting and reorganizing the information in ESP textbooks. In Riazi's (2005) words, for a textbook to be of high quality, both the software, i.e. the content and organization, and hardware, i.e. the physical appearance, should be in order. In his terms, visual information including graphics, photos, charts, diagrams, etc. as well as clear layout and appropriate type face are necessary features of ESP textbooks. Krug (2002) also introduces illustrations as well as the physical appearance as important features of any ESP textbook.

Reviewing the current ESP textbooks developed in PNU shows that lack of any visual features including pictures and photos are evident. In addition, their design (layout, cover, color, binding) are far inferior to their counterpart commercially produced ones.

### B. *Lack of Materials Reviewing and Updating*

Krug (2002) introduces being up-to-date as an important feature in any ESP textbook development. According to Riazi (2005), being up to date is one of the most significant features of ESP textbooks and achieving this feature involves the continuous revision of texts, exercises, as well as skills and strategies. Leafing through the books showed that the date of edition was a missing link!

### C. *Ineffective and Traditional Exercises and Drills*

Reviewing the textbooks indicates that the majority of exercises and drills are text-based and structural. Rarely do these exercises involve students in developing language skills. Rarely do these exercises involve students in developing language skills or communicating ideas. The uniformity of one single pattern of organization in these books means imposing a strict and inflexible structure on learners to follow, no matter what the nature of the subject matter and discipline is and who the learners are.

Reviewing the textbooks shows that most of them follow the same cliché pattern involving word list, reading passages, comprehension questions and vocabulary practice.

Using such an inflexible strict pattern, tracing to the first PNU's ESP textbooks, is the most common pattern in the current ESP books. In other words, the diversity of exercises, activities, and tasks is one of the visible missing links in such textbooks. It means that these books are restricted to a linguistic object. In this regard, John and Davies (1983) write: "one of the most contributions to the approach to reading I ESP was the shift from Text as a Linguistic Object (TALO) to Text as a Vehicle of Information (TAVI).

In fact, the absence of skills and strategies like scanning, skimming, guessing meaning from context, predicting, inferring, reading for main ideas, prior or background knowledge, etc. are clearly obvious.

While Hutchinson and Waters (1987) insist that the materials should avoid the assembly line approach which makes each unit look the same, with the same type of text, the same kind of illusion, the same type and number of exercises, such an "assembly line approach" compromises the current framework of Iranian ESP textbooks.

In sum, as Farhady (2006) writes, one cannot prescribe a particular method of teaching for a particular ESP class. The kind of materials, the objectives of the courses and the nature of the students are the factors that must be accounted in any ESP textbooks development.

### D. *Misconception of ESP*

Reviewing the current ESP textbooks reveals that in most of them the authors do not have a true understanding of ESP textbook. As Farhady (2006, p. 27) writes:

The purpose of ESP is not to teach any scientific subject matter in English. We are language teachers, and ESP is teaching English. The idea of specific purpose should not be mistaken for subject matter areas. We are not supposed to teach physics, chemistry, or any science for that matter, in ESP classes. Our main objective is to serve the purpose for which the course is designed. If the objective is to improve reading ability of the students, we should teach them how to read, and how to read in their fields of specialty independently of scientific concepts. In fact we teach them how to read definitions, no matter what scientific concept is defined. We teach them how to read a particular genre, such as the introduction part of an article, no matter what the content is. This does not mean that the content is not important. Rather, the content receives the importance when it serves as a motivating factor.

Following such principles, the materials in the present books do not meet the needs of learners. In fact, we can conclude that a kind of misconception of the nature of ESP is dominant in PNU books.

To sum up, we can state that there is a mismatch between theory and practice. While as Soleimani (2006) writes that the materials developed for the reading-centered approach to ESP ought to be consistent with both reading theories, strategies and skills essential to the reading process, taking a look at the textbooks reveals that there is no consistency between theory and practice. According to their authors, reading is a text-based approach and success in reading depends upon the knowledge of the structures and vocabulary. Supposing that success in reading means learning a long list of words as much as possible, they have developed such inefficient ESP textbooks.

## X. SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Here, some practical suggestions in the light of our findings are presented as follows:

1- A thorough and comprehensive needs analysis in order to come up with the objectives of ESP instruction in all majors is necessary. In fact, paying real attention to the learners' needs and interests must be the first step in preparing the ESP textbooks.

2- Revising and updating the books are essential. Providing texts and tasks with newer concepts and information is necessary. Such a revision must enhance and increase the learners' interests and motivations on the topic. When the materials are revised, methodology would follow.

3- New current approaches should be used in developing and preparing any new ESP textbooks. The current inadequate approaches as the basic ones in these textbooks do not have the capacity to meet our goals. In fact, a remodeling of the texts, exercises and activities is essential.

4- The visual appearance and layout of such books as well as their physical shape and appearance ought to be revisited. One such revision might be the use of important visual features including pictures, charts, tables, graphs, etc. which not only can be eye-catching and motivating, but can be informative as well.

5- In dealing with vocabulary, new vocabulary should be presented in meaningful and appropriate contexts. It should be recycled in subsequent lessons for reinforcement. But most of the new words in such textbooks are introduced out of context.

6- The authors of such books must be experts in ESP materials development. Again, it is insisted that the idea of specific purpose should not be mistaken for subject matter areas.

7- Last but not least, paying attention to the ESP teachers and instructors' experiences, observations and expectations is a must. In developing the new textbooks, their attitudes should be considered, too.

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# The Role of L1 in L2 Idiom Comprehension

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**Abstract**—The present study investigated the role of first language (L1) transfer in Iranian EFL learners' second language (L2) idiom comprehension. It was also sought to understand whether there is any significant difference between learners of different proficiency levels and their use of L1 in decoding L2 idioms. To do this, the participants of different levels of language proficiency were asked to participate in this study. The L2 idioms were categorized based on their similarity to L1 into three groups of identical, similar and different. A think-aloud protocol analysis was performed and participants were asked to verbalize their thoughts as they read the target idioms in order to detect the strategies they used. The results showed that the most favoured strategy used by learners of different levels was translation. Translation to L1 (Persian) was also the most-frequent strategy in decoding similar, identical and different types of idioms. It was also revealed that generally the participants of different levels were significantly different from each other in using strategies.

**Index Terms**—foreign language learning, learning English, learning strategies, idiom learning, translation

## I. INTRODUCTION

Learning another language fully needs a lot of perseverance and also systematic practice. Children first language has been compared to learning a foreign language (for example, Fine 1988). These children must acquire new vocabulary, pronunciation, pragmatics, grammar, cohesion, coherence, etc. Idiom learning is an area bound to challenge many of the L2 learners. Cooper (1999) states another point of view as expressions whose meanings are not understood from the literal meanings of their constituent elements. Gibbs (1986) classifies idioms into transparent and obscure according to compositionality; transparent idiom is a kind of idiom whose idiomatic meaning can be predicted by the lexical items. There is a close relationship between the literal meaning and figurative meaning in transparent idioms. In contrast, the obscure idioms refer to idioms in which the relationship between literal meaning and figurative meaning is obscure. *To kick the bucket* is one of the obscure idioms.

Irujo (1986) categorized the idiom items into three types in terms of the similarity between L1 and L2: identical, similar, and different idioms. Identical idioms are idioms in L2 which has first language equivalents. They are the easiest for L2 learners to understand and produce since one-to-one correspondence was found between L1 and L2. Similar idioms refers to the idioms had similar meaning or form in the first language. Irujo (1986) found that L1 knowledge may assist L2 learners in comprehending idioms which are identical and similar to L1 equivalent. Different idioms which have no similar L1 equivalents were the hardest to understand and produce.

As for comprehension strategies employed by learners, Cooper (1999) conducted a study by means of think-aloud protocols to collect learners' perceptions and attitudes during comprehending idioms. Non-native English speakers' use of online processing strategies was measured in this study. Eight major strategies were identified and used by L2 learners: the most frequently used was guessing from context, others were discussing and analyzing the idioms, using the literal meaning; using background knowledge; referring to an L1 idioms, requesting information; repeating or paraphrasing the idiom.

In addition, a number of studies investigating the idioms comprehension by EFL Chinese learners have been developed recently (Chen, 2004; Huang, 2007; Wang & Zhang, 2006; Zuo, 2008).

Chen (2004) studied the comprehension of English color idioms by Chinese EFL learners. The result showed that strategy use varied with idiom types; that is, more difficult the idioms are, more strategies are adopted by learners. Also, the advanced learners tended to use more diversified strategies to figure out the meanings. Zuo (2008) investigated how Chinese EFL learners comprehend unfamiliar English idioms in reading and what strategies they employ in the process. The results showed that the idiom comprehension performance and strategy use were influenced by both idiom types and learners' L2 proficiency.

Knowledge of idioms is necessary for understanding a native speaker's speech because a native speaker's language is full of idiomatic expressions. Danesi (1994) declares an average native speaker produces about 3000 metaphors a week.

## II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Learning a foreign language has been compared to L1 acquisition many times but there are some differences (Fine, 1988). L2 learners do not start from point zero. They have their L1 to turn to. This comparison leads us to contrastive

analysis (see chapter two) which is going to determine similarities and differences between the two languages (Fisiak, 1981). Production of the foreign language needs not only to have a good command of language skills but to acquire other language features such as idioms. An idiom is a combination of lexical items and has a meaning which is distinct from the individual lexical items and this idiomatic meaning is usually understood based on the conventional use of speakers in the speech community. Thus, idioms are culture specific. To understand the meaning of idioms, it needs to learn about the target culture and also the intercultural differences. Learning to use idioms is, in fact, an essential but complex task for ESL students who lack of cultural references. Metaphors also play a great role in the composition of the idioms and comprehending them needs the knowledge of these metaphors. One who wants to comprehend the L2 idioms, he/she should persevere and practice for a long time. Iranian EFL learners rarely use idiomatic expressions and metaphors when they use language. It seems that this problem refers to their inability to process L2 idioms. Also, those who use idiomatic expressions and metaphors in their speech production have difficulty in using the idioms in appropriate context. Furthermore, some metaphorical and idiomatic concepts are affected by L1 that adds to their problems in idiom and metaphor comprehension.

In addition to the above-mentioned problems, Iranian EFL teachers scarcely introduce L2 idioms to students despite the fact that mastery of these is difficult since idiomatic expressions contain such forms in which words are not often used with their usual meanings. Another factor that places a burden for L2 learners to decode the meanings of the idioms is that since there are not always one to one correspondences between L1 and L2, the idioms cannot be easily comprehended from the meaning of their parts. Here in this study, the researcher sought to find about the challenges L2 learners confront while decoding L2 idioms.

### III. RESEARCH QUESTION AND HYPOTHESIS

With regard to what was said above, this study tried to seek an answer to the following question:

1. Do Iranian EFL learners turn to their L1 to decode the idioms in English?
2. Do intermediate, upper-intermediate and advanced L2 learners go through the same process to understand L2 idioms?
3. Are identical, similar and different idioms decoded in the same way?

According to the above questions, the following null hypothesis was posed to be tested in this study:

1. Iranian EFL learners do not turn to their L1 for assistance in order to access the idiomatic meaning of the idioms in English.
2. Intermediate, upper-intermediate, and advanced learners do not go through the same strategies to decode identical, similar, and different idioms.
3. Iranian EFL learners did not decode the idiomatic meaning of identical, similar and different idioms in the same way.

### IV. METHODOLOGY

#### A. *Participants*

Forty five Iranian EFL students from different levels of education ranged from high-school students to MA holders with the age range of 18-35 participated in this study. They were studying English in Iranian English centres and universities located in the city of Shiraz. The participants were from three levels of proficiency; intermediate (n = 15), upper-intermediate (n = 15) and advanced (n = 15).

To make sure that all participants were in the same range of exposure to English each participant was provided with an interview about their English learning background. The interview revealed that no participants from the three levels of proficiency had any special advantage over another.

#### B. *Instrumentation*

This study made use of the following materials for data collection.

##### **1. The Quick Placement Test**

Quick Placement Test (QPT) was used to differentiate the participants' English proficiency, and divide them into three levels of English language skills for the study. It is reliable and valid test and it consists of 60 questions. There were five questions related to their knowledge of different signs and notices used to indicate particular meanings, five cloze passages (25 questions), 20 multiple-choice questions which assessed the participants' knowledge of grammar, 10 multiple choice questions related to the knowledge of vocabulary.

##### **2. Idioms Lists**

In order to provide acceptable and standard idioms for the study, the researcher got help from 5 dictionaries and references to collect three lists of idioms from three different levels of proficiency:

- 1) Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary (2007) which is an English -English reference (7<sup>th</sup> Edition)
- 2) Oxford Idioms Dictionary which is an English-English idiom reference (2002)
- 3) Longman Exam Dictionary which is an English to English reference (2006)
- 4) Farhang Moaser which is an English-Persian reference (Batani, 2005)



5) FarhangMoaser Millennium Dictionary which is very comprehensive English-Persian dictionary

6) An English-Persian Dictionary of the origin and stories of English idioms (Golshan, 2009)

Some explanations about the two lists of idioms are as below:

a. List one: this list was used for think-aloud protocol. It contained 12 idioms from the three different levels (4 from identical idioms, 4 from similar idioms, and 4 from different idioms). In order not to let the subject know about the idiom group (identical, similar, and different), the researcher offered idioms in a mixed and disorganized way.

b. List two: this list contained the whole 30 carefully selected idioms. They were all out of context. The participants were asked to answer them in their first language (Persian).

In order to choose appropriate and common idioms, the researcher consulted some colleagues (who were certified teachers in Department of Education) on the issue.

### 3. Think-Aloud Protocol

Think-aloud protocol (TA) was initially a method of direct observation, developed by Newell and Simon, to investigate cognitive problem-solving strategies, such as reading. Think-aloud protocols (TA) have been widely used to explore L1 and L2 students' cognitive processes in reading research. For these studies using TA protocols, the aim is to develop reading strategies and to discover or describe strategies used in reading comprehension tests.

In order to investigate the comprehension processes, the think-aloud (TA) protocol was applied in the study. During the process of the task, participants were asked to verbalize their thoughts while reading every stimulus sentence and idiom. Researcher gathered participants' thoughts and analyzed the strategies participants used.

## V. RESULTS

### A. Analysis of Think-aloud Protocol Results

To figure out similar idioms many of the participants translated the words of idioms into their L1 to decipher the idiomatic meaning of the idioms. Some of their translations which were wrong and led to misunderstand are presented in Table 5.1.

TABLE 5.1.  
SUMMARY OF PROTOCOL ANALYSIS ON SIMILAR IDIOMS

Idioms	Protocol	Inference
To be all ears	From all ears I understood "hamehgoosh" so it means "saraapaagooshbudan" we have in Farsi	TA – MA
To give a green light	Green light means "cheraaqesabz" I think means "ok daadan" I have heard in Farsi before.	TA – PA – MA
To have a heart of stone	The phrase "Heart of stone" means "qalbiaz sang" we have the exact match in Farsi which is "sangdelbudan"	TA – MA
To be on the tip of the tongue	From translating every single word we can get the exact meaning in Farsi. It is "budannokezaban"	TA – MA

D=Consult a Dictionary ME=Metaphor Search IS= Incorrect Schema S=Schema Search PA=Paraphrase MA=Search for an Exact or a Similar Match IT=Incorrect Translation TA=Translation Attempt

As some of the idioms had some differences, there were traces of metaphor search in this stage. Here are some examples of think-aloud protocol in similar idioms Table 5.2.

TABLE 5.2.  
SUMMARY OF PROTOCOL ANALYSIS ON SIMILAR IDIOMS

Idioms	Protocol	Inference
One swallow does not make the summer	Swallow means (parastu) summer means (tabestan) it means "bayekparastutabestansakhtenemishe that in Farsi a similar one refers to "baa ye golbahaarnemishe. It is a kind of metaphor.	TA – ME – S – PA
Do not look a gift horse in the mouth	Gift horse means "asbehedyeh" and at university I read the exact meaning that is "tudahaaneasbepishkeshironegahnakon" the Farsi equivalent is "dandaaneasbepishkeshironemishomaarand". "To look here in the mouth" here is a metaphor for "counting thr teeth in Farsi"	TA – PA – MA – PK – ME
To get up on the wrong side of the bed	I knew from my university period. I know exactly what it means. But if I want to analyse the way we can get across the meaning, the phrase "wrong side" can be implied as "dandeh 'chap" so the meaning is clear. It means "azdandeh chap bolandshodan".	TA – PK – ME
Any port in storm	The phrase "any port" means "harbandari" and "in storm" means dartufa'an" so we can conclude the similar equivalent in Farsi which is "kafshkohnehdarbiabaanne' matast", although I knew before.	TA - PK - ME - PA

D= Consult a Dictionary/ ME=Metaphor Search/ IS= Incorrect Schema/ S=Schema Search/ PA=Paraphrase/ MA=Search for an Exact or a Similar Match/ IT=Incorrect Translation/ TA=Translation Attempt

There were some mistranslations in the process of decoding similar idioms, while there were no mistranslations in the process of understanding identical idioms. Table 5.3 shows some cases of these mistranslations in full details.

TABLE 5.3.  
SUMMARY OF PROTOCOL ANALYSIS ON IDENTICAL IDIOMS

Idioms	Protocol	Inference
One swallow does not make the summer	The word "Swallow" means "chelcheleh" and the whole idiom may mean "ye chelchelehtaabestaaraanemisazad."	TA – IT – IS
Do not look a gift horse in the mouth	From the meaning of every single word we can understand that the idiom means "be dahaanasbehedyehnegahnakon"	TA – PA – IT – IS
To get up on the wrong side of the bed	What is wrong side here? I think it means "samtenaadorost" so it means "aztarafenadorostetakhtbolandshodan" or it may mean "bad azkhaabbolandshodan"	TA – IT – IS – ME
Any port in storm	"hichbandaridartufa'an" it means no hope left "omidinist"	TA – ME – IS – IT

D= Consult a Dictionary/ ME=Metaphor Search/ IS= Incorrect Schema/ S=Schema Search/ PA=Paraphrase/ MA=Search for an Exact or a Similar Match/ IT=Incorrect Translation/ TA=Translation Attempt

As Table 5.3 revealed there are some traces of L1 interferences in translating these idioms. Some of them did not understand the metaphorical aspect of the idioms, for example, when a participant translates "any port" into "hichbandari" it shows mistranslating and misunderstanding the exact meaning of the idioms. As idioms were different, the participants went through more complicated strategies and faced more challenges to decode the meaning of idioms. When you check tables 4.2 and 4.3 you see that almost all the participants went through their L1 at some points to reach the meanings of both identical and similar idioms.

When confronted with different idioms, advanced participants were somehow unable to decode the idioms. They used translation and other complicated strategies for understanding the different idioms but seemed no use and they got stuck. Some of their mistranslations are presented below in Table 5.4.

TABLE 5.4.  
SUMMARY OF PROTOCOL ANALYSIS ON DIFFERENT IDIOMS

Idioms	Protocol	Inference
Out of blue	Means "birunazaabi" because the word "out" means "birun"	TA – IT – IS
To face the music	Means "bemusiqialaaqehneshaandaadan". Face means "ru be rushodan" and this may mean "alaaqehdaashtan"	TA – IT – IS – ME
To be right on the money	From the words we can imply that it means "to be rich".	TA – IT – IS – ME
To pay on the nail	I don't know and I haven't heard of that but to guess;"pardaakhtanruyemilkh" it may mean "to have a difficult work"	TA – ME – IS – IT

D= Consult a Dictionary/ ME=Metaphor Search/ IS= Incorrect Schema/ S=Schema Search/ PA=Paraphrase/ MA=Search for an Exact or a Similar Match/ IT=Incorrect Translation/ TA=Translation Attempt

As it can be seen, almost all of their translations were wrong and misleading. This caused their very low function in understanding this group of idiom. Only few of the subjects mentioned that they have learnt from their university periods. Another interesting point is that two of the participants simultaneously translated the word "nail" as "suzan" or "needle" in English. One of them translated the idiom as "be andaazehsaresuzankharjkardan" or in English "to spend a bit" and the second translated as "be sakhtipardaakhtkardan" or "to pay very hard".

*B. The Relationship between Different Item Types and Strategy Use*

The process of different idiom types was significantly something odd. As it is indicated in Table 4.5, all of the participants translated the idioms word for word and unfortunately, nearly all of them mistranslated and misunderstood. The frequency of strategies used in decoding different idioms was the lowest comparing to other groups of idioms (Identical, Similar). We can conclude that there was a lot of interference of L1. Almost all of the translations were inappropriately offered except those which have been left blank.

TABLE 5.5  
DIFFERENT IDIOM TYPES AND THEIR FREQUENCY USE

Idioms		Frequency	Percent
Identical	D	7	3.9
	ME	39	21.7
	IS	23	12.8
	S	13	7.2
	PA	3	1.7
	MA	85	47.2
	IT	35	19.4
	TA	141	78.3
	PK	29	16.1
	Hyp	3	1.7
Similar	D	9	5
	ME	56	31.1
	IS	47	26.1
	S	9	5
	PA	4	2.2
	MA	6	3.3
	IT	88	48.9
	TA	129	71.7
	PK	18	10
	Hyp	2	1.1
Different	D	10	5.6
	ME	17	9.4
	IS	57	31.7
	S	2	1.1
	PA	2	1.1
	MA	3	1.7
	IT	134	74.4
	TA	140	78.8
	PK	5	2.8
	Hyp	0	0

Table 5.6 shows the frequency of different strategies employed by advanced, upper-intermediate and intermediate learners. Regarding this table, advanced learners have revealed some interesting results. The description of results is provided below.

TABLE 4.6.  
DIFFERENT GROUPS OF LEARNERS AND THEIR FREQUENCY OF STRATEGY USE

Level		Frequency	Percent
Intermediate	D	18	10
	ME	18	10
	IS	50	27.8
	S	9	5
	PA	0	0
	MA	16	8.9
	IT	95	52.8
	TA	136	75.6
	PK	6	3.3
	Hyp	1	0.6
Upper-intermediate	D	8	4.4
	ME	0	0
	IS	58	32.2
	S	1	0.6
	PA	0	0
	MA	38	21.1
	IT	100	55.6
	TA	151	83.9
	PK	10	5.6
	Hyp	1	0.6
Advanced	D	0	0
	ME	62	34.4
	IS	19	10.6
	S	14	7.8
	PA	9	5
	MA	40	22.2
	IT	62	34.4
	TA	123	68.3
	PK	36	20
	Hyp	3	1.7

Regarding the above data provided in different tables specifically Tables 5.5 and 5.6, it was found that the participants turned significantly to their L1 in order to decode English Language idioms. Thus, the first null hypothesis of study was rejected.

In order to find whether there were any differences between participants at different levels and their frequency of strategy use, 7 one-way ANOVA test were performed. The results are summarized in the following tables:

TABLE 5.7  
ANOVA ON D= CONSULT A DICTIONARY

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.904	2	.452	10.176	.000
Within Groups	23.844	537	.044		
Total	24.748	539			

The results showed that the participants at different levels were significantly different ( $F_{2, 537} = 10.17, p < .001$ ) from each other in using dictionary to decode idioms.

TABLE 5.8  
ANOVA ON ME=METAPHOR SEARCH

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	5.615	2	2.807	18.130	.000
Within Groups	83.156	537	.155		
Total	88.770	539			

The results of ANOVA on using metaphor among three groups showed that participants of different levels were significantly different ( $F_{2, 537} = 18.13, p < .001$ ) from each other in using metaphor search to decode idioms.

TABLE 5.9  
ANOVA ON IS = INCORRECT SCHEMA

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	4.715	2	2.357	13.698	.000
Within Groups	92.417	537	.172		
Total	97.131	539			

The results of ANOVA showed that participants of different levels were significantly different ( $F_{2, 537} = 13.69, p < .001$ ) in using incorrect schema to decode idioms.

TABLE 5.10  
ANOVA ON S=SCHEMA SEARCH

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.478	2	.239	5.713	.004
Within Groups	22.456	537	.042		
Total	22.933	539			

The results of ANOVA showed that participants of different levels were not significantly different ( $F_{2, 537} = 5.71$ ,  $p > .001$ ) in using schema search to decode idioms.

TABLE 5.11  
ANOVA ON PA=PARAPHRASE

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.300	2	.150	9.421	.000
Within Groups	8.550	537	.016		
Total	8.850	539			

The results of ANOVA showed that participants of different levels were significantly different ( $F_{2, 537} = 9.42$ ,  $p < .001$ ) in using schema search to decode idioms.

TABLE 5.12  
ANOVA ON MA=SEARCH FOR AN EXACT OR A SIMILAR MATCH

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1.970	2	.985	6.992	.001
Within Groups	75.667	537	.141		
Total	77.637	539			

The results of ANOVA showed that participants of different levels were significantly different ( $F_{2, 537} = 6.99$ ,  $p = .001$ ) in using Search for an Exact or a Similar Match strategy to decode idioms.

TABLE 5.13  
ANOVA ON IT=INCORRECT TRANSLATION

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	4.737	2	2.369	9.788	.000
Within Groups	129.950	537	.242		
Total	134.687	539			

The results of ANOVA showed that participants of different levels were significantly different ( $F_{2, 537} = 9.78$ ,  $p < .001$ ) in incorrect translation of idioms.

Another series of ANOVA analyses were performed in order to find whether there was any significant difference between different types of idioms namely, identical, similar, different, and the use of different strategies employed by Iranian EFL learners.

TABLE 5.14  
ANOVA ON D = CONSULT A DICTIONARY

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.026	2	.013	.282	.755
Within Groups	24.722	537	.046		
Total	24.748	539			

The result of ANOVA, as is shown in Table 5.14, indicated that different types of idioms did not significantly differ from each other in using dictionary ( $F_{2, 537} = .28$ ,  $p > .001$ ). Thus, different types of idioms were received the same attention in terms of using dictionary.

TABLE 5.15  
ANOVA ON ME=METAPHOR SEARCH

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	4.248	2	2.124	13.495	.000
Within Groups	84.522	537	.157		
Total	88.770	539			

The result of ANOVA, as is shown in Table 5.15, indicated that different types of idioms were significantly different ( $F_{2, 537} = 13.49$ ,  $p < .001$ ) from each other in metaphor search.

TABLE 5.16  
ANOVA ON IS= INCORRECT SCHEMA

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	3.393	2	1.696	9.718	.000
Within Groups	93.739	537	.175		
Total	97.131	539			

The result of ANOVA, as is shown in Table 5.16, indicated that different types of idioms were significantly different ( $F_{2, 537} = 9.71, p < .001$ ) from each other in incorrect schema strategy use.

TABLE 5.17  
ANOVA ON S=SCHEMA SEARCH

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.344	2	.172	4.094	.017
Within Groups	22.589	537	.042		
Total	22.933	539			

The result of ANOVA, as is shown in Table 5.17, indicated that different types of idioms were not significantly different ( $F_{2, 537} = 4.09, p > .001$ ) from each other in schema search strategy use.

TABLE 5.18  
ANOVA ON PA= PARAPHRASE

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.011	2	.006	.338	.714
Within Groups	8.839	537	.016		
Total	8.850	539			

The result of ANOVA, as is shown in Table 5.18, indicated that different types of idioms did not significantly differ from each other in using paraphrase ( $F_{2, 537} = .33, p > .001$ ). Thus, different types of idioms were received same attention in terms of using paraphrase.

TABLE 5.19  
ANOVA ON MA = SEARCH FOR AN EXACT OR A SIMILAR MATCH

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	24.026	2	12.013	120.329	.000
Within Groups	53.611	537	.100		
Total	77.637	539			

The result of ANOVA, as is shown in Table 5.19, indicated that different types of idioms were significantly different from each other ( $F_{2, 537} = 120.32, p < .001$ ) in search for an exact or a similar match.

TABLE 5.20  
ANOVA ON IT=INCORRECT TRANSLATION

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	27.270	2	13.635	68.165	.000
Within Groups	107.417	537	.200		
Total	134.687	539			

The result of ANOVA, here, indicated that different types of idioms were significantly different ( $F_{2, 537} = 68.16, p < .001$ ) from each other in incorrect translation strategy use.

TABLE 5.21  
ANOVA ON TA=TRANSLATION ATTEMPT

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.493	2	.246	1.347	.261
Within Groups	98.211	537	.183		
Total	98.704	539			

The result of ANOVA, as is shown in Table 5.21, indicated that different types of idioms did not significantly differ from each other in using translation to decode those items ( $F_{2, 537} = 1.34, p > .001$ ). Thus, different types of idioms were received same attention in terms of using translation to L1 as a strategy to detect the meaning of idioms.

TABLE 5.22  
ANOVA ON PK = PRIOR KNOWLEDGE

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1.604	2	.802	9.487	.000
Within Groups	45.389	537	.085		
Total	46.993	539			

The result of ANOVA, here, indicated that different types of idioms were significantly different ( $F_{2, 537} = 9.48, p < .001$ ) from each other in receiving prior knowledge of participants.

Totally, the results of different statistical analyses provided statistical support to test the null hypotheses of this study.

## VI. DISCUSSION

Data was collected using think-aloud protocol analysis. The results of data analysis revealed that Iranian EFL learners significantly used their L1 to decode L2 idioms. All the three groups of participants did not go to same process to decode the idioms. For example, advanced subjects did not use dictionary but intermediate subjects used to satisfy their needs. The more differences there were among the three groups of idioms, the more translations and strategies were used by the participants to decode the idioms, the less similarities between the lexical items in L1 and L2 are found and the more challenges L2 learners confronted in decoding the idioms. Thus, the first null hypothesis of study was rejected.

It was also found that Iranian EFL learners of different levels were significantly different from each other in their use of strategies to comprehend different types of idioms. Also, metaphorical aspects of language are a strategy that mostly advanced participants turned to in order to comprehend the idioms. All the nine strategies were marked and used very differently among the three different levels of proficiency. According to the results of seven ANOVA analyses, Iranian EFL learners of different levels used significantly different strategies in decoding identical, similar, and different idioms. Therefore, the second null hypothesis was not rejected.

With regard to the third research question, the results of descriptive statistics and one-way ANOVAs showed that the identical, similar and different idioms were not almost decoded in the same way. Different learners of different levels used different strategies in the same way to decode different types of idioms. The three groups of idioms were not decoded in the same ways. For instance, identical idioms were comprehended by translating the words of the idioms, while different idioms were not possible in this way and it needed the knowledge of metaphorical language. Thus, the third null hypothesis of this study was not rejected.

A number of studies (e.g., Griffin & Harley, 1996; Mondria & Wiersma, 2004; Schneider et al., 2002) have investigated the process of learners' L2 idiom comprehension. Schneider et al. (2002) found that learners who used more processing on the way they learned idioms, they remembered it better. Regarding the use of different learning strategies in idiom comprehension, Cooper (1999), used online processing of L2 idioms by asking participants to report the strategies they applied during comprehension and learning through think-aloud protocol. A rich context was also provided for learners. It was found that the use of context was the major strategy employed by the participants to understand the meaning of L2 idioms. Lontas (2002) used similar strategies to access online processing information, but the rich context was not provided for learners. It was found that a number of different meaning making strategies were used in the L2 processing of idioms.

## VII. CONCLUSIONS

Nearly all of the participants of this study translated the idioms word for word into their L1 and tried to find Farsi equivalents for the idioms. Mostly their translations were helpful in decoding identical idioms and unable to decode the different idioms. Advanced participants performed better than the other two groups even in decoding different idioms. Advanced subjects were able to understand few of the different idioms. This means that once the number of similar lexical items in different idioms decreased, even advanced participants encountered problems in decoding different idioms. Upper-intermediate participants, also, first translated the idioms word for word even more than the advanced participants but their translations were less useful than that of the advanced ones. Intermediate participants as well as other groups translated the idioms into L1 and they used dictionary more than upper-intermediate but advanced subjects did not use dictionary at all.

Strategies were used differently among the different levels of proficiency. Advanced subjects used translation of their own but they did not consult a dictionary. On the other side, they turned to other strategies like metaphorical aspect of the language and schema to decode the different idioms. Once their L1 translations were not helpful, they did not give up immediately. They reflect on the idioms and searched deep into their mind. Upper-intermediate subjects performed less successful than the advanced subjects. They turned to the metaphorical aspect of the language less than the advanced ones. Once their L1 was unable to help, they did not persist a lot to find the idiomatic meanings of the idioms. L1 dependence is almost noticeable in this stage. Very few of them turned to their schema or the metaphorical aspects of the idioms.

Now to discuss our research hypotheses, we can conclude that hypothesis one is rejected because all of the participants depending on their levels of proficiency turned to their L1 for help. The first part of hypothesis two is rejected because very few of the participants were able to understand the different idioms. Nearly all of them got stuck in different idioms comprehension but the second part of hypothesis two is confirmed due to advanced participants who turned to other strategies to decode the idioms. The last hypothesis but not the least one is also rejected because almost all the participants from the three levels of proficiency utilized different strategies to comprehend the idioms. They used more than two or three strategies even in case of intermediate participants.

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# An Analysis of Spoken Language and Written Language and How They Affect English Language Learning and Teaching

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**Abstract**—Language plays a crucial role in the development of human society. It is the main means of communication between individuals, groups and countries. Nowadays in China, more and more people are learning English as a second language. What is the effective method of learning a foreign language becomes their chief concern. Basically speaking, four modules are involved in the process of second language acquisition. They are listening, reading, writing and speaking. In English language teaching and learning, mastering these four modules means a lot. Speaking and writing skills, as the productive modules, are usually more difficult for learners. In this essay, from the origin and functions of language, the correlation and disparities between speaking and writing skills are analyzed and possible ways of improving these two skills in second language acquisition are explored and suggested.

**Index Terms**—second language acquisition, writing, speaking, communication

## I. INTRODUCTION

Kachru and Nelson suggest that English has developed from the native language of a relatively small island nation to the most widely taught, read, and spoken language that the world has ever known (2001, p. 9 cited in Kuo, 2006, p. 213). China, one of the leading emerging economies with the world's largest population, perhaps enjoys the largest population of ESL learners. With the proceeding and advancing of globalisation, English learning and teaching attracts more and more attention in China. Meanwhile, improving English proficiency becomes a significant topic.

As for English proficiency, there are generally four basic skills involved in the language learning process. They are listening, reading, writing and speaking. Listening and reading are the processes of receiving, whereas, writing and speaking are processes of production, or put it another way, output.

In the case of first language acquisition, from traditional Chinese idea, the first thing to do should be listening, and then speaking and reading, writing usually comes the last. From my point of view, these four skills cannot be divided so clearly and they are interweaved with each other in the process of language acquisition. But the rough sequence is like this. Perhaps it is because of the different degrees of difficulty of these four skills. Generally speaking, receiving is more easier than producing and verbal process is easier than written things. However, in the case of second language learning, this sequence does not always work the same way.

In China, we usually start to learn a foreign language at the age of around 6 years old. This foreign language is often the English language. The general sequence of the four skills learning is: reading, listening, writing and speaking. This shows that writing and speaking, the productive skills, are comparably difficult for English language Learners. Whereas, in the practical learning process, these four skills work together and help each other to improve. For example, when you are listening to the target language, this also helps to develop speaking skills. Furthermore, reading does the same to writing skills.

In this essay, I will try to analyze the correlation and disparities between spoken language and written language to see how to apply them better in English language learning and teaching in China.

## II. THE CHARACTERISTICS AND IMPORTANCE OF ENGLISH SPEAKING AND WRITING SKILLS

When discussing the origins of language, Yule mentions two functions of language:

“...All this noise-making and gesturing, seems to be characteristic of only one of the major functions of language use, which we may describe as the interactional function. It has to do with how humans use language to interact with each other, socially or emotionally; how they indicate friendliness, co-operate or hostility, or annoyance, pain, or pleasure.

But there is another major function of language, the transactional function, whereby humans use their linguistic abilities to communicate knowledge, skills and information. ...” (1996, p. 6).

In this paragraph, Yule points out the interactional function and transactional function of language. These two functions have a commonness: communication between human beings.

Languages originated from the need for communication between and among people. From this ‘need’, spoken language appeared and developed, and then the written language, which catered for the need of recording and

preserving things. To put it simply, the purpose and the function of language is to know about other people and let others know about you. Listening and reading are processes for the former and speaking and writing accomplish the task of the latter. To learn a foreign language, it is necessary to master all of these four skills. It is incorrect to suppose that you can listen to others and read materials in the target language but cannot speak and write in it at all. Language is a tool of communication of human society. This kind of communication is a bi-directional process which includes both receiving information as well as giving out information. This giving-out includes speaking and writing. In a long period, writing capability is considered to be the symbol of the well-educated. In some sense, we can say that writing skills are more advanced than speaking skills. In the case of first language acquisition, speaking is learned unconsciously in daily life and writing is learned consciously, usually in schools. But in the second language learning situation, speaking is of no easier than writing. There are various reasons for the characteristics and differences of these two skills. Here I would like to state two of them.

The first one is the learning environment. For writing, it is usually not so difficult to obtain and refer to written materials. But speaking is a skill which demands more practice in daily life. In China, English language is not used widely. Except for some loanwords from English, we seldom use English in our daily lives. For an English language learner, the English class is almost the only language environment for him/her to learn and practice English. But the classroom is only an artificial language environment. Chinese English language learners lack favourable conditions for language acquisition.

Another difficulty for learning English speaking skills regards grammar.

"...There is, to begin with, no influential description of spoken English which has, say, the status of grammars of written English. Spoken English appears very variable, and is very different from one dialect area to another. Even between speakers who mostly speak 'standard English' there is different emphasis in their selection from forms in standard English. ..." (Brown, 1983, p. 3)

Grammar offers a set of rules for language, according to which we can comprehend and produce correct language alternatives. For English writing, there are plenty of rules for us to abide by. Whereas, we could hardly find specialized grammar for speaking skills. Sometimes, Chinese English language learners speak according to the rules of writing. But speaking is not just uttering the exact written language. Another point is that native speech varies from area to area, from culture to culture, between different age groups, different levels of education, from different social classes etc. What and How should we teach spoken English? It is an issue which has been discussed by scholars for years and is still subject to debate, since spoken language is both inconstant and changeable.

### III. CORRELATION AND DISPARITIES BETWEEN SPOKEN LANGUAGE AND WRITTEN LANGUAGE

In one sense, we can say that written language is the written form of what people speak. The difference between them is that one is oral and one is written. But the case is not so simple. These two forms of language perform different functions in human society and the different functions determine their fundamental differences.

Although both of them are processes of production, written language is not just spoken language written down and spoken language is not the written language read aloud. It is usual practice that people use different words and sentence structures to express the same thing in writing and speaking. Take the read-aloud case for example:

"Of course if you have actually tried to 'speak like a book' yourself, you may agree that it can be hard work. It is hard work reading aloud from a book. This may be because it is not something we are used to; or because the sentences can be awkward to read aloud—too long, too complex, or too technical. It can be tricky to get the correct intonation, and you may find you often have to re-read bits to make them sound right. Reading aloud tends to require considerable attention." (Bygate, 1991, p. 10)

When I am in junior middle school, in the English class, it is common practice to read some certain text aloud. This is a case of speaking written language. From some Chinese English teachers' point of view, reading the text aloud can help students to get a more profound impression about it and practice their pronunciation and intonation. But the language which is spoken out is far away from everyday spoken language.

The following statements summarize some of the differences between these two forms of language skills:

- 1) Written language tends to use longer and more complex sentences and the sentence of spoken language is shorter and easier to understand.
- 2) Written language usually allows for a second thought but spoken language is often produced on the spur of the moment.
- 3) Written language usually lasts longer and spoken language is comparably transient, except in the case of audio recordings.
- 4) Written language usually tends to transmit information. However, spoken language tends to express more emotions and personal feelings, perform more functions in smoothing interpersonal relations.

These points are only a small part of their differences.

Since written language and spoken language are different in so many ways, we recognize that we should follow different procedures for dealing with them in English language learning and teaching.

### IV. HOW TO DEAL WITH SPOKEN LANGUAGE IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING AND TEACHING

When I was a middle school student, teachers put more attention on reading and writing and provide less practice with listening and speaking. Consequently, listening and speaking skills are always my weakness in English. It is a wide-spread problem for English language learners of my age in China. To sum up the reasons:

- 1) The national syllabus for English language teaching places more emphasis on reading and writing than on listening and speaking.
- 2) The teaching conditions and teachers' proficiency are limited with regard to listening and speaking skills.
- 3) Listening and speaking skills are not basic requirements for assessment.
- 4) The social environment does not demand much for English listening and speaking skills.

However, things have changed considerably in recent years. With reference to the above,

- 1) The national syllabus has changed gradually to emphasize all of the four skills of English language learning, and the teaching materials have been greatly improved for this purpose.
- 2) The teaching conditions have been improved and some of Chinese schools now have specialized language laboratories. And some of the schools have engaged more native English language speakers to teach spoken English.
- 3) As regards assessment procedures, listening and speaking are given equal emphasis as reading and writing skills and a relatively complete English language assessment system has been implemented. As assessment has a backwash for learning and teaching. That is, what is assessed determines what is taught and learned. Teachers and students must work hard to improve listening and speaking skills to satisfy the assessment.
- 4) In recent years, the English language has been used much more widely in China. For example, more and more foreign companies whose official language is English have entered Chinese market. If a student wants to work for the foreign companies, a good English speaking proficiency would provide him/her a better opportunity.

In addition, here I would like to put forward two international tests for English language to illustrate this change. About 2 decades ago, TOEFL was very popular in China and it occupied a dominant status for English language test. When IELTS came up, it gradually becomes more and more popular as a significant test indicating learner's English language level. The big difference between these two forms of test is that IELTS put more emphasis on assessing learner's practical capability in using the spoken language. If the learner wants to get a satisfactory result in IELTS test, he/she must work hard to obtain a good English spoken skill.

All these changes have had fundamental effects on English language learning and teaching in China. Teachers and learners pay much more attention to practical usages of English language, especially the learning of spoken language. How to learn and how to teach spoken language are attracting more and more attention.

At the very mention of spoken language, what comes first to my mind is that related to pronunciation and intonation. Undoubtedly, they are two of the basic elements for speaking a language. For a beginner, it is not surprising that he/she spends a considerable time on repeating some certain vowels or consonants and on trying to distinguish between similar sounds. The exactness of pronunciation is really of great importance. I have heard a story from my friend. When he was in London waiting for the coach to Bath, he wanted to confirm if that bus stop was the very stop for his coach and asked a man standing beside. Unfortunately, great confusion occurred between them concentrating on the words 'Bath' and 'bus'. That man kept saying, 'yes, this is the bus stop' in reply to his enquiry. This is a problem of the similar pronunciation of 'th' and 's'. This story shows us how important the right pronunciation is. It really affects our daily lives greatly.

In China, spoken English is usually taught and learnt in these ways: model dialogues, pattern practice, oral drill tables, look-and-say exercises, oral composition, etc. Sometimes we have group discussion and, very occasionally, we hold debates on particular issues for the purpose of practicing spoken English.

However, this is far away from enough. Spoken language is such complex a system and the learners must learn much more things besides these.

How is spoken language produced? Is it to read the written language aloud together with some oral expressions? Or it is another completely different language system? These are difficult questions to answer. Here I would like to quote from Bygate when he is discussing how to learn spoken language. After he citing some traditional methods for learning spoken language, he says,

"Ten years later, during which time this approach to teaching oral skills had been widely adopted, David Wilkins pointed out there were some learning problems that exercises like these did not solve. An important one is that of ensuring a satisfactory transition from supervised learning in the classroom to real-life use of the skill. This transition is often called the 'transfer of skills'." (1991, p. 6).

Here he mentions the 'transfer of skills' from classroom learning to real-life. This is really a widespread problem in China, where the English language learning environment is not sufficient enough. But we have tried to make more opportunities for students keep in frequent touch with English. It is very helpful to bring up something that attracts students' interests. The English corner is a very good example. English corner is a certain place for people to gather together with each other to talk in English language. In Jinan, the city where I live, we have an English corner in the central city park. Most of them are students and teachers and also some native speakers. They talk on various issues and exchange their ideas in English. English corner constitutes a kind of microcosmic English language environment.

As for the method of learning and teaching spoken English, the Audiolingual method is worth mentioning here,

"Audiolingual method, a very different approach, emphasizing the spoken language, became popular in the 1950s.

This involved a systematic presentation of the structures of the L2, moving from the simple to the more complex, often in the form of drills which the students had to repeat. This approach, called the Audiolingual method, was strongly influenced by the belief that the fluent use of a language was essentially a set of ‘habits’ which could be developed with a lot of practice.” (Yule, 1996, p. 193)

The audiolingual method emphasizes the learning of spoken language. It is disputable due to its own disadvantages. But I appreciate the idea of ‘habits’ mentioned here. Practice makes perfect. When the learner practices the spoken language more and more, a set of habits can be formed inside him/her, which would make him/her to produce spoken language in L2 from consciously to somewhat unconsciously and speak the L2 more naturally.

Besides the factors mentioned above, there is a major problem still exists for English language learners in speaking skills. As the civilization and society are advancing, the function of maintaining interpersonal relationship in spoken language is becoming more and more prominent.

“...in a reciprocal exchange, a speaker will often have to adjust his or her vocabulary and message to take the listener into account. The speaker also has to participate actively in the interlocutor’s message—asking questions, reacting and so on. This is something which requires an ability to be flexible in communication, and a learner may need to be prepared for it.” (Bygate, 1991, p. 8)

This means that even if you can pronounce the right sentence with proper intonation, it is still not enough. Perhaps there are quite a few words and sentence structures to express the same meaning. Which one should be employed for the best purpose of communication and smoothing the relationship at the same time? In order to communicate successfully, the learner must have mastered most of the language skills and have a considerable understanding of the certain culture where the L2 is spoken and then could he have the ability to handle variational situations freely. This is really a high demand for an L2 learning.

Another difficulty arises when we consider that English language varies from country to country and even from area to area. It is not so easy to say what is standard English. British English? American English? Canadian English? Australian English? Singapore English? And still many other kinds of English. They are all English but they are different in many ways, from lexical choosing to intonation employment. To deal with these variations in English language, we introduced more and more authentic materials to our English language learning class for students to listen to and have a general grasp about it. And students are encouraged to listen to BBC as well as Voice of America and try to imitate British English or American English.

Spoken language is flexible and open to change. It is not easy to get a good mastery of the spoken language in the L2. But it is possible to establish a good basis in pronunciation and the grammar of the target language. When it is possible to apply it to real life, the learner will make it soon. I myself am an example of this. My spoken English is not very good in China. When I first came to England, I really found listening and speaking difficult. But after 3 months stay, I feel it is much easier for me to communicate with others in various circumstances. The greatest difference from China is that I am in an English speaking environment here. From my own point of view, this circumstance is of vital importance for English language learners for speaking good English. That is the very reason why I came here to study and live for a year.

## V. HOW TO DEAL WITH WRITTEN LANGUAGE IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING AND TEACHING

Yule points out that:

“When we consider the development of writing, we should bear in mind that a very large number of the languages found in the world today are used only in the spoken form. They do not have a written form. For those languages which do have writing systems, the development of writing, as we know it, is a relatively recent phenomenon. ...” (1996, p. 9).

Written language appeared much later than spoken language and initially it just wrote down what people spoke. But with the development of different special purposes of writing, written language developed its own style and own rules and became a highly-demanded skill of language. In a very long period, writing is always a symbol indicating person’s educational level. In TOEFL and IELTS tests, the written module is usually considered to be the decisive module. Many universities or colleges’ English proficiency entrance requirement is like this, IELTS overall band no less than ... with writing module no less than ...

In China, we always put attention on English writing. Unlike speaking skills, writing is much more constant and has relatively stable grammar to refer to. In this sense, learning to write in English is not so difficult as learning to speak in English. But learning to write proper English is a very hard work.

“An ability to speak well—fluently, persuasively, appropriately—is something that most of us would hope to achieve in our first language. It is also an objective for many learners of a foreign language, especially those who wish to do business internationally, or to study to travel in English speaking countries. An ability to write appropriately and effectively is, however, something which evades many of us, in our mother tongues or in any other languages we may wish to learn, and this in spite of the many years which are frequently devoted to the development of the skill.” (Tribble, 1997, p. 3)

Even in the case of first language acquisition, people need to learn writing in their mother tongue on purpose, usually in schools. It is no wonder that we consider writing a difficult skill to learn in the case of second language learning.

For writing, the learner should first have a good mastery of English vocabulary which would make it possible for him

to choose the most appropriate words for his/her writing. Besides this, he/she is expected to be good at various sentences structures and have a relatively full knowledge of English grammar. At last, he/her should lay out a logical outline for his/her writing as a whole.

Here I would still like to recommend authentic materials for students to read. By 'authentic materials' here, I mean the materials written by native English-speaking authors. Read more and practice more would help the learner to write much more like native speakers.

Writing is indeed a big issue in language learning. It is not easy trying to cover all its aspects in this essay here. It is an advanced and important skill for a foreign language learner.

#### VI. CONCLUSION

The function of language is to communicate with others to survive and to maintain certain interpersonal relationships. As two skills of language, speaking and writing have their own characteristics and they have fundamental differences in many respects. This requires different learning and teaching methods to deal with them respectively.

There are different examples regarding learning and teaching spoken language and written language. As an English teacher in China, how to apply both of them appropriately to the classroom is of vital importance. Language is a changeable system, especially the spoken language. It really seems impossible to work out a perfect plan of how to learn and teach spoken language and written language. What we can do is to do our best to improve the better methods and materials and map out different teaching plans for the various needs of English learners.

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# A Contrastive Study on Transitional Markers in English Language Teaching Research Articles Written by English and Persian Academic Writers

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**Abstract**—The present study attempted to work on the distributions of the Transitional Markers in a corpus of thirty articles related to the discipline of English Language Teaching. All of the articles are written in English, fifteen by academic writers who are native speakers of English and the other fifteen by Persian academic writers. Using descriptive statistics, it was revealed that the Transitional Markers belonging to the categories of *contrast* and *purpose* were more used by native writers and Transitional Markers belonging to the category of *comparison & similarity* were used almost equally by both groups of writers. Transitional Markers belonging to the categories of *addition*, *time*, *result*, *place*, *example* and *summary & emphasis* were more used in the ELT articles written by Persian article writers. Moreover, using inferential statistics, it was indicated that a significant difference exist between the uses of the Transitional Markers in the two groups of the articles.

**Index Terms**—metadiscourse, transitional markers, native academic writers, Persian academic writers, ELT research articles

## I. INTRODUCTION

The ability to write in a correct way is important to produce articles in English, and as Myles (2002) says this ability cannot be naturally acquired, but it is usually learned through practices in instructional settings. Among factors that make a piece of writing more comprehensible, cohesion and coherence are of the most important ones. Some other devices that also help the unity of the whole text are Transitional words and phrases, being referred to as Transitional Markers (TMs). In the 1970s, the study of texts shifted from formal aspects of writing to organization and structuring of discourse itself (Esmaili and Sadeghi, 2102). A "deeper and narrower approach" (Swales, 1990, p.3) was followed that focused on specific academic genres and tried to investigate communicative purposes of written texts as well as its formal features. Therefore, the nature of the works in academic genre analysis (e.g. Swales, 1990; Dudley-Evans, 1994; Hyland, 1995; Hoey, 2001; Bhatia, 2004) was an applied one and the focus of those works was on typical pattern of linguistic realization. In this study it is tried to be faithful to this description and it is made narrower because the center of attention in this study is on analyzing the use of TMs in written academic discourse, namely ELT research articles.

In academic writing, it is metadiscourse that provides the mutual understanding between writer and reader. Doing so, it concentrates on "those aspects of the text which explicitly refer to the organization of the discourse or the writer's stance towards either its content or the reader" (Hyland, 1999b, p. 438). Metadiscourse "allows us to see how writers seek to influence readers' understandings of both the text and their attitude towards its content and the audience" (Hyland, 1998, p. 437). Hyland and Tse (2004), believe that they metadiscourse, "a writer is able not only to transform a dry, difficult text into coherent, reader-friendly prose, but also relate it to a given context and convey his or her personality, credibility, audience-sensitivity, and relationship to the message" (2004, p. 157). Metadiscourse is a first tool in attracting the reader's attention towards the text. It is also evaluative and engaging, influencing the level of closedness, expressing ideas, and the level of the power that makes the reader involved (Tse, Hyland, 2004). Dafouz-Minle (2008) studied how metadiscourse resources, both textual and interpersonal, contribute toward the overall persuasiveness of text.

The function and presence of metadiscourse have been examined in various genres and contexts, namely textbooks (Hyland 1999b), science popularization (Vartatala, 1998), advertisements (Fuertes-Olivera et al., 2001), newspaper discourse (Lee, 2004; Hemple and Degand, 2008), academic talks and lectures (Thompson, 2003; Eslami and Rasekh, 2007) and research articles (Mauranen, 1993; Dahl, 2004; Moreno, 1997; Hyland, 1998, 2001a, 2002, 2007; Zarei and Mansoori, 2007). According to Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching & Applied Linguistics (2002, p.120) Contrastive rhetoric is the study of similarities and differences between writing in a first and second language or between two languages, in order to understand how writing conventions in one language influence how a person writes in another. Writing in a second language is thought to be influenced to some extent by the linguistic and cultural conventions of the writer's first language and this may influence how the writer organizes written discourse

(DISCOURSE STRUCTURE), the kind of SCRIPT or SCHEME the writer uses, as well as such factors as topic, audience and paragraph organization (Knoy, 2000).

In this study which is also related to contrastive rhetorics, cohesive elements are narrowed down to a modified list of TMs and tried to find and describe the possible differences between the usages of these TMs in two series of ELT research articles both written in English and written by academic writers who are native speakers of English and those written by Persian academic writers who speak English as a foreign language.

## II. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. Which categories of TMs are preferred to be used in ELT research articles written by English academic writers?
2. Which categories of TMs are preferred to be used in ELT research articles written by Persian academic writers?
3. Is there a significant difference between the uses of TMs in ELT research articles written by native English academic writers and those written by Persian academic writers?

## III. METHOD

The corpus to conduct this study, which is an ex-post facto study, was composed of thirty research articles belonging to the discipline of English Language Teaching. Among these thirty articles, fifteen were written by native speaker academic writers and fifteen written by Persian academic writers. Both series of texts were selected from academic writing genre, namely ELT research articles. This similarity was our first criterion for the selection of the research articles. The other important criterion which were applied in selecting the research articles were their possessing the introduction, abstract, method, result and discussion sections and the analysis was done in all these sections.

Another criterion was the publication date of the research articles. The English research articles were all chosen with a publication date between 2004 and 2010. This point was considered very relevant in the study because of the possibility of time influences on the style of the writers. Thus, by considering this time limit, it was tried to minimize that time influence.

As instrumentation, a modified list of the aforementioned items was selected from Robert Harris (2010), Joanna Toraba (2010) and Dafouz Milne's (2008) classification of transitional markers. Then they were put into nine categories for being analyzed, namely the categories of *addition, comparison & similarity, contrast, time, purpose, result, place, example and summary & emphasis*. Lastly, the articles were examined to determine the frequency of the TMs and attempted to analyze the differences between the uses of TMs in the two groups of the articles.

## IV. DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURE

In order to satisfy the goal of the study, only the main bodies of the research articles were taken into account. No peripheral parts were included in the process of the study, namely quotes, bibliographies, headings, footnotes, excerpts, examples, tables, figures and even information in the parenthesis.

A point worth mentioning here is that in selecting the articles written by native academic writers especial attention was paid to the writers being native speakers of English who were British or American. And in the cases of the articles which were written by more than one writer the attention was paid to the point that at least one of the writers was a native speaker of English. After selection of the articles, the analysis was done regarding the use of TMs. In next step, the articles were examined to determine the frequency of the TMs.

It should be mentioned that it was not always easy to determine all TMs used by a writer in a research article. The most important reason to this claim is that some of TMs function polysemously in different sentences or between different paragraphs in different texts. Related to this, Hyland (1996, p.437) believes that "the choice of the particular device does not always permit a single, unequivocal pragmatic interpretation". Therefore, the functions of all the items were examined qualitatively in direct relation to their occurrence in the context. For example the word "here" expresses a kind of physical meaning in the real world, but in a text or specifically in a research article it is used as a device to navigate the readers as they go through the text.

Ambiguities of the kind made it difficult to determine which of the items were functioning as TMs and which of them were not. For this reason, context received an especial attention during determining the frequency of the items and because of those ambiguities all the counting was conducted manually. Besides, this manual job was done twice for the purpose of accuracy.

After the data were obtained, they were summarized by the use of descriptive statistics and presented through frequency tables. A t-test was also used to determine if there was meaningful differences between the uses of the TMs in the two series of the articles.

## V. RESULTS

Along with the purpose of the study and also to have an overall image for the distribution of all nine categories for the two series of the articles, the distribution of TMs were first counted in all sections of the articles written by native writers and it was observed that the most distribution percent of the categories of TMs in the articles written by native

writers is related to the *contrast* category (31.3%). The next rank is demonstrated by the category of *addition* (28.2%). The next priorities are occupied respectively by categories of *example* (9.3%), *result* (8.3%), *purpose* (8.2%), *summary & emphasis* (8.0%), *time* (3.9%), *place* (1.8%) and *comparison & similarity* (1.0%), which imply that native writers prefer to use the TMs included in the category of *contrast* most and then the TMs belonging to the categories of *addition*, *example*, *result*, *purpose*, *summary & emphasis*, *time*, *place* and *comparison & similarity* respectively as it is shown here:

TABLE 1:  
TABLE OF THE DISTRIBUTION OF THE FREQUENCIES OF THE CATEGORIES OF TMS IN ELT RESEARCH ARTICLES WRITTEN BY ENGLISH WRITERS

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid addition	593	28.2	28.2	28.2
comparison and similarity	21	1.0	1.0	29.2
contrast	660	31.3	31.3	60.5
time	83	3.9	3.9	64.4
purpose	173	8.2	8.2	72.6
result	174	8.3	8.3	80.9
place	38	1.8	1.8	82.7
example	195	9.3	9.3	92.0
summary and emphasis	169	8.0	8.0	100.0
Total	2106	100.0	100.0	

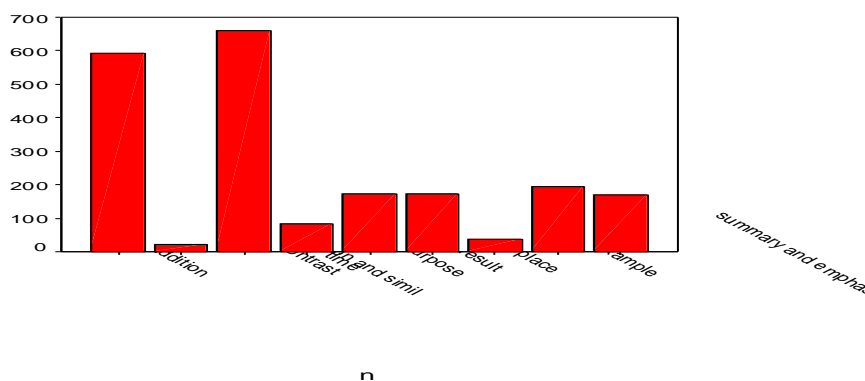


Figure 1: Distribution of the Frequencies of TMs in Articles Written by English Writers for Each of the Categories

Separately, the distribution of TMs was calculated in the articles written by Persian writers and it was discerned that the most distributed category of TMs in the written products of Persian writers is the *addition* category (35.9 %). The next distribution percent is related to the category of *contrast* (19.3%). The next levels are occupied respectively by categories of *result* (13.5%), *example* (9.8%), *summary & emphasis* (8.4%), *time* (5.1%), *purpose* (5.0%), *place* (2.0%) and *comparison & similarity* (1.0%), which means that Persian writers prefer to use the TMs included in the category of *addition* most, and then the TMs belonging to the other categories respectively *contrast*, *result*, *example*, *summary & emphasis*, *time*, *purpose*, *place* and *comparison and similarity*.

TABLE 2:  
TABLE OF THE DISTRIBUTION OF THE FREQUENCIES OF THE CATEGORIES OF TMS IN ELT RESEARCH ARTICLES WRITTEN BY PERSIAN WRITERS

	frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid addition	401	35.9	35.9	35.9
comparison and sim	11	1.0	1.0	36.9
contrast	215	19.3	19.3	56.2
time	57	5.1	5.1	61.3
purpose	56	5.0	5.0	66.3
result	151	13.5	13.5	79.8
place	22	2.0	2.0	81.8
example	109	9.8	9.8	91.6
summary and emph	94	8.4	8.4	100.0
Total	1116	100.0	100.0	



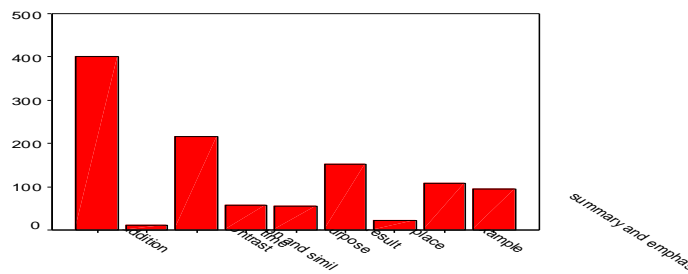


Figure 2: Distribution of the Frequencies of TMs in Articles Written by Persian Writers for Each of the Categories

According to the tables above, the categories of *contrast* and *purpose* are more observed in the articles written by native writers and category of *comparison & similarity* observed equally in the two series of the articles and categories of *addition, time, result, place, example* and *summary & emphasis* are more observed in the ELT research articles written by Persian writers.

Consequently, determining the existence of a difference between the uses of TMs in the two series of the articles, independent T-Test calculations were done and explained through the following table:

TABLE 3:  
CALCULATION OF INDEPENDENT SAMPLE TEST

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
n.p	Equal variances assumed	129.785	.000	-6.855	208	.000	-6.36219	.92815	-8.19197	-4.53241
	Equal variances not assumed			-7.062	136.537	.000	-6.36219	.90095	-8.14380	-4.58057

$$|t| = 6.85 > t(0.05, 208) = 1.96$$

According to the table above, the observed t value is 6.85. This value is greater than the t value in the table of critical values of t (Brown, 1988, p.192) for 208 degrees of freedom at 0.05 probability of error and a level of significance less than 0.05 which is equal to 1.96. Therefore, with the possibility of 95 percent the hypothesis can be accepted. In other words: "There is a significant difference between the use of TMs in ELT research articles written by writers who are native speakers of English and those which are written by academic writers who are Persian."

## VI. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The results of this study revealed that the TMs belonging to the categories of *contrast* and *purpose* are observed more in the articles written by native writers and the TMs belonging to the category of *comparison & similarity* are observed equally in the two series of the articles, and categories of *addition, time, result, place, example* and *summary & emphasis* are observed more in the articles written by Persian writers and using a T-test, it was confirmed that there is a meaningful difference between the uses of TMs in articles written by native and Persian writers.

Such a difference results from various reasons one of which can be the lack of mastery of norms and conventions of academic writing genre and more specifically article writing at Persian writers' side. Hyland (2004) confirmed this by mentioning that metadiscourse resources are of great value at higher levels of writing in an academic and at the same time meaningful and appropriate way to a particular disciplinary community.

In Iranian universities, writing courses are followed based on a product-oriented approach rather than a process-oriented one. Another thing worth being mentioned here is that in such an approach students are not sensitized to the discourse community they address. Thus, it is true to say that such students who are exposed to product-oriented approaches to writing will not be expected to write appropriately in a genre of which they have no clear picture in mind and were not fully and seriously exposed to.

Generally, In order to make their piece of academic writing more fluent and comprehensible, the writers make use of lots of cohesive devices. They may use different genres to satisfy the dynamic necessities of the members of the discourse communities. It can be said that, if sometimes discourse community's conventions do not work, one of the reasons can be the generic awareness. In other words, writers of the articles should not be unaware of the genre they are writing in. This kind of unawareness may have its root in the fact that academic writers in Iran during their BA, MA and PhD studies do not pay enough attention to the genre of thesis and dissertation or article writing. And maybe the

supervisors and the responsible educational system do not take enough care of this generic awareness and let it develop along the students' lives and becomes sources of such problems when they are in the positions of an academic writer who are supposed to be able to write research articles accurately and at the same time comprehensibly.

In addition, like some MA or PhD students who are writing their thesis or dissertations, some Persian writers may have a tendency to use other scholars' writings as inspiring models to get an overall image of a research article or maybe they are simply under the influences of the general and familiar instructions given by their professors in their educational lives. Generally, what a writer writes as an ELT research article is a reflection of their general picture of what an ELT research article is. Having different pictures of an ELT research article can be one of the reasons for the existence of difference between the articles written by the two groups of writers. As an example, there was an interesting difference found between the occurrences of the TMs *I believe*, *I hope*, *I suppose* and *I think* which belong to the category of *Summary and Emphasis* in the two series of the articles. Persian writers were not much willing to use these TMs and they preferred the passive voice structure. The reason to this may again be the effects of their educational background and the Persian writing structures the writers received during their years of academic lives. The other reason to this can be rooted in the lower degree of confidence regarding their responsibility for the accuracy of the findings of their research articles. This may imply the fact that the differences of the academic written works of native and non-native writers can also have cultural roots. It is true that research articles follow same conventions according to genre necessities, however as some scholars believe there exists a "significant intercultural variation in the rhetorical preference of writers" (Mauranen, 1993, p. 1).

What are found in the study are to some extent in congruence with what are found in the study run by Noorian & Biri (2008) which was also a contrastive one revealed that there are meaningful differences between the two groups concerning the existence of interpersonal markers. Their study also suggested that different factors interacted in the choice of metadiscourse markers in newspaper opinion articles written by American and Iranian EFL columnists: culture-driven preferences, genre-driven conventions, and Iranian EFL writers' extent of foreign language experience. There are also some agreements between the results of this study and a research run by Ailin Firoozian Pooresfahani, Gholam Hassan Khajavy & Fateme Vahidnia (2012). In their study, it was revealed that there were significant differences on the overall frequency of metadiscourse features as well as on the particular occurrence of some categories in interactive and interactional features (Mur-Duenas, 2011)

The results of the present study may have some pedagogical implications and help teachers of writing courses to design tasks that focus not only on grammatical issues but also on rhetorical structures and different genres of writing. As some scholars like Cheng and Steffensen (1996) believe that tracing endophorics can increase students' understandings of the major structures of texts. The study also has some implications for Iranian students and novice article writers who are willing to write in academic genres. Moreover, Groom suggests that the best way of including major genres in syllabus is to "present generalizations about the linguistic and rhetorical features of these genres not as models to be applied, but as hypotheses for students to test by investigating authentic texts and practices in their own disciplines" (Groom, 2005, p. 273). Along with this suggestion, the present study attempted to have some implications for material developers and syllabus designers in order to give them some insight to provide materials mostly in line with the process-oriented approach.

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# The Effect of the Etymological Elaboration and Rote Memorization on Learning Idioms by Iranian EFL Learners

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**Abstract**—The present research study investigated potential impacts of the etymological elaboration and rote memorization on the learning of the English idioms by Iranian EFL learners. Sixty (N = 60) female students of the Iranmehr language school were selected among a total number of 100 based on their performance on a Nelson proficiency test, and were assigned into two groups. Prior to the study an idiom achievement test was administered to the learners in both groups to make sure that they did not know the idioms at the outset. Subsequently, the participants in the experimental group received the idioms with the relevant etymological elaborations, while those in the control group were asked to memorize the same idioms without the etymological elaborations for 15 sessions. An independent samples t-test was used to compare the mean scores of both groups on the posttest. The results revealed that elaboration of idioms was significantly more effective than learning the same idioms by rote memorization.

**Index Terms**—idiom, etymology, rote memorization, EFL

## I. INTRODUCTION

Idiomaticity has recently attracted considerable attention in linguistics, psycholinguistics, and psychology (Cacciari & Tabbosi, 1993). In other words, languages contain many formulaic phrases and expressions that every speaker must learn. According to Bobrow & Bell (1973) and Boers et al. (2004), languages contain many phrases and expressions that every speaker should learn. Because language production concentrates on an ability to string multi-word expressions, people don't seem proficient speakers of the foreign language until they master many idioms that are used in every day discourse.

Weinreich (1969) defined idiom as an expression whose meaning cannot be derived from the meaning of its individual elements. To illustrate, to kick the bucket means to die. As the figurative meaning is not predictable, idioms create language learning problem for all groups of learners. Weinreich (1972) considers idiomaticity as “a phenomenon which may be described as the use of segmentally complex expressions whose semantic structure is not deducible jointly from their syntactic structure and the semantic structure of their components” (p.89). Since gaining proficiency in a foreign language depends on picking up the idiomatic expressions in the everyday language of native speakers, many researchers have centralized their attentions to the idiom studies in recent years.

Learning idioms has been very difficult for the second language learners; nevertheless, we cannot ignore to acquire them, for the fact that they are useful mediums for conveying our meaning. Furthermore, to improve learners' receptive skills alongside their productive skills, educators have to teach the most frequently used idioms to the learners. In spite of the evident difficulties associated with learning idioms, learning large idiomatic expressions is necessary for the foreign language learners.

Therefore, an important concern in EFL learning is seeking and finding a beneficial method of teaching idioms to improve students' learning process. The mastery of idiomatic expressions appears to be one of the most difficult tasks in the learning of a foreign language. Even advanced learners often cannot reach a native-like level of this skill. Thus, it seems to be necessary to find more effective ways to help the learners to get mastery over all aspects of the foreign language they are learning.

Idioms permeate English with specific features and give it astonishing variety so that “avoiding the use of idioms gives language a bookish, stilted, unimaginative tone” (Cooper, 1999, p.86). They help language learners understand English culture, which has its roots in the customs and lifestyle of the English people, and provides an insight into English history (Crystal, 1997). In recent years, some researchers started to focus on idioms which have an etymology, a story behind. According to Boers et al., (2007) “etymological association is likely to call up a mental image of a concrete scene which can be stored in memory alongside the verbal form” (43).

Boers 2000, Grant 2004, Boers et al., 2004, proved that associating an idiom with etymology has recently become a popular subject. Also he believed etymological elaboration is an effective method for learning idioms. On the other hand, the researchers intend to know how they can boost the effect of this type of elaboration.

In line with the above discussion, the present study aims to determine if there is any statistically significant difference between the effects of etymological elaboration and rote memorization on learning idioms by the Iranian intermediate EFL learners.

## II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Idioms are abundant in everyday speech but have not been the subject of much research. Boers (2000) pointed out the results of several studies have demonstrated that learners' familiarity with metaphor of idioms can have a significant effect on vocabulary retention. Idioms are a class of multi-word units "which pose a challenge to our understanding of grammar and lexis that has not yet been fully met" (Fellbaum, 2006, p. 349). Current psycholinguistic views support the argument in favor of considering idiom as a type of "long word" whose meaning is accessed directly, and not through prior decomposition or analysis of the constituents. On the other hand, when an idiom is encountered for the very first time, language users have no choice but to decipher its meaning from the meaning of the constituents, usually doing so by taking into account the most salient, or prominent, meanings first (Giora, 1997; Peleg & Giora 2000). It is worth noting that, as with all figurative language, even transparent idioms pose problems for language learners who, lacking the necessary linguistic and cultural knowledge to decipher them, are apt to interpret them literally.

Fernando & Flavell, (1981) believed traditionally, one of the most important principles for categorizing idioms has been its non-compositional nature. It is believed that its meaning cannot be inferred by adding up the individual elements. As a result, the meaning of idioms seems to be completely arbitrary. (Cooper, 1999)

Kovecses (1990) proved that a large number of idioms are not quite arbitrary. This means that their figurative meaning of idiomatic expressions is unpredictable on the basis of a figurative meaning.

Grant (2004) believed that only a few entries in idiom dictionaries are non-compositional and non-figurative and therefore it is especially difficult for the learners to process them in an effective way. In contrast to the traditional views in second and foreign language learning, the majority of idioms could be presented to learners in different ways that go beyond rote learning.

The results of experiments have already been showed the useful effect of presenting idioms to learners semantically. For example, retention has been facilitated by enhancing learners' awareness of the metaphors beyond the figurative expressions (Boers, 2000; Kovecses & Szabo, 1995). Several studies have also shown students to be more interested in remembering the figurative idioms with their original usage. (Boers, 2001)

Boers (2001) found, a strategy of inferring idiom's meaning only from its original usage cannot provide a correct interpretation. As it could provide an additional way for learning. In contrast to the "traditional" belief, which believed that the idioms are 'dead' metaphors that could only be learned through memorization, cognitive semantics provides the more systematic way to learn of a large number idiomatic expressions.

The results of many experiments have shown that students' familiarity with the Literal meanings of idioms can have a positive effect on vocabulary retention(Boers 2000).Boers (2000a, 2000b) also identified three dimensions which contribute to this beneficial effect.

1. The conceptual metaphors (i.e. the "metaphoric themes" or "source domains") behind different idioms provide a framework of organization which seems to be quite arbitrary and unsystematic. As organized information is easier to learn than random input, the use of metaphors can facilitate retention.

2. The identification of metaphors behind idioms by learners involves a certain degree of cognitive effort. This process can enhance "in-depth" cognitive processing, which increases memory storage.

3. Learning through imagery processing facilitates the recall .These three dimensions are in fact to enhance vocabulary learning in general.

On the other hand, Moore (2000) defined rote learning as a method involving repetition and memorization.

Rote learning is not only a system which enable the learner to understand the information but also it involves memorizing and storing the incoming information.

Memorization refers to the strategies which focus on the storage and retrieval of language; so some of the strategies, such as drill and repetition, used for practice are the same as memorization strategies. However, in memorization, the main focus is on the storage and retrieval process. The goal of these strategies is organization (Wenden & Rubin, 1987). It has been found in the researches among language learning strategies, repetition is a strategy which frequently used by L2/FL learners (O'Malley, 1985, Chamot, 1987). It has been proposed in the language learning strategies that memorization involving repetition contributes to the storage and retrieval of language, and there has been an emphasis on the storage and retrieval process (Rubin, 1987).

Ellis and Beaton (1993) suggested memorization and repetition are interchangeably used and both are relevant to RL strategies which consolidate meaning and the form of item English learners use memorization in different ways, starting from learning to deal with exercises (Adamson, 1990, p.76). Almad, an Arab student, used memorization as a strategy of learning new vocabulary. He found all the unknown words, wrote the new word and its meaning in and then

memorized them. The result is that he learned many words but as a slower reader. Meanwhile, Cook (1994) believes repetition and memorization are two of the most valuable, and uses of language learning activities.

A study on the subject of idiom was done by Baleghizadeh & Mohammad Bagheri (2012). In order to solve the problem of learning idiom among EFL learners, the researchers used etymological elaboration to facilitate idiom's learning. To accomplish the purpose of this study, 32 Iranian EFL upper-intermediate students were randomly assigned to two groups, one as control group and one as experimental group. Participants in the experimental group received idioms with the etymological elaborations in short texts, while in the control group, participants received the same idioms without etymological elaboration. The results revealed that etymological elaboration has significant effect on EFL students' comprehension and retention.

Another study was conducted by Boers (2001). This study was done in order to evaluate the effect of using imagery on students' retention of figurative idioms. The aim of this study was to see whether these techniques would have significant effect on learners' in associating imageries to new idioms. Students were divided into two groups (experimental group and control group). In both groups, participants were given 10 unknown idioms and were asked to write their meanings. Participants in the control group were asked to provide a context for each idiom, while the participants in the experimental group were asked to provide origin of idioms. The results revealed that the participants in the experimental group were more successful in idioms retention.

### III. METHOD

#### Participants

The participants of this study were 100 Iranian EFL learners studying at the Iranmehr language institute whose ages ranged from 20 to 30. Following the pilot study, a Nelson test was administered based on which 60 female learners were selected to participate in this study. The other forty participants were excluded from the study because of their low language proficiency test scores. Next, 30 participants were randomly placed in one group and the other 30 participants were placed in another namely experimental and control groups. Because the variable of sex has been held constant, no male student was included in this study.

#### Instruments

Three tests and four books were utilized to accomplish the purpose of the study.

1. Nelson test as a means of estimating the participants' level of language proficiency. 2. A test of idioms to make sure that the participants were not aware of idioms prior to study. This test served as a pre-test.

3. A different test of idioms was also utilized as the posttest, the results of which were used to verify the hypotheses of the study.

4. Four books: *A New Approach to Idioms*, *Dictionary of the Origins and Stories of English Idioms*, *Oxford Dictionary of Idioms*, and *the Dictionary of Idioms and Their Origins* were incorporated as the sources for the idioms to be taught. Proficiency test (Nelson Test Battery) In order to have a homogenized sample for the study, a piloted 40-item Nelson test 300C, taken from the intermediate book of Nelson English Language Tests was administered. The time which can be allocated to complete each test is 40-50 minutes. According to Flower and Coe (1976), all items in these tests have been carefully pretested with both students whose native language was usually Spanish and to students from different language backgrounds from all over the world.

#### Test of idioms

The test of idioms was made up of 23 translations, 10 fill in the blanks, 12 matching items which were chosen from *A New Approach to Idioms* by Birjandy and Shahidy (2009) and *A Dictionary of the Origins and Stories of English Idioms* by Golshan (2009) and *Preparation Course for the TOEFL* by Phillips (2003) which have been designed in order to meet EFL learners' need for the most common and handiest English idioms in daily use. The purpose of this test was to make sure that the learners didn't know much about the idioms at the outset of the study. This test was piloted and the result revealed that the reliability calculated through Kuder- Richardson formula 21 was 0.77.

#### Posttest of Idioms

To make sure the participants were not affected by the instructions, the researcher administered another test that was different from the pre- test. The test was made up of 33 translations, 25 matching items which were chosen from the aforesaid materials. Treatment Materials The researcher selected 58 idioms from: *Oxford Dictionary of Idioms*, *A New Approach to Idioms* (Birjandy and Shahidy, 2009), and *A Dictionary of the Origins and Stories of English Idioms* (Golshan, 2009). The selected idioms were relevant to the participants' learning experience. Two factors were taken into account to determine this: first, having a connection with the content of the lessons which the students had studied so far, and second, being of interest to them. The teacher was a good source of help for the selection procedure because she was familiar both with the content of the lessons, due to her long teaching experience, and with the students' personality traits.

#### Procedure

The intermediate Nelson test was first piloted among a group of 30 female learners, the reliability of this piloting stood at 0.78. Consequently it was confirmed that the test enjoyed high reliability. The researcher administered the revised version among 100 female learners at the intermediate level. 60 learners who scored one standard deviation -/+

the mean score were selected to participate in this research Next; they were randomly divided into two groups, that is, the control group and the experimental group.

The participants were all briefed on what the idioms are in the opening sessions. On the first session of each of two classes, the learners in both groups took a pre-test. The results showed that there was no significant difference between the two means of the experimental and control groups on the pretest of Idiomatic knowledge ( $t(58) = .54, p > .05$ , it represents a small-sized effect  $r = .07$ ). Thus the results indicated that the two groups enjoyed the same level of knowledge on English idioms prior to the administration of the etymological elaboration to the experimental group and the rote memorization to the control group. After completing the test, the idioms were equally instructed for 15 sessions, and each session took about one hour. To clarify, the original usage and etymological hints of idioms were instructed to experimental group, while the control group's participants were encouraged to learn the idioms without any etymological elaboration. Once the instruction period was over, the researcher conducted the posttest among both the control and experimental groups to check whether there existed any statistically meaningful difference between the participants in both groups because of the treatment.

#### IV. RESULTS

In this study, the researchers investigated the impacts of impacts of etymological elaboration and rote memorization on Iranian intermediate EFL learners. After gathering the data, the results were subjected to a series of statistical analysis. to compare the mean scores of the two groups on the posttest of idioms an independent t- test was conducted in order to find which of the two methods of etymological elaboration or rote memorization has a more significant effect on the idiom learning of the Iranian intermediate EFL learners. As displayed in the Table 1 the experimental group ( $M = 38.57$ ) after receiving etymological elaboration outperformed the control group ( $M = 27.27$ ) on the posttest of idioms.

TABLE 1  
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FOR POSTTEST OF IDIOMS

GROUP	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Experimental	30	38.57	8.169	1.491
Control	30	27.27	5.656	1.033

The results of the independent t-test indicate that the above mentioned difference between the mean scores of the two groups on the posttest of idioms is statistically significant ( $t(58) = 6.22, p < .05$ , it represents a large-sized effect  $r = .63$ ). Thus the first null-hypothesis as there is not any statistically significant difference between the effects of etymological elaboration and rote memorization on idiom learning of the Iranian intermediate EFL learners is rejected. The subjects who received etymological elaboration performed better on the posttest of idioms.

A paired-samples t-test was used in order to probe the effect of etymological elaboration on the improvement of their knowledge on English idioms. Experimental group shows a high improvement on the posttest of idioms ( $M = 38.57$ ) compared with the pretest ( $M = 25.24$ ).

TABLE 2  
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FOR PRETEST AND POSTTEST OF IDIOMS  
(EXPERIMENTAL GROUP)

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
POSTTEST	38.57	30	8.17	1.49
PRETEST	25.24	30	7.18	1.31

The results of the paired-samples t-test indicate that the difference is statistically significant ( $t(29) = 9.39, p < .05$ , it represents a large-sized effect  $r = .86$ ). Thus the second null-hypothesis as etymological elaboration goes not have any statistically significant effect on idiom learning of the Iranian intermediate EFL learners is rejected. The experimental group following the etymological elaboration shows significant improvement on the posttest of idioms.

A paired-samples t-test was conducted to compare the mean scores of the control group on the pretest of idioms in order to probe the effect of rote memorization on the improvement of their knowledge on English idioms. As displayed in Table 3 the control group shows a high improvement on the posttest of idioms ( $M = 27.27$ ) compared with the pretest ( $M = 26.3$ ).

TABLE 3  
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FOR PRETEST AND POSTTEST OF  
IDIOMS (CONTROL GROUP)

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
POSTTEST	27.27	30.00	5.66	1.03
PRETEST	26.31	30.00	8.29	1.51

The results of the paired-samples t-test indicates that the difference observed in Table 4 is not statistically significant ( $t(29) = 1.71, p < .05$ , it represents a medium-sized effect  $r = .30$ ). Thus the third null-hypothesis as rote memorization does not have any statistically significant effect on idiom learning of the Iranian intermediate EFL learners is supported.

Although the control group following the rote memorization shows improvement on the posttest of idioms the difference is not high enough to reject the null-hypothesis.

TABLE 4  
 PAIRED-SAMPLE T-TEST FOR PRETEST AND POSTTEST OF IDIOMS  
 (CONTROL GROUP)

	Paired Differences					T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
POSTTEST – PRETEST	0.95	3.05	0.56	-0.19	2.09	1.71	29.00	0.10

**Reliability Indices**

The reliability indices for the Nelson test and pretest and posttest of idioms are 0.78, 0.77 and .84, respectively.

TABLE 5  
 K-R21 RELIABILITY INDICES

Descriptive Statistics				
	N of Items	Mean	Variance	K-R21
NELSON	50	31.72	48.56	.78
PRETEST	58	25.7778	59.481	.77
POSTTEST	58	32.92	80.993	.84

**Validity**

The Pearson correlations between the Nelson test and pretest and posttest of idioms are employed as empirical validity indices of the latter two tests. There are statistically significant correlations between the Nelson test and pretest (r = .75, it represents a large-sized effect) and posttest (r = .59, it represents a large-sized effect). Thus it can be claimed that both pretest and posttest of idiom enjoy high empirical validity indices.

TABLE 6  
 EMPIRICAL VALIDITY

		PRETEST	POSTTEST
NLESON	Pearson Correlation	.758**	.593**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000
	N	60	60

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

V. DISCUSSION

The results revealed the experimental group who received etymological elaborations perform better in learning idioms than the other group. These findings are in line with the recent approaches towards etymological information of an idiom. The results of this study indicate that etymological information improves idiom learning of the students and this finding is consistent with Boers (2004) which stated that the mnemonic effects of etymology to idioms are more than the other techniques. Boers (2001) also said that if idioms which derived from specific source are associated with the original usage will be kept more in the memory of students.

The findings confirm Conceptual Metaphor Theory, which suggests that idioms are not mere strings of words with an arbitrary meaning. Instead, their meaning can be traced back to a concrete scene representing the first source from which the idiom was taken. The findings are in conformity with other studies made in the domain of Conceptual Metaphor Theory and idiom learning. The results obtained via this experiment can be a source of motivation for both teachers and learners to take advantage of etymological awareness to deal with this aspect of language. These results reveal that figurative aspect of many idioms is not arbitrary; rather, there is an origin or story behind many of them, and reviving such stories can be a crucial factor in learning idiom. There is a correlation between this study and findings.

VI. CONCLUSION

In this study, the researcher investigated the impacts of etymological elaboration and rote memorization on idiom learning. Two groups of participants, experimental and control, received the same set of idioms. The experimental group received the etymology or origins of the idioms, while the control group did not. Following the last session of treatment, their scores were added up and a t-test was conducted to check the differences between them. The results revealed a significant difference between the two groups, that is, the experimental group significantly performed better than the control group in learning idioms.

VII. IMPLICATIONS

This study revealed that learners` idiom learning increase when the content is taught through an etymological elaboration instruction. This study confirms the etymology in order to teach idioms. English teachers can benefit from



an etymological elaboration approach in order to teach idioms, which are an important part of language learning. When undergoing the etymological elaboration approach, students enjoy their learning- as was visible for the researcher during her observations of the procedure and was expressed by the learners themselves. This research can help syllabus designers and textbook writers to incorporate etymological elaboration in their products. Since materials which deal with all aspects of idioms are crucial to the learning of idioms, developing such materials is strongly recommended to those who have a hand in material development.

1. Since this study was only conducted on the female participants, a similar research can be done on the opposite sex or both together.
2. A more comprehensive study can be done on larger number of subjects.
3. There is a need to carry out similar experiments to investigate the long-term effects of teaching idioms through different techniques, strategies, activities, and other areas of language similar to idioms such as phrasal verbs and metaphors.
4. Since this study covers only 58 English idioms, a more comprehensive study can be done by employing more idioms.
5. Finally, this study can be performed with learners with different levels of language proficiency.

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# Relevance and Coherence

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**Abstract—Relevance and Coherence Abstract: As a tool for communication, language is unique for human beings. In some context, the speakers and listeners construct and comprehend the same text in different ways. In order to have a successful communication, they have to know the appropriate ways to express and the exact information they want to convey. In the process of discourse interpretation, Coherence and relevance are two main factors. This paper aims to investigate discourse coherence in terms of relevance and analyze the relations between the two.**

**Index Terms—coherence, relevance, cognition, relevance theory, interpretation**

## I. INTRODUCTION

Cognitive science has captured worldwide attention since 1970s. Cognitive linguistics came into being when cognitive science was combined with linguistics. Most linguists use the theory of cognitive linguistics to analyze the function of language. That gives rise to cognitive pragmatics. Relevance Theory, which is put forward by Sperber & Wilson in their works *Relevance: Communication and Cognition* in 1986, is the theoretical foundation of cognitive pragmatics. As a new prospective to the study of language, it has attracted consistent interests and attentions of the western pragmatists and the fundamental points of its theoretical framework have been all-roundly introduced, interpreted, reviewed and modified or complemented.

Relevance is an important term for the Relevance Theory and is defined according to contextual effects. To be efficient, people try to maximize the effect of the information with the least effort as possible as he can to process it. When this is successfully done, we can say that they have the optimal relevance.

Coherence is a consequence of interaction between linguistics factors and non-linguistic factors. It is defined as a semantic concept and has long been the focus in the field of pragmatics since it deals with how the discourse can be produced and interpreted. Coherence can be realized by linguistic forms and other context factors. Coherence and relevance are two psychological terms.

## II. COHERENCE

The study about coherence had begun before the modern linguistics emerged. Coherence is considered as the prerequisite for a text to achieve the identity and roughly defined as an effective text whose constituents are connected closely. (Brooks & Warren, 1972) Since the notion of coherence is introduced to linguistics, many scholars such as Jacobson (1960), Harweg (1968), Van. Dijk (1972, 1977) Kintsch (1974) Halliday & Hasan (1976), Coulthard (1977) Widdowson (1978, 1979), Enkvist (1978) have devoted themselves to the research about text coherence. Usually coherence is considered as the connected relationship in meaning between every part of the text. (Brown & Yule, 1983; Crystal.1992) As the study method is concerned, there are two ways in linguistic field, one is the study of language itself, that is, the contributions of all kinds of cohesive devices to text coherence, another is concentrating on not only linguistic forms but also non-linguistic forms such as situational factors, cultural background knowledge and cognitive ability's influences and restraints on text coherence. Widdowson and Brown & Yule are the representatives who adopt the first method while Halliday & Hasan and Danes adopt the second one.

About the definition of coherence, although different linguists agree on the point that coherence is the primary character of a text, they have different opinions. Crystal (1987) claims that coherence means that various kinds of concepts and relations expressed by a text must be relevant to each other, thereby we can infer the deep meaning of the text appropriately. He further puts forward that text coherence is 'the underlying functional connectedness'. van Dijk (1977) holds that 'coherence is a semantic property of discourse, based on the interpretation of each individual sentence relative to the interpretation of other sentences'. It is argued by Widdowson that coherence refers to the illocutionary functions of different propositions and how these functions are used to create different kinds of discourses such as report, descriptive or explanative ones. If the hearer considers that the proposition emerges in some order is connected with the illocutionary function he can accept, he will think that the discourse is coherent. (1985). Beaugrande (1981) defined coherence as the procedures that can ensure the connection conceptually, including, i. It is a kind of logical relations, ii. It can organize events, objects or situations, iii. It can reflect the human experience continuity. It is mainly about "the way in which the components of the textual world which underlie the surface text are mutually accessible and relevant" (1981). Brown and Yule's claimed that (1983) coherence is produced during the process of the readers' interaction with the text. If they can receive it logically, then the text is coherent.

About the conception of coherence, Chinese scholar Zhu Yongsheng (1996) has his own opinion, he claims that coherence is a semantic concept which refers to the connectedness among different parts of the text. This kind of connectedness exists in two different levels: one is among the sentences and another is in the real intention of the text.

Coherence from different angles (semantics, pragmatics, cognitive science) has been explored by most of the linguists who establish their own theory about text coherence such as Theory of Macrostructure by van Dijk (1977), Mann & Thompson's Rhetorical Structure Theory (1988) and Beaugrande & Dressler's Procedure Practice Model (1981) etc.

But different scholars have different opinions about the elements and the degree which occur in the discussions about coherence. It is argued by Givon (1995) that coherence is a mental phenomenon,

"Coherence is not an internal property of a written or spoken text, but a property of what emerge during speech production and comprehension—the mentally represented text, and in particular the mental processes that partake in constructing that mental representation." (Givon, 1995) Givon focuses on the effect of cognition in the dynamic process of constructing a coherent discourse mentally.

Up till now there is no general theoretical framework and well-defined concept of coherence though a lot of scholars have done some researches on it.

I think that coherence should be defined in a broad term with the enlightenment of their different views on coherence. We should first realize what coherence intuitively means for language users. Stubbs (1983) holds that it is the reader's interpretation that creates the coherence of a text. Separating the notion of coherence from the receiver is a wrong path to have some research on it, since it is not only a general concept for the texts overall connectedness, meanwhile it also reflects how the reader evaluate and percept the text. And it is accordance with Baugrand's claim, "coherence is clearly not a mere feature of text, but rather the outcome of cognitive processes among text users" (1981). Coherence is dependent on its receivers' processing.

The process of coherence involves different factors and can be received and understood on different levels, such as syntactic, semantic, pragmatic and stylistic elements paradigmatically. On the other hand, during the process of receiving the coherence, a lot of individual units that can transfer information are given much more concern, such as the units in morphemic, lexical and sentential levels, and coherence in different levels is constructed builds on the coherence of next level, thus, constitute the coherence of the whole text.

A lot of factors can influence the coherence of a text. Hu Zhuanglin (1994) discusses the contribution of context, including co-text, situational context, and cultural context, to discourse coherence. The following sections of this thesis will have a discussion on cognitive context's contribution to the discourse coherence.

### III. THE CONCEPTION OF RELEVANCE

Relevance is a logic notion which is a two-placed predicate representing the relations between different things. (Wang, 1994) The first linguist who uses the notion of relevance in analyzing verbal communication is H.P. Grice. In his co-operative principles, he puts forward four maxims of Quality, Quantity, Relevance and Manner. In his opinion, both the participants in communication hope the utterance is relevant. Sperber & Wilson's Relevance Theory developed the concept of "relevance", they argue that the key of relevance, a notion which is based on a universal view of cognition of human beings, their definition of relevance is a technical term that can characterize a property of mutual process. According to Sperber and Wilson, relevance can be evaluated and measured according to the relations between the cognitive effect and processing effort. If we say some information has a contextual effect in a given context, it will get relevance. A context may involve different assumptions, when an input (e.g. a discourse) is proposed in a context of available assumptions, it may yield some cognitive effects, by modifying or reorganizing these assumptions in the following approaches: a. to strengthen the assumption that existed; b. to contradict and eliminate the assumption existed; c. to connect with an assumption existed and gain implication in a given context, i.e. this implication can be derived not from the new information or the context separately, it can only derive from the combination of the new information and the context. That is to say, you construct an assumption to expect that you can connect it with the given assumptions to gain a new one.

For example:

1) It may provide further evident for, and hence strengthen, an existing assumption.

(1) A: Mary works very hard.

B: She is excellent one in her school.

In this example, the newly-presented information 'she is excellent one in her school' gives more evidence for A's conclusion. So it enforces the present contextual assumption and thus produces new contextual effect.

2) It may contradict an existing assumption.

(2) A: Mary does not a good job in her study.

B: She is excellent one in her school.

In this example, as the new information, 'she is excellent one in her school.' contradicts the assumption 'Mary does not a good job in her study' and even negate it. In this case, the addressee can produce various kinds of contextual effects on the basis of their respective contextual assumptions: it might be inferred that the communicator is joking, because Mary is really excellent in her study; it can alternatively be inferred that Mary does not deserve to be called

first one because she is not good at all subjects, etc.

It may allow the derivation of a contextual implication

(3) A: Will you do any shopping today?

B: We will have vacations for most of the weekends.

In this example, the hearer can not achieve B's communicative intention only through the literal meaning of the sentence. Only by combining this information with various kinds of contextual assumptions can the hearer infer the following possible implications:

(4) a. If we have vacations for the weekend, then we won't need any shopping.

b. If we are not at home for the weekend, then we can not go shopping.

c. If we will not do some shopping, then we won't have anything to eat after our vacation.

Different contextual implications can bring about different contextual effects: according to (4)a, A gets to know that B considers it is unnecessary to go shopping; according to (4)b and (4)c, A infers that B considers it is necessary to go shopping. The hearer will select one interpretation because not all assumptions are hold with the same degree of conviction.

Relevance can be considered as a character of inputs for the processes of cognition including discourses, thinking, remembering, behaviors, voices, signals, tastes, and so on. Sperber & Wilson (1986,1995) put forward a primary assumption that human cognition is based on relevance. The beginning of every utterance is to attract the attentions of the hearer. In a consequence, it is expected to have relevance. Upon the utterance, different hearers have different interpretations, thus will be relevant in different approaches, they can be divided into different levels: be not relevant at all; be fairly relevant; be very relevant. Which interpretation should the hearer select? About the selection of discourse comprehension, Sperber and Wilson put forward two relevance principles and the concept of optimal relevance:

1) Cognitive principle of relevance.

Human cognition tends to be geared to the maximization of relevance.

2) Communicative principle of relevance.

Every ostensive stimulus conveys a presumption of its own optimal relevance.

3) Optimal relevance

An ostensive stimulus is optimally relevant to an audience iff: It is relevant enough to be worth the audience's processing effort. It is the most relevant one compatible with communicator's abilities and preferences.

Clearly, the interpretation that can best satisfy the audience's expectation of relevance will be selected. It is clear that, other things being the same, if the cognitive effects of a newly presented item of information is greater, the greater its relevance for the person processing it. However, it has to be remembered that all information-processing requires effort and time—that is, a cost--and that, other things being the same, the greater the cost of processing a new item of information, the less its relevance for the person processes it. On the contrary, the smaller the processing effort required, the greater the relevance.

According to Relevance Theory, it is the basic character of the cognition of human being to search for relevance. Instinctively, relevance is not only a potential character of observable phenomena, but of some cognition process such as thoughts, memories, and conclusions and so on. The main point that can improve a successful communication is to pursue the optimal relevance between the communicator and addressee. The function of the optimal relevance in communication is obtained according to the relevance principle, which is believed to be an innate constraint in our human psychological make-up. By this principle, a person thinks that what she wants to say has optimally relevance to the hearer whenever she starts to communicate something.

#### IV. COGNITIVE CONTEXT, RELEVANCE AND COHERENCE

Relevance theory is a cognition-based theory about human being communication and discourse interpretation. As the same with the other cognitive theories such as mental model by Johnson-Laird (1983) and modularity hypothesis by Fodor (1983), it admits the following two basic facts: i. achieving the information needs processing efforts; ii. The more efforts taken in the processing of information, the least chance for successful communication and vice versa. In addition, all these cognition-based theories agree that on the one hand information process of human being is at the aim of successful communication, on the other hand it should be as effective as possible.

As we have mentioned above, in Relevance Theory, the standard of relevance is to evaluate the balances between cognitive effect and processing effort. When an item information has a contextual effort in a given context, Sperber and Wilson say it is relevant in that context.(1995) About discourse coherence, they claims that it is the by-product which the addressee receives in the process for searching for relevance. For an utterance, if it is considered relevant to an hearer, it must be coherent. Such a point of view, just like relevance theory, does not meet general approval but receives strong objections.

As two important terms about discourse interpretation, the following parts will shed light on the relations between relevance and coherence combining with the factors of cognitive context.

##### A. *The Definition of Coherence in Relevance Theory*

In Sperber and Wilson's opinion, every behavior in an ostensive communication transmits a presumption that it is

relevant optimally. It is a must to search for optimal relevance in a successful communication. Aiming at receiving the relevance optimally, the addressee has to not only restore the literal meaning but also infer the implication of the discourse by choosing and constructing appropriate cognitive assumptions. That is to say, the assumptions are not pre-existed, but created by the addressee according to his needs. Mutual knowledge is not only the prerequisite but also the result of communication. In order to infer the understandable discourse, the addressee will use the assumptions that can help him achieve relevance as possible as he can.

According to relevance theory, context is a set of assumptions stored in the human being's memory, that is to say, on the one hand, cognitive context can be considered as a set of assumptions that can construct the relevance of the new information, on the other hand, it can be regarded as a series of assumptions changed and influenced by the new information. From relevance theoretical point of view, Blakemore puts forward two kinds of coherence. (1987) The first kind is coherence of propositional coherence, which means that the information in utterance (t) can help construct the propositional coherence in utterance (t+1). The second kind is the coherence of contextual effect, which means that the explanation of utterance (t+1) and utterance (t) can realize the contextual effects between the two utterances. In order to help understand these two kinds of coherence, Blakemore gives two examples:

(5) I put the butterfly on the table. It broken.

(6) I put the heavy book on the table. It broken.

In these two examples, we can see that the linguistic rule can not help the addressee receive the correct explanations. Both "it"s in the two examples are pragmatically determined pronoun. According to relevance theory, the correct understanding of "it" is based on the explanation of the contextual information of the first sentence. From the comparison of the two examples, we can understand that "it" refers to "the butterfly" in the example (5) and "the heavy book" in the example (6). Carston considers that the information analyzed above was part of the propositional content of the discourse and claims that it was the propositional content for pragmatics. She further puts forward that, according to relevance theory, with certain background knowledge, the addressee can find the answer beyond the linguistic content in order to achieve the reasonable explanations of the discourse. This depends on whether the information received can achieve optimal relevance or not. Here is another example:

(7) The king picked up the wine and drunk.

The addressee can receive the following explanations by taking efforts to search for relevance. "the king" picked up "wine" at t and he drunk it at t+n. So we can say that the explanation of discourse's optimal relevance can make the addressee to search for the explanation beyond the literal meaning of discourse. The explanation of the second sentence includes the information from the explaining of the first sentence. All these information is part of the propositional content of the discourse. For example:

(8) Two Muslim fundamentalists entered the city, then came a sudden eruption of new bloodshed in it.

In (8), the explanation from the first sentence can influence or determine the explanation of the second sentence. "then" in the second sentence can be looked upon as "as a result of that". The explanation of the second sentence includes the information from the first sentence. As the new information, "as a result of that" is part of propositional content of the discourse.

Blakemore also puts forward coherence of contextual effect. According to cognitive context or relevance theory, the explaining of the discourse not only shows clearly the proposition expressed by the discourse but also includes evaluating the result achieved by putting the discourse into a set of existing assumptions. In other words, the explaining of the discourse must evaluate the degree of relevance. The coherence from this aspect is called coherence of contextual effect. According to the above illustrations, we can understand cognitive context from two aspects: on the one hand, cognitive context can be considered as a set of assumptions that can construct the relevance of the new information, on the other hand, cognitive context can be considered as a set of assumptions that is changed and influenced by the new information. Here is an example:

(9) A: The proposal was not well thought out.

B: It would have been too expensive.

Sperber and Wilson consider that the addition of the new information to the sentence can influence the context. For example, in the second sentence of (9), "it would have been too expensive" has the contextual effect for providing the evidence for the existing assumption "the proposal was not well thought out."

(9)A and (9)B is coherent because the explanation for (9)B contains the contextual effect for constructing the relevance of (9)A. That is to say, the relevance of (9)A depends on the explanation of (9)B.

According to the relevance theoretical view on context, when the new information and contextual assumptions affect each other through the ways we have noted in section III, contextual effect will be achieved. Thus the coherence can be achieved.

Discourse coherence, as Sperber & Wilson argue, is the by-product in the process of strengthening or weakening of existing assumptions.

### B. About Giora's Objection

Giora (1997, 1998) raises her objection to Sperber and Wilson's view on coherence, she argues that relevance theory is not the only one that controls human beings' communication and discourse coherence should also be considered. She holds that some utterances are relevant to an individual but not coherent and vice versa. As a reply to Giora's objection,

Wilson (1998) writes *Discourse, Coherence and Relevance: A Reply to Rachel Giora* in which she claims that Giora confuses the cognitive principle of relevance and communicative principle of relevance. She also argues that “the main aim of relevance theory in the domain of verbal communication is to explain how utterances are understood. As a by-product, it claims to shed light on certain intuitions of acceptability or unacceptability, for which coherence theorists have sometimes offered alternative accounts.”(1998)

Disagreeing with Relevance Theory, Giora uses some examples to elaborate her opinion.

(10) Bill, who has thalassemia, is getting married to Susan, and 1967 was a great year for French wines.

(11) Bill, who has thalassemia, is getting married to Susan. Both he and Susan told me that 1967 was a great year for French wines.

For the both examples, she claims that relevance theory is not able to account for their unacceptability. According to Relevance Theory, as she argued, if each discourse is relevant in a context, it can be acceptable whether they are intuitively related or not. (Wilson, 1998)

Verbal communication is dynamic and idiosyncratic. According to different addressees, it may be judged utterly differently. If both of the assumptions of two discourse segments have contextual effects in a certain cognitive context and at the same time the hearer has this assumption in his own cognitive context just like Wilson illustrates in her reply to Giora.<sup>[28]</sup> Then we can say that the discourse is both relevant and coherent to the hearer. However, in an ordinary communication, if the speaker utters these two segments abruptly, the addressee will take more efforts to switch from one topic to another. The whole discourse is not relevant to the hearer even though both the assumptions of two segments are new to him for he does not know what communicative intention the speaker wants to transform. According to relevance theory, communication is an ostensive-inferential process. During the communication, the speaker should express his/her communicative intention as ostensive as possible if he/she has the intention to let the hearer understand his/her utterance; the hearer will try his/her best to achieve the meaning of the utterance by combining the utterance with his/her cognitive context.

As we have noted above, the speaker will try his/her best to help the hearer to understand his /her utterance if he/she aims at successful communication. Before or during the process of discourse production, he/she will have an evaluation on the hearer’s cognitive context and then decides in what way he/she should organize his/her utterance. This phenomenon is coincident with communicative principle of relevance. So we can say that an utterance is coherent to an individual if it is optimally relevant to him/her. About this argument, Giora gives another example to object to it.

(12) A: What did John say?

B: Your have dropped your schoolbag.

In this example, B’s utterance can be interpreted from two different ways, one is that it is a report of what Susan really said, she told B that A had dropped his/her schoolbag; the other is what A said on the spot, A was reminding B that his/her schoolbag was fallen instead of answering his/question. Giora admits that the first interpretation is both relevant and coherent to the hearer while the second is relevant but incoherent. If the discourse does take place in the second situation, the role of B’s utterance play is the same as a gesture. During the conversation, B finds that A has fallen her/his wallet and tells her/him. Obviously B’s utterance is not coherent with A’s question for they are two different topics. However, in the daily life communication, B’s utterance is not the end of the discourse, he/she will continue to answer A’s question. As a single utterance it is both relevant and coherent to A. As the topic of the discourse is concerned, it is an independent one in the whole discourse. A will have a sense that B’s utterance is coherent or not to his/her question only when he/she are sure that B is answering for his/question rather than other intentions.

During the process of communication, both the participants select the assumptions in their cognitive context flexibly to adapt the changes in the communication. If every segment in a discourse or different stages of a discourse is under the same topic and is relevant optimally to the hearer, it is coherent.

## V. CONCLUSION

Relevance and coherence are two independent psychological terms in linguistics though there are some relations between them. Relevance theory just provides a way for the study of coherence from cognitive point of view, however, we can not use one to replace another because the judging criteria for relevance and coherence is utterly different. For example, A and B are waiting for a bus when both of them see that the bus is coming. At this moment A says: “The bus is coming”. A’s utterance is not optimally relevant to B because it is not relevant enough to be worth B’s processing effort but it is acceptable to A. Coherence and relevance are two definitions from different perspectives, both of them are the important factors in the production and comprehension of discourses.

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# A CDA Approach to the Biased Interpretation and Representation of Ideologically Conflicting Ideas in Western Printed Media

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**Abstract**—As one of the most important sites in which and through which national agenda is articulated and disseminated, national newspapers play particularly important roles in representing and interpreting news stories (Li, 2009, p. 85). Drawing on Van Dijk's (1998) socio-cognitive approach and Fairclough's (1995) approach of intertextual analysis of news discourse and within the paradigm of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), this study examined how three cases of ideologically conflicting ideas are interpreted and represented in western printed media. The conflicting ideas taken into account included *Iran Nuclear Program*, *Iran Sanctions*, and *Syria Crisis* for which the ideological stances of Iranian officials and most of the western countries strongly differ. Meanwhile, the study attempted to clarify how linguistic tools can carry ideological traits in their discursal properties resulting in misrepresentation of above-mentioned news stories while at the same time legitimating the ideological stances of their favorite sources. Interestingly, the findings revealed that linguistic tools are among the most important devices through which ideological proclivities can be placed in the news stories of newspapers. Besides, such linguistic tools as *lexicalization and collocational patterns, presupposition, intertextuality, and modality* were identified as the items with the highest frequency of use in the representations of such news stories.

**Index Terms**—critical discourse analysis, ideology, bias, representation, conflicting ideas, western printed media

## I. INTRODUCTION

As Das (2009) puts, with the rapid advancement of science and technology in the 21<sup>st</sup> century the role of media is omnipresent for all "positive and negative changes" in the society no matter of geographical location but it depends how media functions in its duties and responsibilities in such situation. Hence, media as a whole has its "potentiality either to affect any social development or to get affected by the factors of the social change" (Das, 2009, p. 1). Television broadcasts and newspaper stories are arguably the most important source of information about the conduct of governments and politicians. The media's central role in determining what information the public has justifies the recent increased attention to how the media shapes public knowledge, attitudes, and behavior (Karlan & Bergan, 2007, p. 2). Media sources may influence the public not only by choosing the slant of a particular report, but also merely by choosing what to report (George & Waldfogel, 2006, as cited in Gerber, Karlan & Bergan, 2007, p. 2).

The news media, however, is widely viewed as *biased*. But the question is that: where can the bias in reporting be detected and what is the tool for it? Answering to this question, Richardson (2007) introduces "*Language* as the medium to do so" (pp. 13-14). He examines the language use [discourse] of newspapers and identifies language as a "*non-neutral element*":

[...] language is social. Language is central to human activity; indeed it is one of the things that make us human. It is through the use of language that we grant meaning to our actions; equally, it is through our use of language that we can attempt to remove meaning from our actions. (Richardson, 2007, p. 10)

Given all the above-mentioned ideas, this study tries to investigate the ways language is used by the public media in general and online printed news media in particular to represent and interpret some news stories of conflicting ideas between Iran and western countries. Among the existing conflicting ideas between Iran and the majority of western countries, three issues which are more arguable and transparent have been chosen including: *Iran's Nuclear Program*, *Iran Sanctions*, and *Syria Crisis* which are still some ongoing issues at present. Furthermore, it was attempted to show how "the use of language" can change the meanings of ideas as well as reversing them in some strong cases.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### A. Language

Language is an important aspect of "personal and cultural identity, as well as being the carrier of knowledge" (Askeland & Payne, 2006, p. 736). Rogers and colleagues (2005) believe that language indexes, expresses, and constitutes social relations, while and at the same time challenging social relations. In this framework, language becomes "dialogic, intertextual, and historically based" (p. 376). Considering social and cultural aspects of language Bell (1997) mentions that "language constitutes social reality as well as reflecting it" (Wang, 2009, p. 753). Moreover, Bakhtin (1981) believes that there is no creation of language in the discourse that is not influenced by certain social groups, classes, discourses, conditions or relationships; we thus consider language to be "both constitutive of the social world as well as constituted by other social practices" (as cited in Wang, 2009, p. 753; Li, 2009, p. 91; Joye, 2010, p. 590). Investigating the relationship between media and language choice is of prime importance in critical and analytical studies and that is the reason why Popp (2006) expresses that "media language choice is an institutionalized means of framing reality" (p. 6). Therefore, framing social, political, cultural, economic, and ideological realities highly depends on the language use of the mass media in general, and printed news media in particular. In this case Ives (2004) narrates Gramsci's notion of language where he saw language as central to establishing, and to understanding the organization of consent. According to Ives (2004, p. 7):

Language is spread predominantly not by government or state coercion [or persuasion], military or police action, but by speakers accepting the prestige and utility of new languages, phrases or terms. Yet the idea that we have totally free choice over the language we use, the words we speak, is clearly misleading. (Ives, 2004, p. 7, as cited in Demont-Heinrich, 2008, p. 274)

### B. Ideology

The concept of ideology has been defined by many different schools of thought and a vast number of different scholars working on ideology, power relations, hegemonic trends as well as discourse studies. Once it was largely associated with the "Marxist theory of base and superstructure" (Vighi & Feldner, 2007, p. 144). Bloor and Bloor (2007) believe that "we can gloss ideology as a set of beliefs or attitude shared by members of a particular social group" (p. 10). They truly mention that most discourse used by members of a group tends to be ideologically based. However, the beliefs or attitudes that stem from ideology may not always be held consciously by individuals; they can be so deeply ingrained in our thought patterns and language that we take them for granted as self-evident. Where a belief is held consciously, it is possible to consciously question what it means or even to stand out against it as an individual. However, where it has become a socially imbued unconscious attitude, it is much more difficult to question – even to oneself – and extremely hard to challenge openly in the social arena (Bloor & Bloor, 2007, p. 10).

While numerous theoretical definitions of ideology exist, it is believed that Van Dijk's (1998) definition is particularly well suited to the study of ideology through a critical discourse analysis approach which is the framework of this research task. To elaborate the case let's define the concept of ideology in Van Dijk's theoretical framework where it refers to the social representations within a group, embodying between-group conflicts. In his terms:

Ideologies are representations of who we are, what we stand for, what our values are, and what our relationships are with other groups, in particular our enemies or opponents, that is, those who oppose what we stand for, threaten our interests and prevent us from equal access to social resources and human rights (residence, citizenship, employment, housing, status and respect, and so on). In other words, an ideology is a self-serving schema for the representation of *Us* and *Them* as social groups. This means that ideologies probably have the format of a group schema, or at least the format of a group schema that reflects *Our* fundamental social, economic, political or cultural interests. (Van Dijk, 1998, p. 69, as cited in Tardy, 2009, p. 267)

### C. Van Dijk's Notion of 'Ideological Square'

Elaborating on his thesis, Van Dijk (1998) contributes a useful theoretical concept he calls the '*ideological square*', which encapsulates the twin strategies of positive '*ingroup*' description and negative '*outgroup*' description. The double strategy of this binary opposition is often manifested in discourse by lexical choice and other linguistic features (Van Dijk, 1998, p. 33, as cited in Hakam, 2009, p. 37). Van Dijk maintains that many group ideologies involve the representation of *Self* and *Others*, *Us* and *Them*. Many therefore seem to be polarized – We are Good and They are Bad, and the '*ideological square*' functions to polarize in- and out-groups in order to present the '*We*' group in a favorable light and the '*They*' group unfavorably (Kuo & Nakamura, 2005, p. 410). Thus, as Van Dijk (1993) clarifies an additional strategy used to express assimilationism is to represent the '*other*' in a negative light which is known as '*negative other presentation*' (Tardy, 2009, p. 282). This ideological polarization may be implemented by a large variety of forms such as the choice of lexical items that imply positive or negative evaluations, as well as in the structure of whole propositions and their categories (as in active/passive, etc.). This strategy of polarization consists of "emphasizing our good properties/actions; emphasizing their bad properties/actions, mitigating our bad properties/actions; and mitigating their good properties/actions" (Kuo & Nakamura, 2005, p. 410).

### D. Critical Discourse Analysis

There are a number of approaches towards CDA. Amongst such various approaches to CDA this study mainly considers the frameworks presented by Van Dijk (1996, 2001), and Fairclough (1999) where Van Dijk articulates Textual Linguistics and Social Cognition; and Fairclough has a more Sociological approach (Resende, 2009, p. 364). According to Fowler (1991), believing that language is a reality-creating social practice, and anything that is said or written about the world is articulated from a particular ideological position, CDA emphasizes the need to critically examine the role of newspaper language. The ideology of the news writers, according to CDA, is not always apparent but is hidden in the subtle choice of linguistic forms, and only by examining linguistic structures in a 'critical' way can the ideological underpinnings of news discourse be unpacked (Fowler, 1991, p. 10, as cited in Kuo & Nakamura, 2005, p. 395). In this regard, Ng and Bradac (1993) echo CDA by emphasizing the importance of not accepting a presented reality at its face value but reading it critically instead (Kuo & Nakamura, 2005, pp. 410-11). CDA therefore provides the means to investigate the ways in which language operates in social life. It illuminates the universalization of specific discourses and the linking of specific texts to ideologies, perceived as symbolic constructions working towards maintaining dominant structures (Thompson, 1990, as cited in Resende, 2009, p. 365).

#### E. Van Dijk's Socio-cognitive Approach to CDA

In Van Dijk's (2001) model of critical discourse analysis, three components illustrate how discourse may reflect social ideologies, namely: discourse, cognition, and society. Discourse refers to discourse structures realized in diverse forms, such as written text, speech, gestures, facial expressions, etc. Cognition here includes personal/social beliefs, understanding, and evaluation engaged in discourse, while society concerns local interlocutor relationships or global societal structures such as political systems and group/subgroup relations. Concerned with all three aspects at once, Van Dijk states that 'it is only the integration of these accounts that may reach descriptive, explanatory and especially critical adequacy in the study of social problems' (p. 98). In other words, social ideology may be reflected by identifying 'the crucial link between macrolevel analyses of groups, social formations and social structure, and microlevel studies of situated, individual interaction and discourse' (Van Dijk, 1995, p. 1, as cited in Wang, 2009, p. 748).

#### F. Fairclough's Approach to CDA

Like van Dijk's, Fairclough's (1995) framework for discourse analysis has three components. The first dimension is *text analysis*, which includes both micro- and macro-levels of text structures; Fairclough's analysis at the textual level involves use of Halliday's systemic functional linguistics and the three domains of ideational, interpersonal, and textual analysis (Kuo & Nakamura, 2005). The ideational functions include meta-narratives that circulate in society. Analysis at this level includes transitivity, which involves the different processes, or types of verbs, involved in the interaction. The interpersonal functions are the meanings of the social relations established between participants in the interaction. Analysis of this domain includes an analysis of the mood (whether a sentence is a statement, question, or declaration) and modality (the degree of assertiveness in the exchange). The textual domain involves the thematic structure of the text. The second is *analysis of discourse practice*, through which texts are produced and received; this dimension involves analysis of the process of production, interpretation, distribution, and consumption. It is concerned with how people interpret and reproduce or transform texts. The third dimension is *analysis of social practices*, focusing in particular on the relation of discourse to power and ideology; this practice, is concerned with issues of power - power being a construct that is realized through inter-discursivity and hegemony. Analysis of this dimension includes exploration of the ways in which discourses operate in various domains of society. Of course, both van Dijk's and Fairclough's versions of CDA focus on media text and context (Kuo & Nakamura, 2005, p. 398; Rogers et al., 2005, p. 371).

### III. METHODOLOGY

In the present study, two sets of data were examined in order of priority and importance in journalism: *headlines* and *lead paragraphs*. The choice of the headlines for a close examination is motivated by the fact that the headlines serve to define the topic of a text, and what appears in the headline is usually considered the most pertinent and important information in the text (Bowles & Borden, 1997 as cited in Wang, 2009, p. 756). Turning to the reasons why lead paragraphs were selected, it should be noted that a summary lead is the "first sentence(s) in a straight news story which serves to summarize the news event and by principle, it is to be written to include only the most important facts of the story" (Lee, 2006, p. 317-318). Hence, if this part of the news story bears a kind of ideological bias, it will suffice to meet the objectives of the present study. Accordingly, the analysis of full texts was overlooked to prevent a sense of redundancy in the task.

To fulfill the task, some news excerpts of western newspapers –from UK and US - were selected as the samples for analysis. The samples were aggregated from a time period of 25 January through 25 August 2012. Among the newspapers published in the US and UK, ten of the most popular and highly referred ones were selected including *Independent*, the *Daily Mirror*, the *Guardian*, the *Daily Telegraph*, the *Daily Mail* from the UK; and the *New York Times*, the *Los Angeles Times*, the *USA Today*, the *Washington Post*, the *Wall Street Journal* from the US.

The procedure for analyzing data included the citation of ten headlines for each ideologically-conflicting topic. These headlines were examined one by one followed by a brief description. Then, the related lead paragraphs followed the headlines of the topic along with their descriptions and analyses. These paragraphs were analyzed from three perspectives: *lexicalization and collocational patterns*, *ideological square*, and *intertextual framing*. After applying suitable linguistics tools for each case, the study turned to the other topics. Similarly, this cycle was repeated for the other two topics too. Finally, the results were gathered and presented.

#### IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The news excerpts chosen to be analyzed in this chapter were categorized based on their topics. This classification respectively included: *Iran Nuclear Program*, *Iran Sanctions*, and *Syria Crisis*. All these topics are ideologically controversial since Iran's viewpoints for them are completely different from those of the western counterparts.

##### A. *Iran Nuclear Program: Headline Analysis*

(Daily Mail, 01 August 2012)

**Defense Secretary Leon Panetta threatens Iran with military strike if it develops nuclear weapons, but Israel says the promises of force aren't enough**

The headline issues *threat* of a *possible attack* on Iran if the country continues its *nuclear weapons program*. It is a threatening sentence which implies that its agents - *Defense Secretary Leon Panetta* and *Israel* – have the power, authority, ability as well as legitimacy to *strike* Iran if the country tries to develop *nuclear weapons*. As it is clear this headline is overwhelmingly biased and full of presuppositions, since when the reader comes across this headline s/he takes for granted that Iran is developing nuclear weapons or at least trying to do so – because the headline is accusing the country of these efforts; Iran is responsible for any possible strike which may happen for it is Iran which is developing nuclear arms; Defense Secretary Leon Panetta and Israel are strong entities that can take practical measurements against Iran if needed – through the use of an active voice which makes the subjects seem powerful; and finally, there must be heavier pressure on Iran and even some practical actions should be devised to stop the country from developing nuclear munitions – because mere promises of force are not sufficient to reach the desired aim. Moreover, the way of titling *Leon Panetta* as the *Defense Secretary* injects a degree of formality and seriousness to the threat made by him. It implies that a formal official with authority and liability is menacing Iran of a probable military strike and not a layman, a journalist or commentator, for example.

Looking through a syntactical lens, the use of *if* clause - *if it develops nuclear weapons* – puts the responsibility and causality of the action, namely a *military strike*, on Iran; because we know that *if* clause is a subordinate clause which happens only if its main clause takes place. Hence, a military strike on Iran happens only if the country develops a nuclear bomb program. In this manner, not only the headline threatens Iran, but also it tries to tacitly express that the rationale for a possible attack lies with the decision Iran makes.

Turning to the analysis of lexical elements of the headline, the choice of the verb *develop* bears a verbal presupposition too. Since *develop* means "cause to grow larger, become more powerful from being small or weak", so it is presupposed that Iran has already got nuclear weapons which the country is trying to make them grow larger this time (Oxford, 1975, p. 78). Everybody familiar with Iran's nuclear program knows that the country has never been cited as a state with nuclear arms by International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) – though there have been some informal accusations. Therefore the headline could choose the verb *start*, which suggests a beginning to something and not making it progress, in order to presuppose the mentioned fact. The last notification related to this headline can be seen in the case of the nominalized verb *promise*. The nominalization used here tries to cover over some aspect of the process that is embarrassing or ideologically uncomfortable, i.e. it implies that instead of making a promise a practical measure should be taken, for instance an attack on Iran.

##### **1. *Iran Nuclear Program: Analysis of Lead Paragraphs Wearing the Lens of Lexical and Collocational Patterns***

Because of the prime importance lexicalization has in CDA studies, and since lexical analysis is one of the most useful tools to understand whether a news story is ideologically biased or not, this linguistic tool was chosen as the first lens of analysis for lead paragraphs. Here is a list of words or collocational patterns which carry ideological traces in their reports for Iran's nuclear program:

TABLE 1.  
IDEOLOGY-LADEN LEXIS AND COLLOCATIONAL PATTERNS USED IN LEADS TO REPRESENT IRAN'S NUCLEAR PROGRAM

	Newspaper	Lexical Choices and Collocational Patterns
1	DML	<i>Raised the threat of a military strike</i> ; if the nation <i>develops</i> nuclear <i>weapons</i> ; to <i>reassure</i> a <i>jittery</i> Israel.
2	DMR	<i>Military action</i> against the <i>rogue</i> Middle East state; if it <i>continued</i> with its <i>illegal</i> nuclear <i>weapons</i> programme.
3	DT	MI6 agents have <i>foiled</i> ; Iran's <i>attempts</i> to obtain nuclear <i>weapons</i> ; will succeed in <i>arming</i> itself; Secret Intelligence Service has <i>warned</i> .
4	GU	The <i>last chance</i> for a <i>diplomatic solution</i> to the <i>gathering crisis</i> ; will <i>rob</i> diplomacy; its <i>remaining credibility</i> and <i>substantially</i> ; <i>chance</i> of a <i>devastating conflict</i> .
5	IN	<i>Major powers</i> to <i>speed up</i> efforts to <i>stop</i> Iran's nuclear programme; <i>cautioning</i> that it would be <i>tougher</i> to <i>confront</i> the issue; an <i>atomic threshold</i> .
6	LAT	Six <i>world powers</i> ; Tehran's <i>disputed nuclear program</i> .
7	NYT	Israel <i>warning</i> ; it may <i>mount a military strike</i> against Iran; he would <i>press</i> for <i>more</i> time; a <i>campaign</i> of <i>economic sanctions</i> to <i>work</i> on Tehran.
8	UT	Israel <i>views</i> the <i>threat posed</i> by a <i>nuclear-armed</i> Iran; greater <i>urgency</i> than the <i>rest</i> of the <i>world</i> .
9	WP	To <i>convince</i> Israeli Prime Minister; <i>allow</i> Iran to <i>develop</i> a <i>nuclear weapon</i> ; <i>persuading</i> the Israelis to <i>hold off</i> on <i>unilateral military action</i> .
10	WSJ	Iranian nuclear program <i>continues</i> to <i>advance</i> ; <i>pressure</i> by the <i>United States</i> and its <i>international partners</i> ; inspectors <i>prevented</i> from <i>accessing sites</i> and <i>scientists</i> ; <i>Key components</i> of Iran's nuclear program are being <i>dispersed</i> and <i>moved underground</i> .

As it is obvious, the *italicized* words or collocations in the above list imply an ideological understanding in their news reportage. These words or collocations have been subtly applied to represent a negative image of Iran's nuclear program in a way that the readers come to understand that Iran's nuclear program is not a peace-seeking phenomenon; instead it is an attempt to make nuclear bomb and mass destruction weapons. Moreover, in many cases the readers are left with the implication that Iran is challenging the world and peace process in the Middle East because of its suspicious cling to nuclear-related affairs.

### 2. Iran Nuclear Program: Analysis of Lead Paragraphs Wearing the Lens of Ideological Square

There is a clear differentiation between the represented images of "in-group" and "out-group" countries or organizations in the lead paragraphs of the mentioned news stories. Van Dijk's (1998) concept of "ideological square" helps to understand how Iran or Iranians (Others) are degraded as opposed to appreciation of the westerners (We) in the lead paragraphs. The results are as follows:

TABLE 2.  
IDEOLOGICAL SQUARE USED IN LEADS TO REPRESENT IRAN'S NUCLEAR PROGRAM

	Newspaper	Iran/Iranians	UN/IAEA/Western Officials
1	DML	Seeking nuclear weapons; punished.	Powerful; punisher; legitimate; rejecting nuclear weapons.
2	DMR	Violator of international laws; having nuclear weapons program; defiant; convicted.	Strong; punisher; authoritative; rejecting nuclear weapons.
3	DT	Dangerous; seeking nuclear weapons; ill-intended.	Cautious; careful; prosperous; advisor.
4	GU	Trouble-maker; having disputed nuclear program.	Diplomacy seeking; legitimate.
5	IN	Dangerous; seeking nuclear arms; inferior; violator.	Powerful; cautious; superior; legitimate; united.
6	LAT	Suspicious; cause of concern.	Legitimate; cautious; constituting a united front.
7	NYT	Punished; defiant.	Powerful; prepared for an attack; rational; thoughtful.
8	UT	Dangerous; nuclear-armed; threatening; militaristic.	Careful; wise.
9	WP	Cause of concern; seeking nuclear weapons; inferior.	Superior; authoritative; legitimate.
10	WSJ	Punished; suspicious; fraudulent; inferior; potentially dangerous.	United; authoritative; legitimate; punisher; superior.

As it is observed, the image of Iran or Iranian nuclear programs (Others) has been depicted in a negative manner through the implication of such meanings as: *seeking nuclear weapons*, *punished figure*, *violator of international laws*, *having nuclear weapons program*, *defiant*, *convicted*, *dangerous*, *ill-intended*, *trouble-maker*, *having disputed nuclear program*, *inferior*, *suspicious*, *cause of concern*, *threatening*, *militaristic*, *fraudulent*, and *potentially dangerous*. Western officials and their allies (We), in contrast, have been stereotyped as *powerful*, *punisher*, *legitimate*, *rejecting nuclear weapons*, *authoritative*, *cautious*, *careful*, *prosperous*, *advisor*, *diplomacy seeker*, *superior*, *united*, *constituting a united front*, *rational*, *thoughtful*, and *wise*.

### 3. Iran Nuclear Program: Intertextual Analysis of Lead Paragraphs

Intertextual analysis is another tool to extract ideological traces placed in the news texts. The following table itemizes the voices projected in the lead paragraphs to represent Iran's nuclear program. It clarifies the news actors and participants who have their says in the lead paragraphs while at the same time trying to show whose voices have been

silenced (reporting the ideas of one side and ignoring those of the other side) or muted (when no voice from both sides is echoed) in the texts.

TABLE 3.  
NEWS ACTORS AND PARTICIPANTS QUOTED IN THE LEADS TO REPRESENT IRAN'S NUCLEAR PROGRAM

	Newspaper	Voice of Iran/Iranian Officials	Voice of UN/IAEA/Western Officials
1	DML	Silenced	Defense Secretary Leon Panetta
2	DMR	Silenced	The PM of Britain
3	DT	Silenced	MI6 agents; the head of the Secret Intelligence Service
4	GU	No voice	No voice
5	IN	Silenced	Ehud Barak, the Defence Minister of Israel
6	LAT	Iran	Six world powers
7	NYT	Silenced	Israel; President Obama
8	UT	Silenced	Israel; Israel's defense minister
9	WP	Silenced	President Obama; U.S. officials
10	WSJ	Silenced	International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA); agency inspectors

The news actors and speakers in the analyzed newspapers can be divided into two general categories: *Iran or Iranian officials* speaking about their nuclear program; and *Western officials* – and their allies – and international organizations like *UN* and *IAEA* expressing their ideas on Iran's nuclear program. As the table shows, the second group has got a considerable priority for the journalists and newspapers in the news reportage of Iran's nuclear program, that is, when the newspapers are reporting Iran's nuclear program they are largely concerned to project the words and claims of the western officials and not those of the Iranian ones. One of the results of such an intertextual framing is that Iran and Iranian officials can not express their ideas or claims on the issues which are challenged by the western front. Consequently, the readers are deprived from hearing what Iran believes about the *accusations, claims, ideas, and condemnations* made by westerners. In this way, they take for granted that what the westerners say or claim is the immaculate truth and Iran deserves such negative actions or measurements.

**B. Iran Sanctions: Headline Analysis**

The second topic which is ideologically controversial between Iran and western countries deals with the *sanctions* imposed upon Iran by United Nations and the US. Following the Islamic revolution of 1978 in Iran a series of sanctions started to be imposed on the country both by United Nations and the US. These sanctions were expanded little by little and in the recent years they covered such vital areas as banking systems, shipping and navigation tools, and finally oil industry. While Iranian government identifies these sanctions as illegal and ineffective, many western countries believe that such sanctions are preliminary and effective steps to be taken so as to limit Iran's power and authority.

(Daily Mirror, 24 January 2012)
<b>Iran urged to "come to its senses" and drop its nuclear programme as the EU imposes an oil embargo</b>

The headline implies that Iran will behave *wisely* and *stop* its nuclear program when European Union (EU) starts to levy an *oil embargo* on the country's oil industry. Lexically analyzing and in presupposition terms, the choice of the verb *urge* – to make a person or an animal [etc.] move more quickly and in a particular direction, especially by pushing or forcing them - not only degrades Iran's position and prestige to animals and irrational entities, but also it takes for granted that the country can be convinced to behave in the right manner just and just through the use of force – and not conversation (Oxford, 2005, p. 1688). Besides, the marked phrase *come to its senses* presupposes that the country has not been behaving rationally, and that it has been following an illogical manner up to now. In the same vein, the verb *drop* meaning "to not continue with something" also presupposes that Iran has got an ongoing nuclear program (Oxford, 2005, p. 470).

Wearing the lens of transitivity analysis, we might ask such questions as: who punishes whom? Who is the superior? Or who is the inferior? The answers to these questions are EU punishes Iran with oil embargo, EU, and Iran, respectively. Thus, as it is seen in all the cases it is Iran which has the negative attributions while on the other hand EU – or as ideological square suggests *in-group we-* owns all the positive and strong stances.

**1. Iran Sanctions: Analysis of Lead Paragraphs Wearing the Lens of Lexical and Collocational Patterns**

The analysis of lexical items and collocational patterns used in lead paragraphs to depict Iran sanctions was interesting too. The results are as follows:

TABLE 4.  
IDEOLOGY-LADEN LEXIS AND COLLOCATIONAL PATTERNS USED IN LEADS TO REPRESENT IRAN SANCTIONS

	Newspaper	Lexical Choices and Collocational Patterns
1	DML	<i>Tensions</i> with Iran have <i>ratcheted up</i> several <i>notches</i> ; the <i>onset</i> of <i>severe new</i> EU and US sanctions; <i>came into force</i> on 1st July.
2	DMR	Iran has <i>stepped up threats</i> ; the <i>EU agreed</i> an oil embargo <i>against</i> the country.
3	DT	Iranians are <i>abandoning</i> traditional eating habits; being <i>thrown out</i> of work at <i>alarming rates</i> ; <i>running short</i> of medicines as the <i>nation braces</i> itself for <i>fresh</i> sanctions; <i>forcing</i> its leaders to <i>scrap</i> their <i>suspect nuclear programme</i> .
4	GU	Ehud Barak has <i>warned</i> that <i>tougher sanctions</i> need to be <i>imposed</i> ; the <i>unprecedented</i> oil embargo <i>agreed by the European Union</i> earlier this week.
5	IN	The <i>toughest sanctions</i> ; <i>unveiled by the European Union</i> ; the <i>last chance to resolve</i> the <i>nuclear stand-off</i> before <i>military strikes</i> are <i>considered</i> .
6	LAT	Oil embargo <i>took effect</i> ; a <i>defiant</i> Iran; a <i>new round of war</i> games; <i>firing missiles</i> at <i>models</i> of <i>foreign</i> air bases.
7	NYT	<i>Attempting</i> to <i>halt</i> Iran's nuclear program with <i>diplomacy</i> , sanctions and <i>sabotage</i> ; <i>sweeping new</i> sanctions; <i>to cut</i> the country <i>off</i> from the <i>global</i> oil market; the <i>best hope</i> for <i>forcing</i> Iran to <i>change</i> its <i>course</i> .
8	UT	<i>International sanctions</i> ; to <i>pressure</i> its <i>leaders</i> ; to <i>abandon</i> its nuclear <i>aspirations</i> ; sanctions are <i>hurting</i> the Iranian <i>people</i> .
9	WP	<i>Near-constant</i> talk about <i>war</i> with Iran; one <i>counterintuitive possibility</i> ; to <i>deter</i> an <i>Israeli strike</i> ; a <i>pressure campaign</i> ; if <i>pursued vigorously</i> ; <i>eventually</i> lead to <i>regime change</i> in Iran.
10	WSJ	<i>Iranian regime races</i> to <i>fulfill</i> its <i>nuclear ambitions</i> ; the <i>world</i> faces a <i>stark choice</i> ; the <i>risk</i> of a <i>military conflict</i> with Iran; a <i>nuclear arms race</i> in the <i>already-volatile</i> Middle East; if <i>like-minded</i> nations <i>act immediately</i> , to <i>deliver</i> a potentially <i>decisive</i> economic <i>blow</i> to the <i>regime</i> .

The *italicized* words or collocations in the above list imply an ideological understanding in their news reportage. They have been subtly applied to represent a negative image of Iran and legitimize the sanction imposition by western countries. Through an elaborate way of word choice, these collocations try to misrepresent Iran's image and imply that Iran is a defiant country which endangers world peace by its stubborn and invoking activities. In this manner, the readers come to understand that sanction imposition on Iran is a legal measurement which limits the country and makes it obey the rules of western countries. Therefore, the readers have got no choice except to support the western imposition of sanctions on Iran.

### 2. Iran Sanctions: Analysis of Lead Paragraphs Wearing the Lens of Ideological Square

The analysis of ideological square created in the lead paragraphs of the news stories on Iran sanctions indicates that there is a high proclivity to represent westerners as superior to Iranians. This superiority paves the ground for the process of legitimating sanction imposition on the country. The following table elaborates on how Iran or Iranians (Others) are differentiated from westerners (We) in the lead paragraphs of the newspapers manifesting the news of Iran sanctions:

TABLE 5.  
IDEOLOGICAL SQUARE USED IN THE LEADS TO REPRESENT IRAN SANCTIONS

	Newspaper	Iran/Iranians	UN/IAEA/Western Officials
1	DML	Inferior; trouble-maker; punished severely.	Authoritative; limiter; punisher; legitimate.
2	DMR	Irrational; defiant; resistant; invoking.	Punisher; authoritative.
3	DT	Under pressure; punished; weak; poor; seeking nuclear weapons; suspected.	Punisher; authoritative; successful.
4	GU	Punished; defiant; inferior.	Punisher; authoritative; cautious; superior; legitimate.
5	IN	Inferior; causing problem.	Advisor; problem shooter; superior; legitimate; united; powerful.
6	LAT	Defiant; militaristic; invoking; threatening peace.	Punisher.
7	NYT	Punished; defiant; stubborn.	Powerful; superior; legitimate punisher; tactful; rational.
8	UT	Punished; inferior; fraudulent; ambitious.	Superior; punisher; authoritative; legitimate.
9	WP	Under pressure; punished; weak.	Thoughtful; rational; authoritative; punisher; powerful.
10	WSJ	Invoking; suspicious; economically weak; potentially dangerous.	Powerful; authoritative; legitimate; punisher.

As it is observed, the image of Iran or Iranian nuclear programs (Others) has been depicted in a negative frame through the implication of such meanings as: *Inferior, trouble-maker, punished severely, Irrational, defiant, resistant, invoking, Under pressure, weak, poor, seeking nuclear weapons, suspected, militaristic, threatening peace, stubborn, fraudulent, ambitious, economically weak, and potentially dangerous*. Western officials and their allies (We), in contrast, have been stereotyped as: *superior, authoritative, limiter, punisher, legitimate, successful, cautious, advisor, problem shooter, united, powerful, tactful, rational, and thoughtful*.

### 3. Iran Sanctions: Intertextual Analysis of Lead Paragraphs



The analysis of news actors and participants appeared in the lead paragraphs of the news stories reporting on Iran sanctions shows that there is no balance in reporting the voices of the western and Iranian officials speaking about Iran sanctions, i.e. the voices of westerners are projected more frequently than those of the Iranian officials. The following table shows whose voices have been silenced (reporting the ideas of one side and ignoring those of the other side) or muted (when no voice from both sides is echoed) in the lead paragraphs of the news stories reporting on Iran sanctions:

TABLE 6.  
NEWS ACTORS AND PARTICIPANTS QUOTED IN THE LEADS TO REPRESENT IRAN SANCTIONS

	Newspaper	Voice of Iran/Iranian Officials	Voice of UN/IAEA/EU/Western Officials
1	DML	No voice	No voice
2	DMR	Iran	No voice
3	DT	Silenced	No voice
4	GU	Silenced	Israel's defence minister, Ehud Barak
5	IN	Silenced	European Union
6	LAT	Iran	No voice
7	NYT	Silenced	Obama administration; American allies; experts
8	UT	Silenced	Iran analysts
9	WP	Silenced	Obama administration
10	WSJ	Silenced	No voice

The news actors of the news stories reporting on Iran sanctions can be divided into two general categories: *Iran or Iranian officials* speaking about their beliefs on the case; and *Western officials* – and their allies – and international organizations like *EU* and *UN*. As the table shows, the second group has got the upper voice in the news reportage of Iran sanctions, that is, when the newspapers are reporting Iran sanctions they are largely concerned to project the words and claims of the western officials and not those of the Iranian ones. The fact that the voices of western officials have been projected more often (7 to 2) supports this claim. One of the results of such an intertextual framing is that Iran and Iranian officials can not express their ideas about the sanctions imposed on the country by westerners. Consequently, the readers are deprived from hearing a balanced and unbiased report and so more susceptible to go along with the westerners in levying harsher sanctions on Iran.

C. *Syria Crisis: Headline Analysis*

The third and last topic to be analyzed in this study is concerned with the *Syrian Crisis* which started in 2011. After a series of uprisings and revolutions in Arab world and countries like Tunisia, Libya, Egypt and Bahrain – labeled as *Islamic Awakening* by Iran and *Arab Spring* by western countries –this wave reached Syria and the country entered a critical period of riot, street battle and protest. While western countries started to condemn the government of brutal crackdown and an autocratic system of ruling, Iran along with Syria claimed that what is happening inside Syria is not the real desire of the people living there but a series of hooliganism and terrorist acts mainly set up and supported by western countries and their allies to topple the Syrian government and replace it by a secular system. Ignoring which side is correct – for it is not in the domain of the present study - the researcher made an effort to focus on the western manifestations of the case so as to extract those news stories which he found biased in their interpretations and manifestations.

(The Washington Post, 13 July 2012)
<b>Clinton condemns massacre in Syrian village, accuses government of murder</b>

The headline reports Clinton's *condemnation* of the *massacre* in Syrian village as well as her *accusation* of the government of *murder*. It posits 'Clinton' as the subject or in transitivity terms *Senser* of the mental processes 'condemn' and 'accuse'. 'Massacre' and 'government' are the *Phenomena* of these two processes, respectively. Hence, it is Clinton who is active and can project her voice, whereas Syrian government is passive and has got no voice to echo in the headline. Similar to the previous headline once again it is observed that a negative image of Syria has been depicted through representing the country as: *passive object, guilty and brutal, cruel, criminal, and oppressive*.

In lexical terms, the choice of the noun *massacre* meaning "the killing of a large number of people especially in a cruel way" further implies that Syrian government is an aggressive and cruel regime which doesn't care about such vital laws as human rights and democracy (Oxford, 2005, p. 943). In addition, the active voice of Clinton also helps to presuppose that this massacre has really happened and there is no doubt about it, because 'condemn' and 'accuse' are the results of a crime or an illegal action, and can not be expressed if there is not any evil thing.

1. *Syria Crisis: Analysis of Lead Paragraphs Wearing the Lens of Lexical and Collocational Patterns*

Here are the results of this kind of analysis which was done for the lead paragraphs scrutinized:



TABLE 7.  
WORDS AND COLLOCATIONS USED IN THE LEADS TO REPRESENT SYRIA CRISIS

	Newspaper	Lexical Choices and Collocational Patterns
1	DML	The <i>lifeless corpse</i> of <i>four-month-old</i> Afaf Mahmmud Al-Sarakb lies <i>limp</i> and <i>motionless</i> ; <i>tortured to death</i> by <i>government security officers</i> ; parents were <i>arrested</i> .
2	DMR	<i>Top generals fled</i> ; Syrian <i>tyrant</i> Bashar al-Assad; to <i>unleash chemical weapons</i> .
3	DT	A <i>possible strike</i> at Syria's <i>chemical weapons stockpile</i> ; is <i>thought</i> to be <i>the largest</i> in the <i>world</i> .
4	GU	To <i>stop</i> the <i>violence</i> ; the <i>regime</i> of Bashar al-Assad to be <i>violently removed</i> ; <i>fleeing</i> to Qatar; only <i>force</i> could <i>remove</i> the <i>Syrian dictator</i> ; <i>denounced</i> the <i>embattled regime</i> .
5	IN	Damascus <i>bombing killed</i> or <i>severely injured</i> ; Bashar al-Assad's <i>inner circle</i> ; <i>responsible</i> for <i>directing</i> the <i>bloody crackdown</i> ; the <i>uprising</i> .
6	LAT	The <i>Holocaust</i> ; the <i>genocide</i> ; to <i>stop</i> the <i>killing</i> ; <i>violence</i> unfolds in <i>Syria</i> ; <i>ineffectual</i> statements of <i>condemnation</i> .
7	NYT	<i>Growing conviction</i> ; Assad <i>family's</i> 42-year <i>grip on power</i> in Syria; <i>collapse</i> of the Syrian government; <i>chemical weapons</i> Syria is <i>thought</i> to <i>possess</i> ; <i>use</i> on <i>opposition forces</i> and <i>civilians</i> .
8	UT	<i>Western nations expelled</i> Syrian diplomats; the <i>regime</i> of Bashar Assad; only <i>military force</i> can <i>stop</i> the <i>massacre</i> of <i>women</i> and <i>children</i> .
9	WP	A <i>massacre</i> of about 200 <i>people</i> ; <i>international condemnation</i> , <i>accusing</i> the government of having <i>"murdered"</i> <i>civilians</i> .
10	WSJ	<i>Extended</i> its sanctions; <i>confirmed</i> a <i>full Iran oil embargo</i> ; to go into <i>effect</i> .

The *italicized* words or collocations in the above list imply an ideological understanding in their news reportage. These words or collocations have been skillfully applied to represent a negative image of Syria and misrepresent the situation inside the country. In this manner, the readers come to understand that Syrian government is a cruel and savage body which violates human rights and kills its civilians. Meanwhile, it is also implied that the westerners are fighting against the brutality and inhuman measurements of Syrian government.

### 2. Syria Crisis: Analysis of Lead Paragraphs Wearing the Lens of Ideological Square

An "in-group" and "out-group" differentiation between *Iran/Syria officials* and *UN/EU/Western officials* is clear in the lead paragraphs of newspapers reporting on Syria crisis. Van Dijk's concept of "ideological square" helps to understand how the first group (Others) is misrepresented as opposed to appreciation of the second group (We). The results are as follows:

TABLE 8.  
IDEOLOGICAL SQUARE USED IN THE LEADS TO REPRESENT SYRIA CRISIS

	Newspaper	Syria/Iran	UN/EU /Western Officials
1	DML	Criminal; savage; murderer; inhuman; oppressive; violating human rights.	Defending human rights; caring about civilians' lives; sympathetic.
2	DMR	Cruel; criminal; dictator; violating human rights.	Supporting democracy; thoughtful; caring about human rights
3	DT	Having chemical weapons stockpile; potentially dangerous; threatening.	Powerful; legitimate; authoritative; advisor.
4	GU	Dictator; cruel; irrational; violent.	Peace-seeking; powerful.
5	IN	Murderer; cause of massacre; responsible for lost lives.	Defending human rights; caring about civilians' lives.
6	LAT	Violent; committing Holocaust-like crimes; killer; condemned.	Powerful; legitimate; authoritative; constituting a united front.
7	NYT	Non-democratic; inhuman; having chemical weapons; potentially dangerous; threatening.	Authoritative; advisor thoughtful; defending human rights; caring about civilians' lives.
8	UT	Criminal; violent; savage; murderer.	Legitimate; authoritative; advisor; thoughtful; defending human rights; caring about civilians' lives.
9	WP	Condemned; savage; murderer; inhuman.	Defending human rights; caring about civilians' lives; superior.
10	WSJ	Punished; inferior; loser.	Legitimate; punisher; superior.

As it is observed, the image of Syria and Iran (Others) has been depicted in a negative manner through the application of such meanings and concepts as: *criminal, savage, murderer, inhuman, oppressive, violating human rights, cruel, dictator, having chemical weapons stockpile, potentially dangerous, threatening, irrational, violent, murderer, cause of massacre, responsible for lost lives, committing Holocaust-like crimes, killer, condemned, non-democratic, inhuman, potentially dangerous, punished, inferior, and loser*. Western officials and their allies (We), in contrast, have been stereotyped as: *defending human rights, caring about civilians' lives, sympathetic, supporting democracy, thoughtful, powerful, legitimate, authoritative, advisor, peace-seeking, constituting a united front, superior, and punisher*.

### 3. Syria Crisis: Intertextual Analysis of Lead Paragraphs

The last table identifies the voices projected in the lead paragraphs to represent Syria crisis. It clarifies the news actors and participants who appear in the lead paragraphs while at the same time trying to show whose voices have been silenced or muted in the texts.

TABLE 9.  
NEWS ACTORS AND PARTICIPANTS QUOTED IN THE LEADS TO REPRESENT SYRIA CRISIS

	Newspaper	Voice of Syria /Iran Officials	Voice of UN/EU/Western Officials
1	DML	Silenced	No voice
2	DMR	Silenced	Three fled top generals of Syria
3	DT	Silenced	Washington government
4	GU	Silenced	Syria's former envoy to Iraq; the ambassador, Nawaf al-Fares (2)
5	IN	Silenced	No voice
6	LAT	Silenced	The world community; the U.S. and its allies
7	NYT	Silenced	Obama administration officials
8	UT	Silenced	Western nations; anti-Bashar Al-Assad rebels
9	WP	Silenced	Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton
10	WSJ	No voice	The European Union

The news actors and speakers in this part can be divided into two general categories: *Syria /Iran Officials*, and *UN/EU/Western Officials*. As the table shows, the voice of the first group has been completely silenced and muted (zero voice) while the voice of westerners has been empowered dramatically (13 voices). One of the results of such an intertextual framing is that Syrian/Iranian officials can not express their ideas and claims on the issues mentioned by the western front. Furthermore, since there is no balance in reporting the news and because of the negative images westerners present on the case, the possibility to convince the readers that Syrian government is an aggressive figure is strongly increased.

V. CONCLUSION

In a nutshell, the mass media simply cannot provide a perspective that is totally free from subjective interpretation of events; on the contrary, media institutions "tend to construct reality in a manner congruent with their underlying ideological and political functions" (Kuo & Nakamura, 2005, p. 411). In short, the study proved that linguistic tools are among the most important items which result in a biased representation of news stories. Moreover, the results showed that: the language of western newspapers – and particularly American and British ones – is highly ideological while representing the news of conflicting ideas between Iran and western countries. Moreover, the study proved that linguistic tools – or the ways of using these tools - have got an incredible discursal capability to misrepresent news stories. Finally, it was also observed that such ideological representations and biased languages in news media can result in legitimation of one side and suppression of the other side.

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# Challenges of Language Syllabus Design in EFL/ESL Contexts

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**Abstract**—Nowadays with widespread use of English language in different countries and its teaching, the main concern of teachers, syllabus designers, policy makers, institutions are to design course materials which can fulfil students language needs appropriately, however designing such a course material is a daunting task. In this paper the researcher tries to shed light on the major concerns of authority in the field regarding EFL/ESL course designing. The researcher tries to explore the ideas of major authority in the field of language teaching and learning and also applied linguists toward the issue of material development in English language teaching classes. Since every student is unique and his/her need is totally different with his classmate, so finding the trade-off between such varieties of needs is demanding and complicated task. Finally the researcher came with this idea that the teachers should think globally and act locally; in that majority of course books are written in other countries, there are certain conditions in which the teachers have to do amendments in order to meet the needs of their own learners.

**Index Terms**—syllabus design, curriculum development, teacher inactment

Nunan (1988) mentions that there is a great deal of disagreement within the teaching profession on the nature of language and learning. As a consequence, we must decide to select material and components from all angles and perspectives.. He further ratifies that the dire need to make decisions the contents on and choices of materials in deciding what to do include in or omit from specifications of content and which elements are to be the basic building blocks of the syllabus, presents syllabus designers with constant problems. Masuhara (1993) asserts that teachers can even be said to play an indispensable role in the development of materials for their learners and classroom's, and also their role in materials development is very crucial in the post method era.. Richards & Rodgers (2003) mentions that the majority of studies thus far on teachers' variables have focused on their roles in acting as the facilitator of learning and language model provider. Teachers appear to be often regarded and treated as passive beings in both language teaching and language learning. They are often expected to adapt flexibly to the roles determined by the objectives of the method and by the learning theory on which the method is based. Richards & Rodgers (2003) declare that the lack of studies on teacher variables seems distressing in that teachers are in a fundamental position in language teaching and learning and are often anticipated to be in charge of essential stages of curriculum development. The teachers' role in designing materials is very crucial. (Dublin and Olshtain, 1992). Cunningsworth (1998) mentions that the main role of teachers in regard to the choice of the course book is recognized as a guide, a facilitator, and a monitor. The teacher is seen as guiding learners through the learning process, with support from the course book, and monitoring student progress, correcting errors when this is useful for the learning process. Cunningsworth (1998) also asserts that prediction of learning and teaching for teachers are a daunting task, and even teachers, no matter how well they know their classes, often need to make adjustments to their planned lessons so as to provide somewhere to stay an unexpected difficulty faced while teaching an item, or to respond to the mood of a class on a particular day. Bartlett and Butler (1985) as cited in Nunan (1988) assert that each language classroom can be looked on as a rather unique learning environment in which the teacher needs to feel free to insert the required adjustments and modifications in the designed syllabus and the curriculum with respect to goal, objective, the learners and teachers' variables, and other situational factors in order to pave the ground for leading the learners towards fulfilling their needs and expectations as they often find necessary to add a new element to materials at hand. They also refer to the type curriculum in which teacher's adjustments are permissible as *the negotiated curriculum*. The negotiated curriculum refers to those curriculum activities which involve negotiation and consultation between teachers and students. It includes such processes as needs analysis, jointly conducted goal and objective, exercises set by teachers and learners, selection of preferred methodology through negotiation, materials and learning activities, and the sharing of evaluation and self-evaluation procedures. The teacher should not hesitate to make the necessary decisions if they seem appropriate. Decisions like selecting a whole course, omitting certain exercises, and adapting a communicative activity all lie with the teacher. The learners would benefit from teachers adjustments if teachers feel free to make them where they feel necessary. On receiving feedback from students, it is ultimately the teacher who makes decisions. These decisions may be macro decisions, such as deciding which course to use or planning a year's work, or they might be micro decisions which are taken quickly as a lesson progress, such as deciding to do an extra exercise on a grammar topic or postponing a listening activity until a later lesson Cunningsworth, 1998). Widdowson (1984) focuses on needs of the learners in this regard. He expresses that there may be a case for concentrating on the learners' needs in the first sense in order to delimit initially the language to be included in a course; but needs of the second kind-learning needs- will have to be taken into account in the

methodological implementation of course proposals. Crombie (1988) seriously questions the validity and usefulness of many available textbooks that aim at teaching English to enthusiastic language learners worldwide. He ponders upon the issue by raising a question that he himself bids to answer it, why has there been such a proliferation of language materials in the market?

Tomlinson (1998) asserts that there are four components which can be considered as the main components of which deserve discussing. The first one is the impact of the materials on the needs and curiosity of the learners and type of effects that arouse attention and interests of learners. Certainly, to attain these goals in the classroom, they must fully aware of their own learners so as to adapt material which is appropriate, fruitful and focused on the needs of the learners. The Second one, the teachers should include authentic material which takes place in the real life for the learners. The materials should also arouse the learners interaction and engagement with input. (Tomlinson, 1998). The third characteristics which have got paramount importance, materials should engage all learners with different learning styles and intelligences. If teachers know their students, they will design activities in which students can really feel at ease using their learning preferences and abilities Rubdy (2003) also maintains that given the complexity of the whole language learning process, even with the best intentions no single textbook can possibly work in all situations. Saraceni (2003) also believes that published materials present a kind of paradox: in the majority of cases they become rather superficial and non-participatory because the writers of such materials tend to cater for all the needs and learning styles of language learners. Learners of language should have a feeling that the whole language is not grammatical points, words and their use, however, a dynamics that they can have their own likes and dislikes making learning language joyful and enjoyable.. Finally, materials adaptation is the guidance towards students' autonomy and independence.

Graves (2000) explains that designing a language course has several components. She continues that classical models of curriculum design as well as more recent models agree on most of the components although they may subdivide some of them and give them slightly different names. McDonough and Shaw (1993) list the following as some of the reasons for adopting materials: 1) not enough coverage of the intended skills, 2) not enough practice of the intended skills, 3) text difficulty, 4) lack of authenticity of materials, 5) inappropriate subject matter, 6) culturally inappropriate materials, 7) not enough match between the course time and the amount of materials to be covered, 8) lack of communicative tasks. Islam and Mares (2003) also add the following to McDonough and Shaw's list. The authors include such factors as: 1) methods of presenting materials, 2) the language of presented materials, 3) subject matter of the presented materials, 4) making a balance between the skills in the presentation of materials, 5) progression and gradation of the selected materials, 6) cultural content of the selected materials, 7) artistic aspects of the selected materials. McDonough and Shaw (1993) provide a list of objectives that a teacher may hope to achieve by adapting classroom materials. They state that in order to attain greater appropriacy from materials, the teachers can adapt to personalize, individualize, and localize. In order to personalizing the materials, the teacher should try to increase the relevance of content in relation to learners' interests and needs. Individualization of the materials addresses learner differences, including the learners' learning and cognitive styles. Localization, as it is described by McDonough and Shaw "takes into account the international geography of English language teaching and recognition that what may work in one place may not do so in another location" (p. 78).

These components, according to Graves (2000), comprise setting objectives based on some form of assessment; determining content, materials, and method; and evaluation. She developed a chart as the framework of course development and she hoped to capture two aspects of course design. The first aspect is that there is no hierarchy in the processes and no sequence in their accomplishment. As a course designer you can begin anywhere in the frame work, as long as it makes sense to you to begin where you do. She expresses that deciding where to begin will depend on how you problematize your situation, that is, how to determine the challenges that you can most productively address within the context. Graves (2000) argues that when you design a course, examining, framing, and attempting to solve the dilemmas of classroom practice become examining, framing, and attempting to address the challenges of course design.

It is interesting to note that how the two kinds of need were related in the design of structural syllabuses of the conventional kind. He continues that needs analysis for ESP has generally been concerned with the specification of aims in this sense, and methodological modification has not been very much in evidence. This is not to say that the importance of such modification has not been recognized. Dubin and Olshtain (1986) express that objectives pay attention to more general, ordinary, social and institutional needs address more general, societal, community, or institutional concerns. They should consider language policy and planning and the role of foreign /second language in the society and issues being main concern of the learners, society and institutional needs .They determine the goals to be manifested in the course.

According to Nunan (1988), syllabus design is essentially concerned with the selection and grading of content. It formed a sub-component of the planning phase of curriculum development. He continues that the first question to confront the syllabus designer is where the content is to come from in the first place. (p.37). When the selecting of materials are considered as much of importance, in this regards the needs of the learners should be paid attended, so what is need analysis?

Needs analysis is defined by Nunan (1988) as an information gathering process when he referred to needs analysis as "techniques and procedures for collecting information to be used in syllabus design" (p. 13) Moreover, in Richards & Platt, (1992, p. 242) needs analysis is defined as "the process of determining the needs for which a learner or group of

learners require a language and arranging the needs according to priorities". Hutchinson & Waters (1997) defined needs analysis by distinguishing between target needs, i.e. what the learner needs to do in order to learn, and 'wants' which represent the learners' views regarding what their needs are. Target needs; according to the authors include 'necessities' which refer to what the learner has to know in order to function effectively in the target situation. While, 'lacks' which refer to need to know what the learner knows already in order to decide which of the necessities the learner actually 'lacks' (pp. 54-56). Wilkins described the synthetic approach in the following terms:

A synthetic language teaching strategy is one in which the different parts of language are taught separately and step by step so that acquisition is a process of gradual accumulation of parts until the whole structure of language has been built up.(Wilkins, p.2). As Maftoon (2001) states it is improbable to be involved in communicative syllabus design without recognizing and analyzing the language needs of the learners. He mentions that "the reason is that if language is a system for expressing meanings and if language learners have different communicative purposes, then these communicative purposes are surely to be reflected in the materials the learners should be taught and to be materialized in the activities they will later engaged in target situations. Therefore the first step in the construction of a language syllabus is to define objectives based upon an analysis of the needs of the learners. Mackay (1965) lists the final criterion for selection and grading as learnability. He gives five factors which are taken into account when considering the learnability of a word:

- a. similarity of the L2 words to its L1 equivalent make them easy to learn
- b. concrete words are easier than abstract ones to learn
- c. long words are more difficult
- d. regularity seen in the words make them easy to learn
- e. some components of the words are already known which make learning those words easy

Clark (1987) also explains that an analysis of the content of a particular subject into its constituent elements of knowledge determines what is to be taught and learnt. This is then sequenced in what is deemed to be a logical way from the simple to be the more complex.

Content selection is an important component of a learner-centered curriculum. In such a curriculum clear criteria for content selection give guidance on the selection of materials and learning activities and assist in assessment and evaluation. The answer in part is that they are easy to write and they only have face validity: they look good. They look good precisely because their authors have been released into seemingly limitless freedom. This freedom result from the fact that they are free to put almost anything anywhere. Part of the problem here is that publishers have responded almost too well. They have excelled themselves in terms of layout, artwork and graphics. Indeed I believe that the success of many courses is almost entirely attributed to the production teams in publishing houses (Crombie, 1988, p.290).

Crombie is not the only critic of existing materials; other researchers have also attended to various problems with materials. For instance, McDonough and Shaw (1993) propose that no matter how internally coherent the textbooks are, they may not be suitable for the context of use.

Masuhara (1998) contends that any given course book will be incapable of catering for the diversity of needs which exists in most language classrooms. Due to the fact that publishers opt for global markets to sell their products, specific needs of learners become of secondary importance (Maley, 1998).

There is no end to the list of the shortcomings; however, the key point remains: teachers, with direct personal knowledge of their classroom teaching, should regard textbooks as their servants and not masters (Littlejohn, 1998). Materials adaptation allows language teachers to achieve more compatibility and fitness between the textbook and the teaching environment, it, therefore; maximizes the value of the book for the intended learners, this would in turn lead to reconciling materials as 'constraint' with materials as 'empowerment' (Maley, 1998, p. 279).

Island and Mares (2003) extend this list of objectives to include: 1) real choice, 2) learner autonomy, 3) higher level cognitive accessibility, 4) accessibility of language input, and 5) more engaging language input.

For a teacher who wants to adapt materials a number of options are available. Maley (1998) enlists these options as: 1) Omission, 2) addition, 3) reduction, 4) extension, 5) rewriting and modification, 6) replacement, 7) reordering, and 8) branching. Islam and Mars also introduce such steps as: 1) adding, that includes extending and expanding, 2) deleting, that includes such steps as subtracting and abridging, 3) simplifying, 4) reordering, and 5) replacing. In one of the most comprehensive descriptions of the process of materials adaptation, McDonough and Shaw (1993) recount the adaptation techniques as following: 1) adding, 2) deleting, 3) modifying, 4) simplifying, and finally 5) reordering. The notion of addition implies that materials are supplemented by putting more into them, while considering the practical effect on time allocation. Addition process according to these authors can include both extension and expanding. During the extension process, language teacher "supplies more of the same materials" (p.79), in other words, the teacher does not modify methodology or language teaching model in order to attain the desired objectives. Expanding is distinct from extension in that the language teacher changes the methodology. Deletion is the opposite process to that of addition. This technique includes such activities as subtraction and abridgement. Subtraction is quantitative reduction of the content without any methodological change in the content. Abridgement, on the contrary, influences the methodology as well as the content. Modification includes such steps as rewriting and restructuring. Rewriting is utilized when the content of the materials needs modification, restructuring, on the other hand, applies to classroom management.

Simplification is another technique that language teachers can utilize for the purpose of adapting language materials. As McDonough and Shaw put it simplification is can be regarded as one aspect of modification or 'rewriting' to be exact. Since simplification has received considerable attention in its own right, the writers assign a separate category to this technique. Many parts of course material can be simplified, this includes such aspects as: 1) sentence structure, 2) lexical content, 3) grammatical structures as well as instructions and explanations that accompany exercises and activities. Widdowson (1979) extensively discusses the process of simplification and draws our attention to some of the problem that simplification may cause. These include stylistic change in meaning that will lead to the text's incompressibility. Last but by no means least, McDonough and Shaw refer to reordering process that "refers to the possibility of putting the parts of a textbook in a different order" (p. 83). This may mean the adjustment of presentation sequence within a unit or taking units in a different sequence from that originally intended.

Richards (2001) explains that in developing goals for educational programs, curriculum planners draw on their understanding both of the present and long-term needs of learners and of society as well as the planners' beliefs and ideologies about schools, learners, and teachers. He emphasizes that the justification for the aims of curriculum stresses the intrinsic value of the subject matter and its role in developing the learners' intellect, humanistic values, and rationality. Richards (2001) mentions that in curriculum discussions the terms 'goal' and 'aim' are used interchangeably to refer to a description of the general purposes of a curriculum and objective to refer to a more specific and concrete description of purposes. An aim refers to a statement of a general change that a program seeks to bring about in learners. According to Richards (2001), the purposes of aim statements are: To provide a clear definitions of the purposes of a program, To provide guidelines for teachers, learners, and materials writers, To help provide a focus for instruction, To describe important and realize changes in learning.

Richards (2001) believes that aims statements reflect the ideology of the curriculum and show how the curriculum will seek to realize it. He continues that an 'objective' refers to a statement of specific changes a program seeks to bring about and results from an analysis of the aim into its different components. Objectives, for Richards, have the following characteristics: They describe what the aim seeks to achieve in terms of smaller units of learning. They provide a basis for the organization of teaching activities. They describe learning in terms of observable behavior or performance.

He continues that the advantages of describing the aims of a course in terms of objectives are: They facilitate planning: Once objectives have been agreed on, course planning, materials preparation, textbook selection, and related processes can begin. They provide measurable outcomes and thus provide accountability: Given a set of objectives, the success or failure of a program to teach the objectives can be measured. They are perspective: They describe how planning should proceed and do away with subjective interpretations and personal opinions.

Richards (2001) emphasizes that objectives should be consistent with the curriculum aim. Nunan (1988) also explains that goal statements are relatively imprecise. While they can act as general signposts, they need to be fleshed out in order to provide information for course and program planners. This can be achieved through the specification of objectives.

Nunan (1988 a) points out that objectives are really nothing more than a particular way of formulating or stating content and activities. Thus how one conceptualizes and states objectives depends on how one conceptualizes the content of the course.

Munby (1978, p.217) mentions it as a constraint on the implementation of the aim specification derived from operational instrument: These implementational constraints are, of course, significant in the modification of syllabus specifications and production of materials, but that is the next stage in course design and should not take place until after the output from the operational instrument has been obtained." (Munby, 1978, p. 217)

Taba's steps which a course designer must work through to develop subject matter courses and these steps have become the foundations for many other writers' suggestions are outlined by Dubin and Olshtain (1986). These steps are: needs and wants distinction, recognizing of purposes, providing content materials, learning activities, and what should be assessed and tested.

Stern (1992 cited in Graves 1996) proposes four types of goals for language learners: Proficiency goals, cognitive goals, affective goals, and transfer goals. In an ideal situation, thus, goals are determined by carefully examining information about the patterns of language use within the various domains of the society, as well as by studying group and individual attitudes towards English and toward all other languages which are used in the setting. Objectives, in turn, are specific outcomes or products of courses which are outlined in a syllabus. Dubin and Olshtain (1986) agreed that the aims lead teachers and assist learners to understand what is going on the course and what the reason is. Course designers ideally make use of information from all interested sources when they write objectives. In some countries, according to Dubin and Olshtain (1986), general goals of a language program might be defined more narrowly if the system has different types of schools, for example: Academic high schools, scientific high schools, vocational high schools. On the basis of broader goals, it is necessary to set up a number of intermediate objectives in an attempt to specify expected outcomes at each stage.

Clear goals and objectives give the teacher a basis for determining which content and activities are appropriate for her course. They also provide a framework for evaluation of the effectiveness or worth of an activity. Widdowson (2003) believes that the purpose of the course is to give momentum and direction, to establish vectors, so to speak, for subsequent learning, and thus to provide bearings whereby learners can make sense and learn from their own linguistic

experience. It is worth mentioning to refer to Graves (1996) who believes that to arrive at the goals, one asks the question, "What are the purposes and intended outcomes of the course?" The answer may be influenced by an analysis of students' needs, the policies of the institution, and the way the teacher conceptualizes content, among other factors.

Breen (1989) expresses that in discovering what learners themselves regard as the most valuable purposes for a task or tasks, the classroom group is necessarily involved in the specification of their needs in learning. He argues that a general approach would require the learners to identify as clearly as possible individual and group goals for language learning. Learner goals may be initially vague and certainly change over time and become more refined and realistic.

Stern (1989) argues that it is necessary that language teaching always pursue all the objectives and content areas simultaneously. The criterion statement one might suggest is that a language policy is better to the extent that it identifies as clearly as possible both its objectives and the content of teaching, and justifies its priorities on rational grounds, that is, why it emphasizes one or the other content area or this or that objective to a greater or lesser extent.

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# An Output-guided Study of Chinese Students' ESA Difficulty

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**Abstract**—English subjunctive mood is always considered as the most difficult part of English teaching. English subjunctive mood carries specific grammatical features such as verbal inflexions, sentences structure, tenses and the understanding of counterfactual meaning. Swain (1985, 1995a, 1995b) poses Output Hypothesis to explain the difficulty of the L2 learners. Based on the hypothesis, pedagogical instructions are also provided theoretically. Other scholarly efforts such as Levelt (1989) and Gass (1988, 1997) are also made to establish the models of SLA. Output Hypothesis is largely applied to a lot of empirical studies, but a specific framework is never found to explain and solve the ESA difficulty that Chinese college English majors have. The present research, on one hand, evaluates the models of SLA, on the other hand introduces Schema in cognitive linguistics to establish a framework that can explain and solve the ESA difficulty.

**Index Terms**—English subjunctive mood, SLA, output hypothesis

## I. INTRODUCTION

English subjunctive mood is under academic arguments of whether it exists independently in English grammar or not. However, most scholarly studies believe it's existence. Traditional notion considers it as an inflexion of verb pattern in grammar, but cognitively it's a special conveyance of the counterfactual meaning, Chinese students have problem in the acquisition of English subjunctive mood<sup>1</sup>. Actually, according to some cognitive linguistic theories, English subjunctive mood is the superficial manifestation of an independent and special human thought process. Chinese students of course possess this common human cognition experience instinctively but problems will rise in their production of specific English subjunctive mood in verb transformation and sentence making.

This difficulty in acquisition must be analyzed based on two basic agreements: difficulty in the linguistic forms (grammar) and its cognitive mechanism. For example, from the perspective of transfer problem, Bloom (1981) has conducted some interesting but controversial studies on the differences between how Chinese and English speakers reason. Bloom insists that since the Chinese language does not explicitly mark the counterfactual, Chinese speakers would experience greater difficulties with counterfactual reasoning. Bloom concluded that the presence or absence of explicit marking of the counterfactual in one's language influences the facility with which one uses this mode of thought. From the cognitive perspective, in human cognition system, besides fundamental category, the cognition of relationship among things constructs another important cognitive structure. Lakoff (1987) names it as "kinesthetic image schema". Kinesthetic image schema is the cognitive structure based on the cognition of relationship among things, higher than fundamental categorization, which connects things in human comprehension and experience. The structure is an organization of repeated knowledge, in order to comprehend more complex concepts. Human experience and knowledge are constructed through the structure.

From the examples listed above, we can find that English subjunctive mood acquisition (ESA) occurs to be a problem to Chinese students. The analysis of the SLA of Chinese students may help the acquisition of the subjunctive mood. The factors involved are the acquisition process and the methods applied in the teaching and learning. When we talk about teaching and learning, the best way to find out the real problem in the acquisition is by carrying out an empirical study which involves the specific data to enable us to research a pattern, according to which the development of ESA is made. This thesis includes the empirical study conducted by a model from evaluating and inheriting Swain's output hypothesis and the other SLA researches. By applying the experiments, the factors involved in ESA are defined and studied. Solution to the problem is suggested according to the analysis of the data collected from the students tested in Zhang Ting's experiment and then obtained for the study.

Primarily, the objective of the study is to define the problem in Chinese students ESA and to provide a possible solution to it according to the relevant theories and hypotheses, as is claimed above.

As an empirical study, the objective of this research is also to testify the framework inspired by SLA theories and cognitive approaches through an experiment.

Volunteers' performance in the experiment is measured, observed and then they are trained in the experiment. Data are collected through the preset experimental procedure. The first-hand data are collected and analyzed, afterwards, conclusion is made through the result analysis.

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<sup>1</sup> The acquisition of English subjunctive is shortened as ESA

In the experiment, subjects are randomly chosen. Data will be collected in designed diagrams and will be contrasted and analyzed to find any difference which will show the defining factors of Chinese students' English subjunctive mood acquisition.

Being a quantitative and inductive research, the model of illustration in the literature is testified after the analysis of the data bank.

This research tends to find out the different problems in the acquisition by analyzing the acquisition difficulty of English subjunctive mood among Chinese students and application of the relevant cognitive theories which are believed to reveal the reason of the difficulty. The theoretical frame of the present study is inspired by Swain's (1995) Output Hypothesis, Gass's (1988) model, and Levelt's (1989, 1992) production model. In the evaluation of these models and the application of these models and theories by other researchers, a framework is established to analyze the result of the empirical study. To be specific, various theories such as Bloom's description of transfer, Swain's output hypothesis, Gass' output model and other researchers' reflections are referred to. These hypotheses are utilized to analyze in the empirical study the difficulty of ESA in terms of linguistic forms. Cognitive hypotheses such as 'Kinesthetic Schema' are used to further explain the cognitive reason for the mechanism of the difficulty.

Swain's output hypothesis (1995) holds that learners of a second language are in need of the chances for the pragmatic use of their linguistic database. Swain calls such meaningful use of the target language 'pushed language use.' According to her, the output practice has at least three functions: (1) Output encourages hypothesis testing; (2) Output facilitates the metalinguistic development, i.e., the learning of various rules about L2 and L2 use. (3) Output contributes to consciousness-raising. In the input practice, i.e., listening or reading, Swain argues, learners are engaged in semantic processing, i.e., making meaning out of text, which does not necessarily lead to the development of syntactic competence. Only the output practice forces them to move from semantic to syntactic processing. Gass (1988) also provides a model in which output is paid great attention to. She suggests the explicit knowledge as a kind of "storage", which can contribute to output through monitoring... Output can influence input through interaction. Besides, Levelt's production model (1989, 1992) also does some value to the present study, for in the model, there are "conceptualizer" and "formulator" out of five of his model's ingredients.

Moreover this acquisition process is from controlled process to automatic process. McLaughlin (1983) poses the 'Information Processing Model'. He explains SLA with the notions such as 'controlled processing', 'reconstruction of interlanguage'. In his model, learners employ controlled processing when starting learning, in this process, learners select information from temporary memory with greater cognitive effort. With the development of learning, controlled processing shifts to auto-processing, then the auto program is stored in permanent memory. Brown (1994) attempts to use McLaughlin's model on the explanation of various aspects of SLA, for instance, controlled processing includes new techniques such as specific grammar, word meaning, spelling, sentence structure etc., while auto-processing includes familiar techniques such as self-correction in writing and speaking, compositionality of sentences etc.

Besides, other accounts hinted by other disciplines are briefly viewed and considered in the chapter of literature review.

## II. ABOUT ENGLISH SUBJUNCTIVE MOOD AND SLA ISSUES

### A. Introduction

To define English subjunctive mood, "the first thing is to make clear the definitions of 'tense' and 'mood'". (Jespersen, 1905) Quirk wrote in *A Grammar of Contemporary English* (1972, p. 84), "English has two tenses: Present Tense and Past Tense. As the names imply, the Present Tense normally refers to present time and past tense to past time." In his 1985's *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language*, he claimed that as most commonly used, the Past Tense combines two features of meaning: (a) The event/state must have taken place in the past or (b) The speaker or writer must have in mind a definite time at which the event/state took place (Quirk, 1985).

Mood is a set of contrasts that are often shown by the form of the verb and which express the speaker's or writer's attitude to what is said or written. (Jack C. Richard et al, 2000, p. 295). Three moods are sorted out by traditional view of English grammar: the indicative, the subjunctive mood and the imperative. The indicative mood is used when speaker considers the action or state denoted by the predicate as a fact. It is used in statements of fact either affirmative or negative, and also in questions and exclamations of facts. The indicative mood, as a common sense, occurs in Modern English sentences most frequently. Comparatively, subjunctive mood was more frequently used in Old English and Middle English. The subjunctive mood has been declining in Modern English now.

The terminology "subjunctive" is derived from the Latin terminology "subjunctivus", meaning "proper to be subjoined". (see Sun Hongren, 1999) So, in subordinate sentences, we see more subjunctive mood use. Nowadays, since many English subjunctive inflexions have gradually disappeared, the use of the mood is less and less. Quirk (1972) said: "The subjunctive is not an important category in contemporary English and is normally replaced by other constructions. In fact, both the indicative and the subjunctive forms are available for hypothetical conditionals, the subjunctive being preferred in formal written English."

Now we can see that English subjunctive mood is a verb pattern more likely occurring in English subordinates and is used to express hypothetical and counterfactual matters.

### B. English Subjunctive Mood in Terms of Pedagogy

Zhang Daozhen (2002) classifies English subjunctive mood into three kinds, according to the verb forms: the present, the past, and the past perfect. However, traditional view is the division of “the present” and “the past”. However, the specific indicators of English subjunctive mood can be referred in Zhang Daozhen’s description (2002).

The most important and frequent indication of subjunctive mood in English structure is in conditionals—counterfactual conditionals. The present and future counterfactual conditionals have the verb form as the past tense in the subordinates and the “would + do” structure in the matrixes. The past counterfactual conditionals have the verb form as the past-perfect tense in the subordinates and the “would have + done” structure in the matrixes.

Mixed time counterfactual conditionals are possible when the verbs in subordinates and the matrixes take their own grammatically-legal forms respectively. There are also implied conditionals. They may not have subordinates but the semantic feature is the same—conditionality.

English subjunctive mood is also used in some types of subordinates:

1) The verbs *wish/ would rather/ suggest (demand/ insist/ ask) etc.* ask for correspondent verb forms to indicate subjunctive meaning in the objective subordinates. For example (Zhang Daozhen, 2002):

- a. I *wish* I *knew* what was going to happen.
- b. I’*d rather* you *told* me the truth.
- c. He *suggested* that a petition (*should*) *be* drawn up.

2) Certain adjectives and nouns, especially the nouns and adjectives (participles) derived from such verbs like *suggest/ demand/ insist/ ask etc.* require the subordinates with subjunctive mood. Here are the examples (Zhang Daozhen, 2002):

- d. It is *important* that he *work* hard.
- e. My *suggestion* is that we *take* the 6:00 train.
- f. There have been *demands* that the prime minister *should resign*.

3) In certain kinds of the adverbials, English subjunctive mood is used; here are the examples (Zhang Daozhen, 2002):

- g. I have loved you *as if/as though* you *were* my son.
- h. *Though* he *be* the President himself, he shall hear us.
- i. *Come* what *may*, we will go ahead with our plan.
- j. They moved the prisoner *in order that* he *not disturb* the proceedings any further.
- k. I hired a boat *so that* I *could go* fishing.
- l. I’*m surprised* that you *should press* the suggestion.

4) The other indications (Zhang Daozhen, 2002):

- m. God *be praised!* (Greeting words)
- n. *May* you enjoy many years of health and happiness. (Greeting words)
- o. It’*s (high) time* you *brought* a new car.
- p. Oh *that* the rain *would stop!*
- q. *Would that* he *were* gone!
- r. *To think* that I *trusted* him!
- s. He is, *as it were*, a walking dictionary.
- t. Who *would have thought* to see you here!
- u. I can earn my own living *if need be*.

(The relevant example sentences above are quoted from Zhang Daozhen, 2002.)

Traditional grammarians believe that English subjunctive is an important and valuable component of English language; it’s not likely to be disappearing with the increase of tenses. For example, L.M.Berk (1999) said: “Like the term ‘imperative’, the term ‘subjunctive’ refers to a particular verb form...The subjunctive is somewhat weak in Modern English, but there are speakers who use it routinely. In many cases, the subjunctive is a form learned in school or through reading, so it is educated speakers who use it most. The modern subjunctive expresses a variety of denotic meanings (Here, denotic refers to a sense of duty or obligation of something which is required or desired).” According to the description above, it is very clear that though the subjunctive mood has a tendency to be more ambiguous in the present English language, it is considered being existing in the language as an important grammatical phenomenon. It is seldom used but it is not vanishing and is still worth being defined as one independent existence in English language.

Some grammarians think that English subjunctive mood is vanishing because “While the number of tenses has been increased, the number of moods has tended to diminish, the subjunctive having now very little vital power left.” (Jespersen, 1905) H. W. Fowler (1926, p. 57) wrote in his *A Dictionary of Modern English Usage*: “About the subjunctive, so delimited, the important general facts are: (1) that is moribund except in a few easily specified uses, (2) that, owing to the capricious influence of the much analyzed classical upon the less studied native moods, it probably never would have been possible to draw up a satisfactory table of the English subjunctive uses, (3) that, assuredly no-one will ever find it possible or worthwhile now that the subjunctive is dying, (4) that subjunctive met with today, outside the few truly living uses, are either deliberate revivals by poets for legitimate enough archaic effect or antiquated survivals as in pretentious journalism, infecting their context with dullness, or new arrivals possible only in

an age to which the grammar of the subjunctive is no natural but artificial.” Palmer (1974, p. 48) said in his *The English Verb*: “Traditional grammarians would object that the unreality use is essentially the subjunctive, but the notion of a subjunctive mood is a simple transfer from Latin and has no place in English grammar, since all the potential subjunctives turn out to be past tense in form (or to be the simple uninflected form as in ‘God **save** the Queen’).”

Some hold a neutral idea that there is the subjunctive mood in Modern English but it is not very important. As Quirk (1985) wrote in *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language*: “the subjunctive in Modern English is generally an optional and stylistically somewhat marked variant of other constructions, but it is not so unimportant as sometimes suggested.” And he has classified it: “There are two forms of the subjunctive, traditionally called the present and past subjunctive, although the use of these forms relates more to mood than to tense.” To give English subjunctive a fairly independent property from the indicative, Quirk (1972) asserted that both the indicative and the subjunctive forms are possible for hypothetical conditions, the subjunctive being preferred in formal written English.

### C. *The Difficulty in Acquiring English Verbal Inflexions*

English subjunctive mood is in the forms of verbal inflexions which lead to Chinese students’ problem in learning to use it.

Contrary to any normal L1 child, who can obtain a full knowledge of the language of the community in which they live at age of five, L2 learners will encounter a great deal of difficulty in acquiring L2 and most learners will generally fail to attain native-like competence. The same is true of Chinese learners of English. It is observed that Chinese learners of English have great difficulty in acquiring English especially in acquiring English verbal inflexions. These inflexions are used to indicate agreement, tense, etc, and they are notoriously difficult to acquire for non-native speakers. The meanings and forms of tense are difficult and complex to acquire for non-native speakers. (Hinkel, 1992 & 1997). Givon (1993) also states that the grammatical point of verbal inflexions is usually the most complicated part of the grammar in any language. As McCarthy (1991) put it, tenses are a “traditional stumbling-block” and can certainly be difficult to acquire. Compared with non-native speakers, children are quick to acquire the grammar of L1. The classical explanation of children’s ease of acquiring the grammar of L1 is put forward by Chomsky: “A consider of the character of the grammar that is acquired, the degenerate quality and narrowly limited extent of the available data, the striking uniformity of the resulting grammars, and their independence of intelligence, motivation and emotional state, over a wide range of variation, leave little hope that much of structure of language can be learned by an organism initially unformed as to its general character.” (Chomsky, 1965, p. 58)

The gap between the language attainment and the available language experience for L1 acquirers is known as the logic problem. Universal Grammar (UG) is the innate language mechanism that bridges the gap by helping the language acquirers to know unconsciously “interiorization” of the grammar that are far from the input in various respects. Though there is much debate over the three logical possibilities that describe the role of UG in SLA, namely, “no-access hypothesis” which means there is not any perspective of UG applied to the L2 learner; “partial access hypothesis” which means only L1-instantiated rules and L1-instantiated function of UG are useful to the learner; and “full access hypothesis” which means UG in its entirety defines L2 acquisition, the function of UG in L2 acquisition is still unclear. However, one thing for sure is that L2 learners do have great difficulty in acquiring L2.

Moreover, English and Chinese are two radically different languages, which possess different subsystems to express tenses and aspects. English marks verbs in two dimensions: (a) tense: “the location of an event in time” (Comire, 1985) and (b) aspect: “ways of viewing the temporal constituency of a situation.” On the other hand, Chinese is thought of as a “tenseless” language whose temporal location is expressed directly by adverbials and indirectly by the use of aspectual viewpoint. Apart from the above problems, most Chinese learners of English acquire English verbal inflexions in L2 classrooms by presenting rules, explaining the meaning of tense and by practicing. Therefore, learners are badly short of real L2 environment. Due to the lack of language environment and the radical difference between English and Chinese, it is not surprising that we, Chinese learners of English, have a great deal of difficulty in mastering English verbal inflexions.

## III. SLA ISSUES VIEWED FROM OUTPUT HYPOTHESIS

Krashen’s (1985) input hypothesis intends to answer a critical problem in SLA, that is: how do humans master a language. His proposal claims that language is produced by accepting a large amount of Comprehensible Input (CI). Perceivable materials, as listening and reading materials are the critical factors in SLA. And according to Krashen’s “i+1” notion, the perceivable lingual materials must be higher in level than the learner’s already-acquired linguistic knowledge. Krashen also (1985) posed two inferences: a) “Production” is the result of acquisition. Production is acquired through considerable “comprehensible input”. b) Learners can have right syntactic forms after being “input” a lot. In all, we can infer from Krashen’s hypothesis, “input” is the decisive aspect of successful SLA.

Meanwhile, Swain (1985) had looked into Canadian’s immersion program of French teaching. The research showed that the students had highly improved their listening and reading capabilities but in “production”—speaking and writing—they had failed to reach the target language’s (TL) standard, and done poorly in producing correct syntactic forms. Swain (1985) then asserted that Comprehensible Output (CO) is more important and critical in SLA. Swain’s output hypothesis holds that output has four functions: 1) noticing/triggering function, which means learners pay more

attention to their language through output; 2) hypothesis testing, examining TL's structure and semantics; 3) metalinguistic function, which learners utilize to express; 4) developing automaticity, TL can be automatic through "output". Swain & Lapkin (1995) found that noticing triggers learners' inner cognition about SLA. Some other researchers find learners modify their language by testing and are pushed to develop new interlanguage which is gradually modified to meet TL's standard. (Pica et al, 1989)

In contrast with these two hypotheses and relating to English subjunctive mood's property we can see that as a verb-inflexion-featured language phenomenon, English subjunctive mood is hard for Chinese students, whose mother language is inflexion-free. Lots of "comprehensible input" may make Chinese students better in comprehension of counterfactual meaning but output can better improve their master of the complex verb-pattern in the production of subjunctive mood structures in their actual language performance.

In second language acquisition research, output has long been assigned to a passive role. For many researchers and language teachers, output is just the manifestation of the acquired knowledge and plays no facilitative role in language teaching. Gass (1997) summarizes the traditional views on output in her book named *Input, Interaction, and the Second Language Learner*.

According to Gass, the first traditional view on output is that it is not a way of creating knowledge, but a way of practicing already-existing knowledge. In other words, output has been viewed as the means of practicing what has previously been learned. This point of view is clearly manifested in the following figure presented by Vanpatten and Cadierno (1993, p. 227)

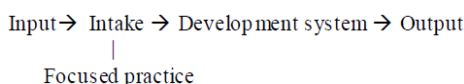


Figure1: Traditional instruction in foreign language teaching, by Vanpatten and Cadierno

The figure demonstrates the traditional teaching method in foreign language teaching. As is known to all, in the traditional foreign language classroom, teachers' instruction appears by first explaining a language presentation and then making students practice repeating a given structure or form. In this figure, it can be seen that the arrows go from left to right not the reverse. Output is considered to be the result of the developing system, but not the cause of it. It seems to have no role to play in developing the learners' interlanguage. Output and the manipulation of output are viewed just as a forum for practicing rules that have been presented to learners. This is certainly the thrust behind the early methods of language teaching in which the presentation-practice (for example, drill and repetition) mode was in vogue.

The second traditional view on output is that it is a method of eliciting additional input. The representative figure holding this view is Krashen. According to Krashen's Input Hypothesis, learners can proceed according to the natural order by accumulating input that contains the structure at their next stage; the structure that is a bit beyond their current level of competence. Krashen claims: "we acquire a language via input, what we read and hear, not via output, actual talking and writing" (1982, p. 57). Krashen acknowledges that output makes a positive effect on language acquisition, but this contribution is not a direct one. Through practicing output, learners can elicit more and better comprehensible input, thus facilitating language acquisition. Output affects the quantity of input a language learner receives, because the more he talks, the more people will talk to him. Output also affects the quality of input language learners receive, because oral dialogue practice group members often try to help learners understand by reminding them of their wrongs in their speech. They judge how to help revise by observing if what is said is comprehended, and also by listening to the conversers' talk. A second language speaker, who makes a lot of mistakes, has a bad original accent and is not fluent, will most likely to receive, in general, more revised "right" imbuening than a speaker who appears confident and smooth. Long (1983) has the similar opinion. He believes that second language learners can only get good quality input by using output (speaking) to give the interlocutor feedback, so that the input directed to them is more finely tuned to their current competence.

From the above paragraphs, it can be seen that for many researchers and language teachers, output is just an indication of SLA that has already taken place, and it seems to have no role to play in SLA except as one way of practicing already-existing knowledge for greater fluency or as the means of eliciting additional input. It is an yield of learning, not an origin of learning. These traditional views on output were not challenged until 1985, when the Output Hypothesis was first proposed by Swain. In this hypothesis, Swain claims that output serves SLA in several ways. It is also an important causal factor in language learning process. In order to achieve native-like proficiency, both comprehensible input and comprehensible output are needed. Output also plays important roles in advancing language learning.

Swain's Output Hypothesis is formulated essentially in reaction to Krashen's Input Hypothesis and is based on many years of research on Canadian immersion programs.

Just as mentioned above, Krashen views input as an essential environmental ingredient for second language acquisition. He states: "human beings acquire language in only one way—by understanding messages or by receiving 'comprehensible input'" (1985, p. 2). As is said, language acquisition is decided by focusing on comprehending what others are giving out. Provided that the learner hears meaningful speech and endeavors to understand it, acquisition will

automatically occur. "If input is understood, there is enough of it. The necessary grammar is automatically provided." (Krashen, 1985, p. 3). As for output, Krashen de-emphasizes its utility. Krashen regards it as a result of acquisition not its cause. Krashen claims: "speaking will 'emerge' on its own as a result of building competence via comprehensible input" (1985, p. 2). In Krashen's opinion, the active knowledge of how to use a second language never benefits from outputting the knowledge of a language. Its only positive effect may be that it involves other people into speaking, thus offering more objects for the learner to deal with. Krashen even declares: "it is, in fact, theoretically possible to acquire language without even talking" (1982, p. 66). This emphasis on input at the expense of output is a distinguishable feature of Krashen's theory. Krashen's points of view are quite influential within second language education and have had considerable impact on the nature of pedagogical provision.

Krashen cites many evidences to support his Input Hypothesis, one of which is the success of immersion programs. Immersion programs refer to the educational programs where the teaching of language is integrated with content teaching. In these programs the students receive a substantial portion of their education via the medium of their second language. The goals of these immersion educations include both academic achievement in the content areas studied and a high level of proficiency in the second language. After many years of study in these programs, the students there do realize the goals. They do achieve great progress both in their content learning and language learning. Researchers, such as Swain (1981) and Allen et al (1982), have conducted a series of research in a number of French immersion programs across Canada. By comparing the students in the immersion programs with those in the regular programs, they find that the immersion students do as well as others in the subjects such as mathematics, science, history and geography. Besides achievement in their content learning, they have made great progress in many areas of their language development. For example, they have developed a remarkable ability to comprehend oral and written discourse. They are quite fluent in using the TL. Their functional ability and confidence in using the TL are also greatly enhanced. In Krashen's estimation, "Canadian immersion is not simply another successful language teaching program—it may be the most successful program ever recorded in the professional language teaching literature" (Krashen, 1984, p. 61). Krashen believes the success of immersion programs resides in the fact that the students there receive a plenty material of understanding input. For example, the subject-matter material in these immersion programs is made easy to understand to involving students in several ways. The segregation of native speakers helps guarantee that teachers will speak at a language level available in conveying meaning to the students.

It is true that these immersion students have achieved great success in their second language learning, but it does not mean these programs are perfect. They still suffer from drawbacks. Harley (1983) and Swain (1983, 1984) find that the immersion students are still clearly distinguishable as foreign speakers and writers despite a vast amount of comprehensible input they have received. They evidence less understanding and master of complex grammar, less right judgement on their general use of vocabulary and morphosyntax. Although there is continued progress through the grades, their interlanguage remains sufficiently 'off-target' as to be a cause of concern. Considering Krashen's comment that "if input is understood, and there is enough of it" (Krashen 1985, p. 2) and "the necessary grammar is automatically provided" (Krashen, 1985, p. 2), these results are unexpected. Facing this situation, Swain argues these results may indicate that Krashen's Input Hypothesis needs refinement. The simple provision of meaningful input which is comprehensible to learners, while clearly necessary, is not itself enough for learners to fully develop their L2 competence. Now what is responsible for the weakness in these immersion programs? According to Swain, one of the important reasons for this is that these learners engage in too little language production, which prevents them from going beyond a functional level of L2 proficiency. Immersion students, Swain (1985, p. 249) argues, lack opportunities for output in two ways—

*"First, the students are simply not given—especially in later grades—adequate opportunities to use the target language in the classroom context. Second, they are not being "pushed" in their output. That's to say, the immersion students have developed, in the early grades, strategies for getting their meaning across which are adequate for the situation they find themselves in: they are understood by their teachers and peers. There appears to be little social or cognitive pressure to produce language that reflects more appropriately or precisely their intended meaning: there is no push to be more comprehensible than they already are."*(Swain, 1985)

Experimental studies of interactive behavior in French immersion classroom have indicated that immersion classes are largely teacher-centered. The teachers do most of talking while students do much of listening. The students are not required to give extended answers and few of the students' utterances are longer than a single clause (Allen, Swain, Harley & Cummings, 1990; Swain, 1985). This allows students to manage successfully with their incomplete recognition of the language; communication among students and between teachers and students is quite encouraging despite lots of mistakes in the students' speech. Observations such as these have led Swain to the conclusion that understanding target language utterance is not enough and the learners must also be given the adequate opportunities to produce them. What the students need is not only comprehensible input but also comprehensible output. Both of them are the necessary conditions for successful language learning. "By comprehensible output is meant that the learner is pushed toward the delivery of a message that is not only conveyed, but that is conveyed accurately, coherently, and appropriately." (Swain & Lapkin, 1989, p. 156) Comprehensible output has its unique roles to play in SLA. It must be considered not just a sign of acquired knowledge, but also a sign of learning at work.

Its role is, at minimum, to provide opportunities for contextualized, meaningful use, to test hypothesis about the target language, and to move the learner from a purely semantic analysis of language to a syntactic analysis of it (Swain, 1985, p. 252)

In 1985, Swain puts forward a hypothesis relevant to the L2 learner's presentation compared to Krashen's Comprehensible Input Hypothesis. This hypothesis is termed 'Comprehensible Output Hypothesis'. This basic presupposition of the Comprehensible Output Hypothesis declares that producing the second language, especially when learners have difficulties in conveying their attempted meaning successfully, forces learners to make their output more precise, fluent, and decent and that this process contributes to second language acquisition.

Swain (1993, 1995) extends the scope of the hypothesis and identifies the following four functions of output.

First, output develops the fluent and automatic processing. This function is called the fluency function, which is quite familiar to us. In order to develop a speedy access to the extant second language knowledge for fluent output performance, the students need many chances to use their accumulation in meaningful texts/conversations, and this naturally depends on output. Output provides opportunities for effective practice of one's linguistic database, permitting the development of automaticity in their use.

Second, output has a metalinguistic function, or what might be referred to as its 'reflective' role (Swain, 1995, p. 128). It is claimed that

*"as learners reflect upon their own target language use, their output serves a metalinguistic function, enabling them to control and internalize linguistic knowledge"* (Swain, 1995, p. 126).

In other words, output may cause the learners to engage in more syntactic processing than is necessary for the comprehension of input. This syntactic processing may lead to modified or reprocessed output—a possible step toward language acquisition. Reflection on language may not necessarily involve metalinguistic terminology. 'Meta-talk' produced with or without metalinguistic terminology may, according to Swain, serve the function of deepening the students' awareness of forms, rules, and form-function relationships, provided that the context is such that the language produced by the learners serves some genuine communicative function.

Third, output has a hypothesis-testing function. That is, producing output is one way of testing one's hypothesis about the target language—to try out means of expression and see if they work. Researchers have found that learners from hypotheses about the structural properties of the target language on the basis of the input data to which they are exposed (eg. Mclaughlin, 1987, 1990; Selinker, 1972). Ellis (1994, p. 352) argues that these hypotheses can then be tested receptively and productively. Hypotheses are tested receptively by means of listening & reading and productively by means of speaking & writing. . Listening and reading provide more input material, which enables the learners to confirm, reject, or modify his or her existing hypotheses about the target language. Hypotheses can also be tested productively. Production involves a series of learner-generated hypotheses and assumptions about the second language (Swain, 1995, 1997). It represents the learners' best guesses about how the target language works. When learners' guesses are tested, they are either confirmed or rejected/disconfirmed. Hypotheses are confirmed if the learners successfully transmit the intended meaning of the message successfully. Hypotheses are disconfirmed (rejected) and revised if the learner's output fails to communicate the intended meaning of the learner's message successfully (Ellis, 1994, p. 352). Therefore, through producing the target language learners can test comprehensibility and linguistic well-formedness of their interlanguage against feedback obtained from their interlocutors.

Finally, output gives rise to noticing. It is called the noticing/triggering (or consciousness-raising) function. This function of output is the focus of the present thesis. By the noticing function, Swain (1995, p. 125-126) postulates: "In producing the target language (vocally or sub-vocally), learners may notice a gap between what they want to say and what they can say, leading them to recognizing what they do not know or know only practically. In other words, under some circumstances, the activity of producing the target language may prompt second language learners to consciously recognize some of their linguistic problems; it may bring to their attention something they need to discover about their L2."

Swain believes that output forces learners to move from semantic processing prevalent in comprehension to syntactic processing needed for production. In production, the learners are on their own and they cannot rely on external clues and background knowledge in the same way as they do in comprehension. To produce, they need to be more active: They need to create communicative intentions and express them in linguistic forms; in doing so they may notice their linguistic deficiency. Researchers studying the communication strategies do find that learners notice problems when they speak (e.g., Tarone, 1997; Bialystok, 1990; Kellerman, 1991). Of course, noticing a problem does not equal solving it, but the awareness of a problem can give learners the incentive. In order to solve their linguistic deficiency, learners may try ways that are appropriate in a given context. For example, if the learners are left on their own to solve the immediate production difficulty, they may search their own linguistic knowledge for information that might help to close the gap by generating new knowledge or consolidating existing knowledge (Swain & Lapkin, 1995). On the other hand, if relevant input is immediately effective, the strengthened sense of problem-causing during output may cause students to deal with the ongoing input with more focused attention. They may try to examine closely how the target language expresses the intention that they just had difficulty in expressing on their own. In either case, learning is believed to be enhanced through the act of producing language, which, by its mechanisms, makes learners more aware of their linguistic problems, which leads to reappraisal of their inter-language capabilities.

From the above paragraphs, it can be seen that output plays several important roles in language learning. The traditional viewpoints on output should be changed. Output is not only a result of second language acquisition, but also an important causal factor in learning a language. It has its own unique contributions to learning processes. Two points need to be mentioned here. First, the Output Hypothesis is not the terminator of the Input Hypothesis. It tends to complement and reinforce rather than replace input-based approaches to language acquisition. Swain also acknowledges the importance of input or input comprehension. What she wants to emphasize is that output also plays an active role in second language acquisition. Producing the target language has the advantages that are not processed by comprehension. Second, simply providing students with opportunities for output is not enough. Swain (1993) claims that the learners not only need the opportunities of output but also need the opportunities of ‘pushed output’. In order to bring the functions of output into play, learners need to be pushed to make use of their linguistic resources.

The Output Hypothesis can help to examine how Chinese students can acquire the specific linguistic forms (verbal inflexions, subjunctive forms) and to promote their grasping of the form.

IV. MODELS OF ACQUISITION

This research analyzes Levelt’s (1989) and Gass’s model (1988), and views as a three-step process, as follows:

1. Input level includes ‘apperceived input’ and ‘comprehended input’. In this level, selections are made by learners and a great deal of cognitive effort is made.
2. Knowledge level is the level of ‘intake’, in which input is split into ‘explicit knowledge’ and ‘implicit knowledge’. Furthermore, since implicit knowledge generates output, controlled processing is also turned to auto-processing in this phase.
3. Output level, the actual utterance is produced. The production is generated by auto-processing, so output should be enforced to promote SLA.

Moreover, the connections of the three levels involve cognitive processing, too, not only the transition from controlled processing to auto-processing.

Firstly, between level 1 and level 2, schematization is involved in the selection. For example, the forms happening in L2 but not in L1 are supposed to be selected by learners to build up new schemata. Secondly, between level 2 and level 3, schematization also happens and is facilitated for output with auto-processing. The significance of my framework, to be assumed, is the explanation on how the levels are connected by schematization. (Table 2.2)

Levels	Contents	Cognitive process	mechanism	Connection
Input level	1.apperceived input 2.comprehended input	selection among the information from temporary memory		building new schemata of L2 features
Knowledge level	Intake, with the varieties of implicit knowledge and explicit knowledge	schemata are expressed to be explicit knowledge and is mentally operated to be implicit knowledge	transmission from controlled processing to auto-processing	facilitate the schemata and form permanent memory
Output level	L2 Output	auto-processing guided output		

Figure 2. the model

Output of the learners can help facilitate the schemata to form permanent memory. Let’s begin to analyze this with the three types of schema.

James (1979) suggests that there be basically three areas of schema or prior knowledge structure that play a part in the act of listening or reading comprehension, namely linguistic schema (language knowledge), content schema (topic knowledge) and formal schema (rhetoric knowledge).

Linguistic schema is the knowledge of letters, sounds, grammar, syntax and vocabulary. Carrell and Eisterhold stated (1983) that linguistic schemata include the aspects of basic linguistic knowledge such as poetics, lexis, grammar and so on. Above is the content schema, which refers to people’s background knowledge of the world. It is the basis for comprehension. It deals with the knowledge relative to the content domain of the text. Turner (1994) says that the information contained in context schemata includes predictions about appropriate actions to take in order to achieve goals in context, and suggestions for reasonable problem-solving strategies. Johnson (1982) has noticed that a text on a familiar topic with background knowledge is better recalled by English foreign students than an unfamiliar topic. Formal schema is the third type. It is the background knowledge of the formal rhetorical organization structures of different types of texts. (Carrell and Eisterhold, 1983)

In this research, content schema and formal schema are very important. The schemata established in students’ minds are the key to ESA. That Output can help to consolidate the learner’s linguistic knowledge is because their schemata are established through the process.

Output hypothesis explains that the acquisition of language is mainly decided by the output of the learner and schema can explain why it works well.

The model has three levels and these levels and the cognitive mechanism involved are testified and proved by the empirical study statistics. We can see it respectively:



1. Input level includes ‘apperceived input’ and ‘comprehended input’. In this level, selections are made by learners and a great deal of cognitive effort is made. When instructed by the teacher with the grammar rules, the participants firstly notice the rules in their explicit expression. For example, the verb “wish” needs its objective clause apply the past form of the predicate if the whole sentence is present tense.

2. Knowledge level is the level of ‘intake’, in which input is split into ‘explicit knowledge’ and ‘implicit knowledge’. Furthermore, since implicit knowledge generates output, controlled processing is also turned to auto-processing in this phase. In processing the knowledge they receive from the teacher, the participants use the multiple choice as a measurement. They begin to analyze the purpose of the questions in the quizzes, and progress is made rapidly. At the same time, some participants have developed the ability to make sentences in English subjunctive mood and evaluate the subjunctive meaning in translation while attempting to use the right form in their writing. It is very instructive that the participants who are encouraged to express and practice what they have learnt (G3) make more rapid progress than those who are only imbued with the knowledge without any chance to practice under instruction (G2).

3. Output level, the actual utterance is produced. The production is generated by auto-processing, so output should be enforced to promote SLA.

This level involves the schematization. The participants have set up the schema of ESA and automatic response can be made when conveying and comprehending the subjunctive meaning. Right forms are used easily and automatically. G3’s performance is more significant, which proves that more out-put is more beneficial in ESA.

In the teaching and leaning of English subjunctive mood, the model introduced, analyzed and proved in the latter part of this thesis can have some positive guidance.

First, teachers should encourage students to practice what they have learnt but not just list out the knowledge of the grammar for the students to remember. According to the criticism against the mere-input methodology, the simple exposure to the knowledge but without any practice to reinforce it would not evidently and permanently improve SLA (including ESA).

Next, students should utilize any chance to practice what they have received from the teacher and class, try not only to remember the points and descriptions of the rules but also write and utter the actual words with constant revision of the errors. Gradually, the knowledge is internalized and turned into the automatic response when one is using the linguistic structures.

This research is also limited in its theoretical analysis and the execution of the experiments. For the theoretical perspective, the cognitive mechanism is not comprehensively studied. As is know, cognition involves a lot of complex factors, not only one’s intelligence and nerves but also contextual and social factors. The thesis only refers to those factors which are more accurate in a scientific study but a little ideal from the actual situation. We expect a larger-scaled scientific view on the problem where more cognitive matters and mechanism can be included.

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