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## Foreword

In this third issue of 2008, Dr. Eva Bernat provides our editorial opinion paper, *Beyond beliefs: Psycho-cognitive, sociocultural and emergent ecological approaches to learner perceptions in foreign language acquisition*. Like all our Ed. Op. pieces, this paper is a statement of one of our associate editor's educational values and beliefs. Bernat argues for a pluralist sociocognitive framework to provide a more holistic view both in the SLA field in general and in language learner belief studies. We will be happy to publish any well-argued responses to this very comprehensive comparative overview of our field. In line with the views expressed here, the AEJ editorial team is very keen to attract a broader range of submissions.

AEJ has published a wide range of papers on task-based learning from across Asia, indicating that TBL is not easily classified as a Western incursion into Asia. It appears to be best classified as an approach that is based on widely applicable principles of SLA that can be redefined within local contexts. Parviz Birjandi and Saeideh Ahangari, in the *Effects of Task Repetition on the Fluency, Complexity and Accuracy of Iranian EFL Learners' Oral Discourse*, add to our growing collection of pieces on task-based learning from across Asia. The paper underlines the relationship between theory and practice by highlighting the practical consequences of the limited attentional capacities available to students performing new tasks, and the way that the different components of language production and comprehension compete for such limited capacities. The value of task-repetition is once again supported in this paper.

Omid Akbari, in *Teaching Vocabulary Items through Contextualization and Picture to Elementary Iranian EFL Students*, investigates the effectiveness of teaching vocabulary items through pictures and contextualization to elementary Iranian EFL students. The results should also be of interest beyond this context, confirming that using pictures seemed to be more effective than contextualization at this level. This need not be interpreted to mean that providing context is unnecessary, as pictures can be seen as a means of providing memorable context for learners.

In *Relations Network in the Interactive ESL Class: Analysis of Individuals, Groups, and a Whole Classroom Network*, Li Na, Wang Lin-yao and Yao Ji-wei look at classroom

interaction from the perspective of both individuals and whole groups. They conclude that Cooper's "empathy" model and Rovai's "sense of classroom community" are useful paradigms for organizing an interactive class in ESL. An individual's relationship to groups is commonly seen as a cultural dimension that varies across contexts, so this paper provides a good opportunity for a replicated study in another cultural setting.

Babak Mahdavy (*The Role of Multiple Intelligences (MI) in Listening Proficiency: A Comparison of TOEFL and IELTS Listening Tests from an MI Perspective*) compares TOEFL and IELTS listening tests in relation to Multiple Intelligences Development. These quantitative results appear to suggest that despite the differences between IELTS and TOEFL listening tests, only linguistic intelligence has a statistically significant influence on listening proficiency as measured by TOEFL and IELTS and that teachers of intermediate level students need to focus on bottom-up processing. Again further confirmation of these findings would be interesting, possibly using a qualitative research design.

Shan-fang Guo in *Differential Effects of Etymological Elaboration and Rote Memorization on Idiom Acquisition in College EFL Learners* investigates differential effects of etymological elaboration and rote memorization on idiom acquisition and retention in Chinese college EFL learners. Guo finds that etymological familiarity appears to assist acquisition more than rote memorization. One important implication to consider for teaching practice is the finding that etymological familiarity leads to superior retention rates.

The next paper is not the first paper to ask why many Chinese learners of English are only instrumentally motivated. Yang Yunbao and Howard Nicholas in *A Review of "Interest In The Learning Of English" in the Chinese Context* try to explain the causes of the current 'high investment and low efficiency' in English learning. One interesting explanation is that the examinations and tests drive the decline in intrinsic motivation causing students to lose their 'interest in learning English'. This paper emphasizes the importance of promoting 'interest' and how to keep it alive for improved learning.

Examinations have long been held responsible for negative effects on institutional learning, but even as we advance further into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it is often difficult to bring about change in traditional systems. Dina Al-Jamal and Nedal Ghadi look at positive and negative washback in *English Language General Secondary Certificate Examination Washback in Jordan*. Their study examined the nature and scope of the impact on English second secondary language teachers in one district in Jordan. Findings indicated that "both the GSCE

and the other related factors have affected English language teachers' method selection with a slight statistical difference in favor of the GSCE washback effect". Widespread use of an unproductive grammar-translation method in teaching English was also revealed. Radical changes in training, supervision and testing are proposed as a solution to remedy this situation.

Galon Melendy in *Motivating Writers: The Power Of Choice* further underlines the importance of motivation in institutional settings and comes up with an interesting and very simple solution that could have an important impact in many contexts. AEJ would like to encourage submissions reporting similar action research that brings about real improvement in learning. This action research study illustrates the effectiveness of "the power of choice of proximal academic goals as a strategy for boosting student motivation in an undergraduate composition and rhetoric course". When students were given the choice between selecting easier or more difficult assessment tasks the majority of students took up the challenge and went for the most difficult option.

Seyed Hassan Talebi and Mojtaba Maghsudi in *Monolingual and Bilingual English Learners in one Classroom: 'Who is at a Disadvantage?'* investigate an important issue in our increasingly international environment. It was concluded that monolingual students need to be provided with more support so that they do not lag behind their bilingual peers in reading comprehension tasks in mixed-mono/bilingual classrooms.

Finally Oya Buyukyavuz and Sevim Inal (*A Descriptive Study on Turkish Teachers of English Regarding Their Professional Needs, Efforts for Development and Available Resources*) provide yet another study that confirms the inadequacy of professional development in national EFL systems. The study revealed that Turkish EFL teachers associate professional improvement with studying textbooks on grammar. It was also found that the in-service seminars organized by the Ministry of National Education failed to meet the professional needs of teachers. Publishing journal articles may not change this situation, but perhaps we need to sustain the hope, tempered with realism, that when a sufficient number of similar studies has been published, this will help provide some impetus for radical change.

Roger Nunn  
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## Beyond Beliefs: Psycho-cognitive, Sociocultural and Emergent Ecological Approaches to Learner Perceptions in Foreign Language Acquisition

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Dr. Eva Bernat has been involved in the field of TESOL for over 15 years. She is currently a part-time lecturer and researcher in the Department of Linguistics, Macquarie University, Sydney. Eva has published widely on the role of metacognition and affect in language acquisition and pedagogy, and serves as an Associate Editor and Editorial Board member on a number of international scholarly journals, including the Asian EFL Journal.

### Abstract

Perceptions and beliefs play a significant role in directing human behaviour. In the SLA field almost two decades of research has revealed how students' beliefs have the potential to shape their cognitive and affective processes in the classroom and impact on their actions. Various ideologically and methodologically diverse studies have shed light on the phenomenon, however, these have mostly been conducted from only one ontological perspective and one research paradigm limiting their potential. This paper attempts to characterize some of the dimensions of the major perspectives in SLA research, and in particular language learner beliefs studies, and show how both have followed parallel paths. The paper also argues for a pluralist sociocognitive framework which would provide a more holistic view in the area of language learner beliefs research and the SLA field in general.

### 1. Introduction

The debate concerning various ontological and epistemological perspectives in the field of language education is not new. Indeed, Zuengler and Miller (2006), in a recent special issue of *TESOL Quarterly* take up such a debate, acknowledging that conflicting ontologies in second/foreign language acquisition (SLA/FLA) do exist. Yet the debate of different ideological viewpoints reflects a healthy state in scholarship and necessitates deeper reflections on all sides.

In the past, perceptions and beliefs (no differentiation of concepts is made here, though

such exists in other disciplines; but see Goldman, 1986, on 'perceptual beliefs', and Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975, for 'inferential beliefs'), or metacognitive knowledge as it is sometimes referred to (Flavell, 1987), have been studied in various disciplines and within a number of research paradigms. Research and scholarship on perceptions and beliefs in the area of language learning has been growing and gaining prominence in the last two decades. This is evidenced by a growing number of academic papers, journal special issues, books and conference papers from around the world providing valuable cross-fertilization of ideas. While empirical studies and theoretical discourse have provided useful insights, they have often evolved into relatively closed competing paradigms. The diversity in perspectives of these belief studies point to the researchers' different ontological and epistemological assumptions that are clearly reflected in their research paradigms. Researchers within these paradigms often tend to avoid concepts and methodologies from neighbouring disciplines that could potentially enrich one's own perspectives. Indeed, methodological debates surrounding research tools, participatory structures, and ethical dilemmas are important sites for engagement (Candlin & Sarangi, 2004) and this paper will attempt to address some of these with respect to the SLA field in general, and the field of learner beliefs in particular.

## 2. Background

Early psychological studies into learners' perceptions and beliefs about learning "opened a whole new Aladdin's cave of personal beliefs, myths, understandings, and superstitions as they were revealed by the persons' thoughts and feelings about their learning" (Thomas & Harri-Augstein, 1983, p. 338). These studies concluded that beliefs about learners' own capacity and personal models of their own processes were much more central to understanding the individuals' learning performances than more universally accepted theories of learning, and that these personal 'myths' explained much more about individual differences in learning than such psychometric measures as intelligence or aptitude. Moreover, they continue to provide a framework for understanding how learners conceptualize themselves as learners (i.e., their identity) and the situation they enter which provides a potential for learning – more obviously in the classroom and less obviously, perhaps, other social events in wider communities (Breen, 2001). Indeed, one's beliefs and identity are often seen as mutually constitutive.



The recognition of the role of learners' epistemological beliefs across various disciplines contributed to a growing body of evidence suggesting that they play a central role in learning experience and achievements (Ryan, 1994; Schommer, 1990), have a profound influence on learning behaviour as well as learning outcomes (Weinert & Kluwe, 1987), and act as very strong filters of reality (Arnold, 1999). Interdisciplinary research shows how one's belief systems, social cognitions and metacognitions are a driving force in intellectual performance (Schoenfeld, 1983), and that learners may be directly influenced by their perception of success in learning and levels of expectancy (Yang, 1999; White, 1999), with realistically high expectations helping to build confidence, and low (or unrealistically high) expectations leading to de-motivation and disappointment (Puchta, 1999).

The study of beliefs in SLA is important, as it has been noted that successful learners develop insights into beliefs about language learning processes, their own abilities and the use of effective learning strategies in the classroom and beyond (Zimmerman & Martinez-Pons, 1986; Oxford, 1990, 2003). It has been argued, that while some beliefs may have a facilitative effect on learning, others can hinder it. Supportive and positive beliefs help to overcome problems and thus sustain motivation, while negative or unrealistic beliefs can lead to decreased motivation, frustration, and even anxiety (Horwitz & Young, 1990; Horwitz, 2001). Therefore, it can be concluded that an awareness of learners' beliefs is central to SLA classroom pedagogy.

Providing a definition for a very complex and latent concept such as 'beliefs' is always a challenge. Most often, researchers adopt definitions that suit the purposes of their own empirical frameworks and reflect personal ideological viewpoints. Thus, they either define beliefs along the lines of personal cognitive constructs or socially and culturally shaped folkloristic ideas, with others yet falling somewhere between the two polarities. For example, Victori and Lockhart (1995) define beliefs about language learning as "general assumptions that students hold about themselves as learners, about factors influencing language learning, and about the nature of language learning and teaching" (p. 224). This definition seems proximal to a sociocognitive view in that it encompasses both the endogenous (cognitive, affective, attitudinal) and exogenous (experiential, cultural, contextual) elements. Thus, sociocognition is understood here to be the interplay of both sociocultural and cognitive influences on learners' metacognitive processes in SLA.

Rangelova and Meskill (2000) explain that the term 'sociocognitive' encompasses a broad

range of current beliefs about learning in general and language learning in particular. The term represents a growing attempt to reconcile the social and cognitive/affective side of learning concerning the acquisition of another language. They suggest that within the field of linguistics, it is most closely aligned with interactionist approaches to theory and research in language acquisition. It begins with the biological predispositions of the human mind for language and learning in consort with external reality (Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991). Indeed, calls for a move towards a pluralist framework incorporating both the cognitive and social perspectives on SLA is not new (e.g., see Larsen-Freeman, 1991, 1997, 2002; Tarone, 2000), yet still one of the current dilemmas is which orientation to adopt (Cangarajah, 2006). Over a decade ago, Block (1996) argued that the "existence of pluralism appears to provide fertile ground for discussion and for the advancement of the field" (p. 66), though real progress in this direction seems slow to come.

In an attempt to better understand the nature and role of beliefs in SLA, various studies have taken up different, often opposing, approaches to their investigations. These can be more generally categorized as 'cognitive' and 'sociocultural', with a recently emerging 'ecological' perspective closely aligned to the latter.

### 3. Cognitive approaches

The cognitive perspective, also referred to as 'mainstream' (Zuengler & Miller, 2006; Kalaja & Barcelos, 2003) dominated much of the SLA research over the past 20 years, and still continues to be "the logical choice for the field" (Long & Doughty, 2003, p. 869) since "nobody would doubt that language, whether first or second, is an aspect of human cognition" (DeKeyser & Juffs, 2005, p. 437). Early studies which attempted to describe and explain the process of language acquisition conceptualized much of the phenomena as various psycholinguistic entities. Mainstream research has been predominantly concerned with the role of the L1, acquisition orders, development sequences, input/output relationship, and the role of biologically-specified universal grammar (UG). Empirical work conducted from this perspective is still alive and well as evidenced by, *inter alia*, the existence of a number of major journals in the SLA field which embrace cognitively-based research. In addition, ground-breaking work in neurobiology, such as that reported by John Schumann

(Schumann, 1998; Pulvermuller, & Schumann, 1994; Schumann, Crowell, Jones, Lee, Schuchert, & Wood, 2004) among others, provide useful insight into the role of cognitive and affective factors in the process of language acquisition based on findings from brain imaging.

Schumann, et al., (2004) argue that

If our thinking about second language learning is not constrained by the biology of learning, and if it is only constrained by an analysis of the product of that learning, then we can say almost anything about underlying mechanisms. ...[w]e can invoke, as though they were real, mechanisms such as an affective filter, cognitive operating principles, noticing, monitoring, cognitive strategies... But... should we limit ourselves to metaphors? We can constrain our metaphors with biological knowledge (p. 13).

The positivist approach in such studies assumes that only scientific knowledge is 'authentic knowledge', and this philosophy has been guiding empirical work within the 'hard sciences' which aim at explanations and generalizations. Therefore, positivism denies any validity to speculation.

From this perspective, among factors of great importance are the cognitive and metacognitive learner contributions to language learning such as learners' perceptions and beliefs, or metacognitive knowledge. Dufva (2003) notes that the 'classic' cognitive approaches to the study of metacognition have been, in part, shaped by rationalist and Cartesian perspectives. The Cartesian view stresses the mentalist (as opposed to behaviourist) aspect of metacognitive knowledge, and the rationalist (as opposed to empiricist) view stresses the innate aspect of the mind in their accounts of learning. Here, the emphasis is on the individuality of mental knowledge as representations or schemata stored in the mind, and contextual influences are seen as secondary. Thus, in this view, the properties of the mind are not necessarily dependent on the outside influences and once established are relatively static.

The stable or static nature of beliefs is among the most central claims of the mainstream approach. A number of interdisciplinary studies suggest that learner beliefs are intertwined with factors such as self-concept and identity, self-efficacy, personality and other individual differences (Epstein, 1990), which possibly makes them less susceptible to change. Others have suggested that there is evidence of a progressive construction and crystalization of beliefs about learning, and such beliefs are argued to influence increasingly the more situationally-specific learning behaviour (Cantwell, 1998, p. 27), where this situation specificity could easily reflect a language learning context. While there is still paucity in

literature reporting the results of longitudinal studies that investigate the stability and malleability of beliefs about language learning, some report little or no change (Kern, 1995; Peacock, 2001).

Studies using the cognitive approach have produced important insights on language learner beliefs. Early research focused on the nature of beliefs, though later expanded to include their relationship to other variables such as strategy use, motivation, anxiety, proficiency, gender, personality, autonomy, nationality, and institutional context, among others (e.g., Banya & Cheng, 1997; Bernat, 2006a, 2006b; Rifkin, 2000; Horwitz, 1999; Siebert, 2003). Generally, these studies have shown that learner beliefs are shaped by both individual learner differences and, to a lesser degree, culture and the context and in which they function. They also play an important role in students' affect (i.e., motivation, attitudes, anxiety) in language learning. This evidence corroborates studies found in cognitive psychology literature that report on correlations between one's beliefs and personal variables (for a review, see Bernat & Gvozdenko, 2005). More recently, the relationship between learners' beliefs and that of their language instructors has come under investigation, with the majority of studies cited reporting a mismatch (for a review, see Bernat, 2007). This disparity, no doubt, bears on learner satisfaction with instructional methodologies and approaches in the SLA classroom.

In terms of empirical studies, mainstream investigative analyses of learner beliefs that characterize the cognitive framework rely heavily on the 'normative approach' of social and behavioural sciences (e.g., Horwitz, 1988; Kern, 1995; Mantle-Bromley, 1995; Chawhan & Oliver, 2000; Kim-Yoon, 2000). These utilize surveys and questionnaires as data collection methods and apply quantitative analyses. While quantitative, etic research methods in the normative approach provide clarity and precision through the use of well-designed questionnaires and descriptive statistics, can include a large number of respondents and afford them anonymity, they do have limitations. For example, the beliefs profiled in survey studies are generally limited to those identified by the researcher and therefore might not be representative of all the beliefs learners hold about language learning. There is also potential for misinterpretation of questionnaire items. Furthermore, some argue that a construct as intellectually and affectively complex and rich as is one's personal belief system is difficult to capture by people's responses to a set of normative statements (Wilkinson & Schwartz, 1989; Weinstein, 1994).

#### 4. Sociocultural approaches

While sociocultural theory has its long established roots in areas such as sociology, anthropology and history, it has only become influential in SLA in the last two decades or so, and its momentous impact is now widespread in this field. Among most influential is Vygotskian sociocultural theory which is fundamentally concerned with the understanding of the development of mental processes as they are shaped, or 'mediated' by their social and contextual influences. This notion of mediation between human mental processes and culturally constructed auxiliaries is indeed central to sociocultural theory (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). Unlike traditional cognitive perspectives, the fundamentality of the sociocultural perspective resides in the belief that the social dimension of consciousness is primary, while the individual dimension is secondary (Vygotsky, 1979). In other words, what impacts the phenomenon (e.g., learner beliefs) is of greater importance than the phenomenon itself, yet both are important to understanding the whole.

Following the works of theorists such as Dell Hymes (1972), among others, language is seen as a social and cultural phenomenon – a socioculturally constructed mediational means (Lantolf, 2000; 2006), not an individualistic and purely mentalistic exercise. Understanding language is not a matter of decoding pre-established descriptive terms and rules of syntax or grammar, but of understanding utterances which are constructively interpreted in relation to their social and cultural contexts. Therefore, not only does dialogic interaction, among other communicative repertoires, transform the meaning potential of language, it also shapes its formal properties (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006).

For the field of SLA, the sociocultural lens has had great implications not only in terms of research directions (e.g., applying critical paradigms such as discourse analysis and Bakhtin's dialogism, as in the work of Dufva, 2003), but also language teaching methodologies which saw an exponential rise in the development of social - and thus more communicative - approaches. According to Widdowson (2007), the development of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) drew its inspiration from changes in orientation in linguistics, influenced by the philosophical enquiry into pragmatics (especially Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969) and the sociolinguistic study of language in its social context (especially Hymes, 1972; Labov, 1972), but it is Hymes' (1972) formulation of communicative competence, in particular, that lead to the conceptualization of CLT. From the sociocultural stance, both research and pedagogy typically focus on the learner's language *use* in context, rather than isolated linguistic

structures or rules of use.

The social locus of cognition has also been the interest of researchers investigating language learners' perceptions and beliefs. In this view, Rust (1994) describes beliefs as socially-constructed representation systems which are used to interpret and act upon the world, acknowledging the role of context on mental processes. Here, beliefs are seen as fluid and dynamic, not stable entities within the individual. Investigative methods of socioculturally-based studies on learner beliefs include ethnographic classroom observations, diaries and narratives, metaphor analysis, and discourse analysis (e.g., see Kalaja & Barcelos, 2003) and aim to bring students' emic perspectives into account. For example, the dialogic perspective extends from Bakhtian philosophy of the inherently ideological nature of language and emphasizes the learner's *voice*. Applying the discursive orientation to her investigation, Dufva (2003) reports that learners' beliefs can emerge through 'negotiative' interview techniques (i.e., unstructured conversations). In such dialogues, the learners' biographies together with personal accounts of experience give insight to their beliefs. Similarly, Hosenfeld (2003) describes a longitudinal case study where learners' beliefs repeatedly emerged through written journal entries, some – albeit enigmatically – are acted upon while others are not. The researchers emphasize the importance of interpreting the learning activity and the primacy of contextual variables in their investigations. Findings of such studies do not aim to make generalizations, but describe beliefs as embedded in the learners' learning activity.

As discussed, empirical approaches using the sociocultural perspective typically employ qualitative research methods. Studies are usually small-scale and employ in-depth, descriptive and interpretive analyses. They can include a variety of data collection methods such as interview techniques, journal or diary entries, uses of metaphors, as well as classroom observations, enabling triangulation of data. However, the limitations of such studies are reflected by researcher's selectivity of data, a degree of interpretive subjectivity, and context-specificity resulting in lack of application to broader SLA contexts (Bernat & Gvozdenko, 2005).

## 5. Ecological approaches

Under the broad umbrella of sociocultural approaches, yet distinct and a relatively recently emergent field of enquiry in SLA is 'ecology'. The 2008 Summer Issue of the *Modern*

*Language Journal* is devoted to discussion of the nature of language acquisition from the 'dynamic/complex systems' perspective (often referred to as the 'ecological perspective'), evidencing a rapidly growing interest in this area. Ecology expands on the notions of Vygotsky's view of language and the work of Saussure, while taking into account other semiotic traditions, notably Peirce, Halliday, and Bakhtin (for a comparative discussion, see van Lier, 2004). The currency of the ecological perspective is defended by van Lier (2004), where he espouses that "biology appears to be the new science *par excellence*" (p. 9). He further shows that two closely related sciences, psychology and linguistics, have come to include an ecological perspective among the current array of approaches to their fields, pointing to early pioneers of psychology who explicitly referred to their perspective as ecological (e.g., Brunswick, 1943; Barker, 1978; and, Lewin, 1943; cited from van Lier, 2004). More recently, Halliday's (2001) work in linguistics also reflects this approach, and suggests that the term 'ecology of language' is best seen not as a separate field or discipline, but as a transdisciplinary endeavour. The ecological perspective, according to van Lier (2004), is neither a theory nor a method but a way of thinking, where language learning is seen as a semiotic emergence rather than a gradual, linear acquisition process (Lantolf, 2006). Indeed, an increasing number of phenomena in biology and physics are no longer reduced to forces but are treated as an *emergence* of semiotic relations (Potschka, 2004).

Yet, unlike the more traditional perspectives on SLA being of reductive nature that assume a simple casual relationship between input and output, the ecological perspective assumes that the processes are much more complex. Ecology involves the study of nonlinear systems that may not necessarily be predictable, or reflect a cause-effect relationship, and, as such, has been closely linked to chaos and complexity theories (van Lier, 2004; Larsen-Freeman, 1997, 2002). In this view, ecological research considers, among others, factors of space (the physical, social and symbolic) and time (both past, present and future dimensions). It is often associated with longitudinal descriptive and interpretative work such as ethnography - van Lier (2004) sees the work of Malinowski (1967) as ecological in this sense. (For a discussion of changes to research methodology motivated by the adoption of a complexity theory perspective on language development, see Larsen-Freeman & Cameron, 2008).

But how is the 'ecological perspective' relevant to SLA research in general, and beliefs research in particular? A key characteristic of any ecological approach is its contextualized or 'situative' character. Investigations typically focus on phenomena at the macro level (e.g.,

study of the school or classroom environment) and/or micro level (e.g., study of perceptions, affordances, and actions). *Affordances*, simply put, are opportunities for interaction which tie perception and attention to activity. In this view, context plays an important role and is not just something that surrounds language. It defines language while, at the same time, being defined by it. Whatever happens in the examined context becomes part of the investigation, inevitably leading to a critical perspective. van Lier (2004) claims that such a perspective often requires thinking outside the confines of our own particular paradigm, or 'box', and that although the ecological perspective lends itself to contextual and interpretative research framework, it does not necessarily rule out any particular type of research methods; "ruling out of which would only confine one to a particular box" (p. 7). In proposing the ecological perspective as a research paradigm for SLA, van Lier (2004) reminds us that cognitive activity does exist and that it is very important in language development, admitting that the ecological approach would be useless without its contribution. Yet, while the idea is plausible, to ensure that it does not merely remain in the sphere of rhetoric, ecological studies need to reflect that scope. For example, the abovementioned concept of *affordances* could provide a starting point for explorations into learner perceptions and beliefs regarding their potentiality for actions in language learning, as well as language engagement outside the classroom.

Attention to perceptions and beliefs in relation to actions in these semiotic contexts has not yet received adequate attention among researchers. Hosenfeld (2003) and Alanen (2003) have undertaken research focusing on beliefs and the process of belief formation (or *emergence*, to use an 'ecological' term). Using interview techniques, observations and field notes, they show how certain learner beliefs about language learning are constructed in interaction – interpersonally (jointly constructed in interactions with other students or their teachers) as well as intra-personally (within one's own thinking). Similarly, Wongsothorn (2005) investigated language beliefs among university entrants in Thailand using similar methods, however, there is still paucity of language learner belief studies which explicitly identify their research paradigms as 'ecological'.

So far, I have attempted to show how the theoretical and applied areas of the SLA research field and the language learner beliefs research field have followed almost parallel developments over the last few decades. Various researchers have embraced divergent paradigms in their work, contributing to the development of our current knowledge in these



areas.

## 6. Challenges ahead

Our challenge for the field of research is now threefold. The first, to continue to embrace various multidisciplinary approaches to empirical studies in the field of language learning, taking advantage of developments in cognitive and social research fields, as well as new approaches such as those afforded by the ecological perspectives and chaos/complexity theories (e.g., see Larsen-Freeman, 2002), among others. A number of proponents have also argued for such an integration (e.g., see Block, 1996) which could reflect a more holistic sociocognitive framework while enabling the triangulation of data obtained via different methodological means in empirical studies. Indeed, researchers have recently called for more interdisciplinarity in the field of foreign language acquisition in general (Dewaele, 2005; Guiora, 2005), and in the area of learner beliefs in particular (Bernat & Gvozdenko, 2005). While the current diversity of theoretical perspectives has steadily begun to create a rich tapestry of complimenting studies, there is a need for more plurality in this area given the scope and depth of one's beliefs.

Importantly, alongside cognitively based quantitative studies, in recent years the respectability of social-based qualitative approaches to SLA study has grown, together with a greater acceptance of such approaches across the social sciences in general. Alanen (2003) points out, that neither cognitive nor sociocultural approaches are completely incompatible with one another, and that contemporary cognitive psychology and cognitive science are now evolving in ways that the study of cognition encompasses more and more of the social aspects as well. Indeed, disciplinary border-crossings have become much more acceptable in linguistics and language-related research (Larsen-Freeman, 1997), though more is needed in the area of learner beliefs.

Furthermore, it seems important to combine a number of research perspectives and methodologies in future studies given the constraints of purely quantitative methods investigating a phenomena as cognitively and affectively rich as learner belief systems and the interpretatively subjective and contextually specific nature of qualitative studies alone. Combinations of approaches and methods utilizing both qualitative with quantitative data could provide an even greater insight into a multitude of potentially interacting sociocultural/contextual, affective/ psychological, cognitive/neurobiological, and ideological

factors that determine – to a variable extent – learner beliefs about language learning.

More specifically, the second challenge is to investigate the *impact* of learner beliefs on their language learning processes as well as outcomes. While much has been reported on the nature and strength of learner beliefs, less has been said about their actual impact in the classroom and beyond (but see, Graham, 2006). Alanen (2003) admits that a question of great interest for future research will be to determine at which point or in which contexts beliefs start to be used as resources for self-regulation in language learning. This could perhaps be done via elicitation techniques such as stimulated recall, particularly when cognitive dissonance (dissonance between beliefs and actions) might have occurred. In sum, Alanen (2003) contends that in this particular aspect, the research questions within the neo-Vygotskian framework do not differ greatly from those proposed by cognitively-oriented research, providing optimistic common ground.

Other recommendations include investigating a possible relationship of language learner beliefs and individual differences such as gender, as a number of recent studies have reported a positive relationship (Siebert, 2003; Piechurska-Kuciel & Bernat, 2008). Contextual or situational variables, as well as ethnic and nationality differences, could further be studied for the light they may shed on the nature (and possibly stability or malleability) of learner beliefs. Indeed, a number of studies on context/setting specificity (Rifkin, 2000; Bernat, 2006), and ethnicity (Horwitz, 1999; Siebert, 2003), have produced varied results in relation to these variables and language learner beliefs, yet these were predominantly quantitative in nature. Qualitative studies on contextual variables impacting learner beliefs which have already begun to receive attention in recent years (for some studies, see Kalaja & Barcelos, 2003) and will no doubt continue to extend our knowledge on their influence on learners' metacognitive processes.

The mismatch between teacher and learner beliefs presents a third challenge for the field. Future research might include multi-method approaches to investigating ways of dealing with the mismatch between teacher and learner beliefs in the classroom. The majority of studies sighted report significant belief differences between teachers and their learners (see Bernat, 2007). For example, students tend to hold a higher preference for learning grammar, translation, vocabulary and pronunciation exercises, and often hold unrealistic expectations about the length of time it takes to learn a foreign language. Indeed, significant differences between student and teacher beliefs might create tension in the classroom, thus emphasizing

the need for studies to explore the most productive ways of minimizing this gap.

Consequently, there is a need to investigate possible intervention measures and their effectiveness in changing or restructuring learner beliefs in the classroom context, should they be found to be unproductive, unrealistic, or hampering the acquisition process. The field of language learner beliefs has yet to determine the possibility and plausibility of changing learner beliefs in the classroom context. Almost two decades ago, Horwitz (1988) reported that over a third of the students in her study held misconceptions with respect to the length of time it takes to learn a foreign language, to name but one of many instances of unproductive beliefs. Horwitz's findings are corroborated by a number of other more recent studies (e.g., Siebert, 2003; Bernat, 2007; Kern, 1995). Whether learner beliefs can (and even ought to) be changed in the classroom context is a currently much under-researched area, reflected by the paucity of literature on the issue. Dole and Sinatra (1994) point out that "most often studies did not examine long term changes in beliefs by re-administering dependent measures over time" (p. 253). Yet, a number of psycho-cognitive (among others) theories exist (e.g., see Petty & Cacioppo, 1986; Chaiken, 1987) which could provide a theoretical framework for future studies exploring the possibilities of belief change and change continuity in the SLA context. However, a cautionary note is due here. Namely, we need to have a better understanding and a stronger foundation of learner beliefs, before any intervention measures are applied. Over a decade ago, Mantle-Bromley (1995) argued that "we do not yet know enough about the nature of incoming students' beliefs to design effective curricular intervention addressing those beliefs" (p. 377), a view which was more recently expressed by Woods (2003). Whether we have already gained enough knowledge in this area in order to successfully intervene with theoretically sound intervention methods is still, in the view of some, a matter for debate and research.

## 7. Conclusion

This discussion has attempted to elucidate some important theoretical and empirical contributions various often opposing perspectives have made to the SLA field in general and to language learner beliefs research in particular. It has provided a synopsis of research studies into learner perceptions and beliefs about language learning which were underpinned by both the cognitivist and social research paradigms.

On a pragmatic level, a number of recommendations have been made concerning future

directions of learner beliefs research. These include investigating the actual (as opposed to perceived) impact of language learner beliefs in SLA, investigating the relationship between learner beliefs and other individual and contextual variables, as well as examining the congruence of learner and teacher beliefs in the classroom context and exploring ways of minimizing possible gaps.

On an ideological level, it has proposed the sociocognitive framework for SLA research, but in particular language learner beliefs studies. The potential convergences of both the cognitive and sociocultural perspectives appear optimistically fruitful and perhaps worthy of further consideration. Rangelova and Meskill (2000) suggest that cognitive orientations have the potential help to fill in gaps in social-cultural studies related to second language learning, and that clinical experiments that illustrate certain architectures and tendencies of the mind can and ought to be incorporated into sociocultural theory and practices. Such established lenses can be used to gain additional perspective on learning phenomena *in situ*. Likewise, socially oriented enterprises also need to be factored into cognition-based research. Reflective of the socio-cognitive matrix is a poignant analogy once given by Michael Sharwood Smith in a conference paper. Sharwood observed that "the 'cake' of SLA is cognitive, while the 'icing' is social" (cited from Zuengler & Miller, 2006, p. 36). Crucially, while the focus on the 'icing' is experiencing an exponential rise in some SLA circles, we ought not forget the biological cognitive bases of language and thought processes while being enticed by the more recently emergent purely positivist research paradigms. Clearly, each perspective has different yet important offerings.

Combining the discussed methods and assumptions of both traditions - one concerning metacognitive/cognitive elements of the workings of the mind, the other with socially construed understandings of these same processes - can certainly aid in addressing the shortcomings of both orientations: one being exclusionarily scientific, the other often accused of lacking scientific rigor. As Rangelova and Meskill (2000) conclude, "where differences in orientations in the 'soft' and 'hard' sciences have more frequently been pitted one against the other in paradigm wars, terminological battles, and the wrestling of ideologies" (p. 6), a convergence of these respective stances can indeed emerge.

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## Effects of Task Repetition on the Fluency, Complexity and Accuracy of Iranian EFL Learners' Oral Discourse

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### Abstract

A more recent trend within communicative approaches has been to consider how attention can be profitably channeled through the instructional choices that are made (Schmidt, 1999). The assumption is that learners have available limited attentional capacities, that the different components of language production and comprehension compete for such limited capacities. "The more that a learner tries to hold in his or her head at a given moment, the harder the learning is and the more likely there will be a cognitive overload" (Oxford, 2006, p. 51).

A number of proposals have been made as to how some attention may be focused on form. It can be done through task design (Fotos & Ellis, 1991), pre-task and post-task activities (Doughty, 1991), consciousness-raising activities (Willis, 1996). In this research we approach the issue of attention from a different but related perspective. Our study focused on the ability learners have to utilize their L2 knowledge in production. We investigated if there is an

evidence of target like production when the need to focus on meaning has been minimized through task repetition, thereby freeing learners to attend to form, not from input, but from their own internal system.

To examine the effects of task repetition and task type on fluency, accuracy, and Complexity, the researcher assigned 120 students to 6 groups; the narrative task performers, personal task performers and decision-making task performers in the male and female groups. Data was collected using a 2x2x3 factorial design. The first production of the subjects was measured for fluency, accuracy, and complexity. Then after a week all the subjects did the same task again, and their second production was also measured for fluency, accuracy, and complexity. The t-test results and the analysis of variance indicated that task repetition, and task type, as well as the interaction between these variables resulted in significant differences in subjects' oral discourse in terms of fluency, accuracy, and complexity.

Key Words: task, repetition, fluency, accuracy, complexity, oral discourse

## Introduction

In recent years a number of researchers, syllabus designers and educational innovators have called for a move in language teaching toward task-based approaches to instruction. (Prabhu, 1987; Nunan, 1989; Long & Crooks, 1991; Ellis, 2003).

Since the advent of communicative language teaching and the belief that language is best learned when it is being used to communicative messages, the communicative task has ascended to a position of prominence as a unit of organization in syllabus design. Nunn (2006), for example proposes a task-based unitary framework because it "leads to student-led holistic outcomes in the form of written reports, spoken presentations and substantial small-group conversations that lead to decision-making outcomes" (p.70). This interest in the task has been motivated to a considerable extent by the fact that 'task' is seen as a construct of equal importance to second language acquisition (SLA) researchers and to language teachers (Pica, 1997).

The rise of task-based language teaching has led to a variety of different interpretations of what exactly constitutes a task. Central to the notion of a communicative task is the exchange of meanings. Willis (1996) defines task as an activity where the target language is used by the learner for a communicative purpose (goal) in order to achieve an outcome. Here the notion of meaning is subsumed in 'outcome'. Likewise for Nunan (2006) tasks have a non-linguistic outcome. He defines task as:

A piece of classroom work that involves learners in comprehending, 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.17).

There are two main sources of evidence which justify the use of tasks in language classes. As Lynch and Maclean (2000) mention the first source of justifications for Task-Based Learning is what we might term the ecological one: the belief that the best way to promote effective learning is by setting up classroom tasks that reflect as far as possible the real world tasks which the learners perform, or will perform. Task performance is seen as rehearsal for interaction to come. The second source of evidence comes from SLA research. " Those arguing for TBL, drawing on SLA research, have tended to focus on issues such as learnability, the order of acquisition of particular L2 structures, and the implications of the input, interaction and output hypotheses" (Lynch & Maclean, 2000, p. 222).

Task-based language teaching is also discussed from a psycholinguistic perspective. "From a psycholinguistic perspective a task is a device that guides learners to engage in certain types of information-processing that are believed to be important for effective language use and/or for language acquisition from some theoretical standpoint" (Ellis, 2000, p.197). It assumes that while performing the tasks, learners engage in certain types of language use and mental processing that are useful for acquisition. Ellis (2006) asserts that "tasks reduce the cognitive or linguistic demands placed on the learner" (p.23).

The underlying theoretical position adopted by task-based researchers who work in this tradition derives from what Lantolf (1996) has called the 'computational metaphor'. Lantolf comments: "it quickly became regularized as theory within the cognitive science of the 1970s and 1980s. Mainstream cognitive science so strongly believes in the metaphor – in effect, to be in mainstream cognitive science means that many people find it difficult to conceive of neural computation as a theory, it must surely be a fact" (p. 724). This metaphor underlies the work on task-based learning/teaching of Long's Interaction Hypothesis (1989 cited in Ellis 2000), Skehan's Cognitive Approach (1996), based on the distinction between two types of processing that learners can engage in (lexical processing and rule-based processing), and Yule's model of Communicative Effectiveness (1997, cited in Ellis, 2000).

A more recent trend within communicative approaches has been to consider how attention can be profitably channeled through the instructional choices that are made (Schmidt, 1990).

The assumption is that learners have available limited attentional capacities, that the different components of language production and comprehension compete for such limited capacities, and that the choice to devote attention to one area may well be at the expense of other areas. A central choice in this regard is between attention to form and attention to meaning. The last 20 years have seen a protracted debate in language teaching concerning the relative merits of focusing on accuracy and form as opposed to focusing on fluency and meaning. "Underlying most current research in SLA is the assumption that some level of attention to form is needed for language acquisition to take place" (Radwan, 2005, p.70).

A number of proposals have been made as to how some attention may be focused on form. It can be done through task design (Fotos & Ellis, 1991), pre-task and post-task activities (Doughty, 1991) and consciousness-raising activities (Willis, 1996).

In this research, we approach the issue of attention from a different but related perspective. Our study focuses on the ability learners have to utilize their L2 knowledge in production. We investigated if there is evidence of target like production when the need to focus on meaning has been minimized through task repetition, thereby freeing learners to attend to form, not from input, but from their own internal system.

There are some possible differences that could result from task repetition. For example, "we might expect performance to be more fluent in terms of pausing and speed of words per minute. This is because all things being equal we would expect that doing the task a second time would involve less planning work. Also it is likely to have a different form: because the task has already been formulated previously, we can expect fewer false starts and self corrections (Bygate, 1996, p. 138).

Task repetition, then, seems to have beneficial effects on learner performance. As Bygate (1999) suggests, learners are likely to initially focus on message content and once message content and the basic language needed to encode it has been established, to switch their attention to the selection and monitoring of appropriate language.

#### From comprehension to production

Speaking in an L2 has occupied a peculiar position throughout much of the history of language teaching, and only in the last two decades has it begun to emerge as a branch of teaching, learning and testing in its own right, rarely focusing on the production of spoken discourse (Bygate, 2001).

Krashen's proposal (1985) that comprehensible input brings about language development and generalizes to speaking was attractive. Claiming that we learn through exposure to meaningful material may not be startling. We are unlikely to learn from material that we don't understand, after all. As Mangubhai (2006) states "there is the need to provide opportunities for comprehensible output" (p. 52).

Swain (1985), an important contributor of immersion-based evidence, was led to consider whether other factors beside input might affect language competence. In particular she proposed the 'Comprehensible Output Hypothesis', that to learn to speak we have to actually speak. Swain (1985) argues that knowing that one will need to speak makes one more likely to attend to syntax when one is listening. " In particular, the activity of producing the target language may, under certain circumstances, prompt L2 learners to recognize some of their linguistic problems and bring to their attention something they need to discover about their L2" (Izumi, Bigelow, Fujiwara, & Fearnow, 1999, p. 421).

Building on Swain's output hypothesis, i.e., producing causes learner to engage in syntactic processing and in so doing promotes acquisition, Skehan (1998) suggests that production requires attention to form but only sometimes. He distinguishes three aspects of production: (1) fluency, (often achieved through memorized and integrated language elements); (2) accuracy, (when learners try to use an interlanguage system of a particular level to produce correct, but possibly limited, language); and (3) complexity (a willingness to take risks, to try out new forms even though they may not be completely correct) (Skehan, 1998, p.5). This may also involve a greater willingness to take risks, and use fewer controlled language subsystems. This area is also taken to correlate with a greater likelihood of restructuring, that is, change and development in the interlanguage system.

To recapitulate, ongoing performance in real circumstances would be fluent, avoid errors, and draw on whatever structures are necessary, however complex, to achieve precision in an interaction. As attention is limited, it is unlikely that all of three of these aspects of performance will be achievable simultaneously. Fluency requires learners to draw on their memory-based system, accessing and developing ready-made chunks of language, and when problem arises, using communication strategies to get by. In this case, then, the kind of processing learners engage in is semantic rather than syntactic. In contrast, accuracy and, in particular, complexity are achieved by learners drawing on their rule-based system and thus require syntactic processing. "It is assumed that initially this greater complexity would be



associated with a greater likelihood of error and also more halting dysfluent production. However, as the learner becomes more familiar with some new structure, this error-prone and slow performance is likely to give way to a performance which is less likely to contain mistakes" (Skehan, 2007, p. 60).

This implies that we need to find ways to use tasks to lead learners to vary the type of processing they use, and to integrate their capacity for fluent processing of accurate and complex language. The big challenge – for language teaching in general as much as for task-based teaching – is how this can be done.

According to Bygate (1999) two ways of approaching integration of processing capacities are firstly through task repetition, and secondly through the use of pre- and post-task activities. Task repetition may help develop this process of integration. Experience suggests that we improve our ability to handle communicative situations through repeated encounters with similar demands. According to Plough & Gass, 1993, (as cited by Lynch and Maclean, 2000), repeated tasks cause learners to disengage attention and commitment. Bygate (1996) states that, information-processing load is reduced in repeated tasks, since the cognitive organization of the task is already available. The task provides scope for more ambitious language and greater precision.

Ellis (2003) states that one of the procedural factors that has been found to influence task performance is rehearsal-giving learners the opportunity to repeat a task. Typically we first focus on the message content, scanning our memory for appropriate language to cope with the task. This establishes familiarity with useful message content and language knowledge, and provides a basis for handling the task. On subsequent occasions this familiarity gives us the time and awareness to shift attention from message content to the selection and monitoring of appropriate language. By enabling a shift of attention, learners may be helped to integrate the competing demands of fluency, accuracy and complexity

Levelt (1989) has identified three autonomous processing stages in speech production: (1) conceptualizing the message, (2) formulating the language representation, and (3) articulating the message. Ellis (2005) believes that, "rehearsal may provide an opportunity for learners to attend to all three components in Levelt's (1989) model- conceptualization, formulation, and articulation" (p.14). Lynch and Mclean (2000) indicate that when learners repeat a task their production improves in a number of ways, for example complexity increases, propositions are expressed more clearly, and they become more fluent. Bygate and Samuda (2005) also

suggest that rehearsal is a useful pedagogic procedure not just because of the opportunities it affords learners to develop their L2 discourse skills but also because rehearsal arises in naturally occurring communicative activities.

### Research Questions

The following research questions were addressed in this study:

Question 1: Does task repetition lead to more fluent language use?

Question 2: Does task repetition lead to more accurate language use?

Question 3: Does task repetition lead to more complex language use?

Question 4: Does task type have any impact on the fluency gain through task repetition?

Question 5: Does task type have any impact on the accuracy gain through task repetition?

Question 6: Does task type have any impact on the complexity gain through task repetition?

### Method

#### Subjects

This study was conducted with 120 EFL students (boys and girls) selected among 200 students, who are majoring in English language teaching at Tabriz Islamic Azad University. They were 18-20 years old and at intermediate level. For homogeneity of the subjects, prior to research a proficiency test (PET) was given to 200 students and among them 120 participants who had received 50-60 out of 65 were selected. These 120 students were divided into six groups randomly. Each group worked on a special task type and their performances on the first attempt and second attempt of the same task were recorded and scored.

These learners were not aware of the research purpose. Their performances were recorded in language lab and later on the recordings were transcribed and scored according to some established criteria.

#### Instrumentation

This study was conducted with 120 EFL students chosen from 200 students based on their proficiency scores. The proficiency test was PET (Preliminary English Test, 2004), a second level Cambridge ESOL exam for an intermediate level learners. A one-way ANOVA was run

to test the homogeneity of the participants according to their proficiency scores. The results of the ANOVA test showed that there was no significant difference across the six groups of participants ( $f = 1.164$ ,  $p = .331$ ). Based on the results obtained, the six groups of the study were considered to be equivalent in terms of their proficiency.

The oral production of each group in any performance was recorded on a separate cassette. So totally we used twelve cassettes, i.e. six for their first performance and six for second performance which was the repetition of the first performance.

### Procedure

The subjects involved in this study were randomly divided into six groups i.e. three male and three female groups. Each group was assigned to perform a specific task. The implementation procedures were carefully designed, so that conditions for each task type were as close as possible to being identical for all of the participants, and on each occasion. The recordings took place in the language lab by the researcher and another language teacher.

Before performing the task, the participants in all six groups were instructed about the specific task and were told what they were supposed to do. Students were asked to think about the task they had to do. The material was not part of class work, and subjects had no exposure to the task types before. Each subject, after introducing himself or herself, started to perform the task and it was recorded on a cassette. When all of the participants finished their first performance, the second phase of the study began. Students hadn't been informed in advance about the repetition of the task in order to diminish the practice effect.

After one week students were required to do the same task again. Their second performances were also recorded on separate cassettes. After collecting the data the most difficult phase of our study began. We had to transcribe the speeches in order to measure them. The transcripts were coded, and evaluated by three raters individually. Inter-rater reliability was calculated at 99%, and problems were resolved individually on a case-by-case basis.

### Tasks

This research included a range of tasks to explore whether different task types would have an impact on performance. Three task types were used in this study following Skehan and Foster (1999): Personal tasks (based on information that was well known to participants and that

was therefore assumed to reduce the cognitive load of the task involved), narratives (which were supported by visual material, but which required some degree of organization of material to tell a story effectively), and decision-making tasks (which required the capacity to relate a set of reasons to a set of decisions that had to be made).

These three types of tasks were chosen for a number of reasons. First similar tasks have been used in other studies of task types (e.g. Foster & Skehan, 1996; Skehan & Foster, 1997; Skehan & Foster, 1999; Foster, 2000 cited in Foster, 2001) and thus comparison with the results of these studies would be easier. Second, all of these tasks are monologic rather than dialogic, they afford a basis for deriving measures of learner performance that are not influenced by interactional variables. Finally, we wished to insure that the task was reasonably demanding on the participants and previous researches indicate that this can be achieved by these types of tasks.

As a personal task the following topic was used:

Sending somebody back to turn off the oven. (Foster & Skehan, 1996)

It is the afternoon, you are at the university, and you have an important examination in fifteen minutes. You suddenly think that you haven't turned off the oven after cooking your lunch. There is no time for you to go home. Explain to a friend who wants to help

- How to get to your house
- How to get into the house and get to the kitchen
- How to turn the oven off

For the narrative task, students were required to tell a story based on a set of six pictures taken from Heaton (1975). The name of the story was (a surprise).

For the third type of task, i.e. decision-making the following topic was chosen: You are going to be taken to a deserted island to live there for a month. You can only take three pieces of equipment with you. Tell us what you would like to take with you and give reasons for your choice and justify the decision. Decision-making tasks tend to involve the mobilization of sets of values to enable decisions to be made about conversational problems.

#### Independent Variables

- Repetition: This variable explored the effects of repetition of the same task. This was operationalised by having the participants repeat a version of each task type which they had performed a week before.

- Task type: This explored the effect of task type (narrative, personal, and decision-making) on language performance. The purpose was to explore whether the three task types led to differences in language production.

#### Dependent Variables

Dependent variables were used which focused on three potential qualities of the participant's speech:

- Fluency "concerns the learner's capacity to produce language in real time without undue pausing or hesitation. It is likely to rely upon more lexicalized modes of communication, as the pressures of real time speech production are met only by avoiding excessive rule-based computation" (Skehan, 1996, p. 22).
- Accuracy " is the ability to avoid error in performance, possibly reflecting higher levels of control in the language.
- Complexity "is the utilization of interlanguage structures that are 'cutting edge', elaborate, and structured" (Ellis, 2003, p.113).

#### Measures

Following procedures developed in Bygate (2001) the audiotaped data were transcribed and coded to measure the fluency, accuracy, and complexity of participants' performance. All performances were scored by three raters and a reliability of 99% was calculated. The measures were operationalised as follows:

The data were coded for t-units, defined as "a finite clause together with any subordinate clauses dependent on it" (Bygate, 2001, p. 35). Complexity was measured in terms of number of words per t-unit. The higher the number, the more complex the language. For counting of the words only content words (nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs) were considered.

Accuracy was reflected by calculating the incidence of errors per t-unit- the higher the number, the less accurate the language. Number and length of pauses were not used in this study as a measure of fluency because of the great number of the participants. Accordingly, fluency was measured by counting the number of repetitions, false starts, reformulations, and replacements per t-unit.

Data Analysis

In order to answer research questions the data were then submitted to statistical analysis including (a) paired t-test, (b) general linear model, multivariate analyses of variance (two way ANOVA).

The first research question in this study addressed the effect of task repetition on the fluency of L2 production. To answer this question a paired t-test was conducted. As the descriptive data in Table 1 show, during the first performance the fluency mean score of the participants was .5868 but during the second performance it has decreased and become .4277. As it has been mentioned before, in the case of fluency measurement which is actually a dysfluency measurement in this study, the smaller the figure the better the results.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics for paired t-test

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	PRE.FL	.5868	120	.64384	.05877
	POS.FL	.4277	120	.44268	.04041
Pair 2	PRE.AC	.6129	120	.48360	.04415
	POS.AC	.5223	120	.35116	.03206
Pair 3	PRE.CO	2.7354	120	1.07187	.09785
	POS.CO	3.7857	120	1.57646	.14391

Table 2: Paired Samples t-test

		Paired Differences				t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	PRE.FL-POS.FL	.1592	.67649	.06175	.0369	.2814	2.577	119	.011
	PRE.AC-POS.AC	.0906	.60504	.05523	-.0188	.1999	1.640	119	.104
Pair 3	PRE.CO-POS.CO	-1.0503	1.79036	.16344	-1.3739	-.7266	-6.426	119	.000

As the results of Table 2 show, the difference between the participants' fluency measures in two performances was significant ( $t(119) = 2.577, p = .011$ ). It means that performing the same task for the second time with the time interval of one week had a significant effect on the participants' fluency measurement.

Similarly, the second research question investigated the effect of task repetition on the accuracy of participants' oral production. As has been mentioned, in this research, accuracy has been measured through the number of errors per t-unit, so the smaller the obtained score, the better the accuracy would be. Looking at the mean scores of accuracy measures during the two performances in table 1, we notice that there has been a slight decrease in the amount of accuracy score from time one to time two production. In the first performance, it has been .6129 but in the second performance it has reduced to .5223, which is a sign of improvement and reduction of the number of errors made. However, the results obtained from the paired t-test presented in Table 2 does not show any significant effect for accuracy measures in the case of task repetition ( $t(119) = 1.64, p = .104$ ).

In this study, the main effect of task repetition on speech production is seen in complexity measures which is the core of research question 3. As the descriptive data of Table 1 indicates, there has been an increase in the complexity level of participants from the first to the second time production. The complexity mean score of 2.73 in the first time production has reached to 3.78 during the second time production. It means that the number of the words the subjects have produced has risen when they had the chance to perform the same task again. As it can be seen in table 2, the main effect of task repetition is significantly meaningful for complexity measures ( $t(119) = 6.426, p = .000$ ).

In order to investigate the effects of task type in repeated performances, first analysis was followed by the repeated two-way ANOVA analysis. Tables 3, 6, and 9 show the descriptive data for the three speech features (fluency, accuracy, and complexity) in relation to the independent variables 'task type' and 'repetition'.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics for fluency/ task type

	TASK.TYP	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
PRE.FLU	Narrative	.6250	.5015	40
	personal task	.5150	.4780	40
	decision making	.6205	.8814	40
	Total	.5868	.6438	120
	POS.FLU	Narrative	.4208	.4939
	personal task	.2913	.2893	40
	decision making	.5710	.4797	40
	Total	.4277	.4427	120

Table 4: repeated two-way ANOVA results for the effects of task type on fluency

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Intercept	61.753	1	61.753	164.554	.000
TASK.TYP	1.513	2	.757	2.017	.138
Error	43.907	117	.375		

Table 5: repeated two-way ANOVA results for the effects of repetition and task type on fluency

Effect		Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.
Repetition (pre/pos)	Pillai's Trace	.054	6.620(a)	1.000	117.000	.011
	Wilks' Lambda	.946	6.620(a)	1.000	117.000	.011
	Hotelling's Trace	.057	6.620(a)	1.000	117.000	.011
	Roy's Largest Root	.057	6.620(a)	1.000	117.000	.011
Repetition * TASK.TYP	Pillai's Trace	.013	.794(a)	2.000	117.000	.454
	Wilks' Lambda	.987	.794(a)	2.000	117.000	.454
	Hotelling's Trace	.014	.794(a)	2.000	117.000	.454
	Roy's Largest Root	.014	.794(a)	2.000	117.000	.454

With regard to our fourth research question, the figures in table three show that during the



second performance which is indicated in the table as (pos.flu) fluency has decreased in all of the three task types, but in order to see whether the difference between the task types is meaningful or not, a repeated two-way ANOVA test was calculated (table 4). The results suggest that, although reworking the task did have a striking impact on the learners' speech fluency, task type didn't exert significant effects. i.e. ( $F(2,117) = 2.017, p = .138$  which is higher than .05). There wasn't a significance difference on the fluency of subjects performing three task types in the case of repeated performance. Also, as table 5 shows, there isn't a significance interaction between the task repetition and task type variables. This means that the fluency measurement in two performances was not influenced by type of the task.

Table 6: Descriptive Statistics for accuracy/ task type

	TASK.TYP	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
PRE.ACC	narrative	.6755	.4358	40
	personal task	.5190	.4629	40
	decision making	.6442	.5434	40
	Total	.6129	.4836	120
POS.ACC	Narrative	.5890	.3441	40
	personal task	.3393	.2685	40
	Decision making	.6388	.3646	40
	Total	.5223	.3512	120

Table 7: repeated two-way ANOVA results for the effects of task type on accuracy

Measure: MEASURE\_1

Transformed Variable: Average

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Intercept	77.328	1	77.328	491.219	.000
TASK.TYP	2.305	2	1.153	7.322	.001
Error	18.418	117	.157		

Table 8: repeated two-way ANOVA results for the effect of task repetition and task type on accuracy

Effect		Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.
FACTOR1	Pillai's Trace	.022	2.682(a)	1.000	117.000	.104
	Wilks' Lambda	.978	2.682(a)	1.000	117.000	.104
	Hotelling's Trace	.023	2.682(a)	1.000	117.000	.104
	Roy's Largest Root	.023	2.682(a)	1.000	117.000	.104
FACTOR1 * TASK.TYP	Pillai's Trace	.014	.828(a)	2.000	117.000	.439
	Wilks' Lambda	.986	.828(a)	2.000	117.000	.439
	Hotelling's Trace	.014	.828(a)	2.000	117.000	.439
	Roy's Largest Root	.014	.828(a)	2.000	117.000	.439

In order to find out if task type has any impact on the accuracy gain through task repetition, which was the concern of research question 5, a similar repeated two-way ANOVA was run. The descriptive statistics in Table 6 shows that in all of the three task types participants had an improvement during their second performance.

Drawing on the mean scores reported in table 6, we can see that there is a marked effect for task type on the accuracy measures. The personal task consistently generated more accurate performance during the second attempt. Narrative task type led to the second more accurate performance and the less accurate performance during the second attempt belonged to decision-making task type. The results obtained from the repeated two-way ANOVA run on the data and presented in table 7 show that the main effects are clearly meaningful. ( $F(2,117) = 7.322, p = .001$ ). However, as table 8 shows, the interaction between task repetition and task type is not significant.

Table 9: Descriptive Statistics for complexity/ task type

	TASK.TYP	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
PRE.COM	Narrative	2.6048	.5448	40
	personal task	2.2675	.5661	40
	Decision making	3.3340	1.5096	40
	Total	2.7354	1.0719	120
POS.COM	narrative	3.1795	1.1425	40
	personal task	3.5848	1.3711	40
	decision making	4.5928	1.8198	40
	Total	3.7857	1.5765	120

Table 10: repeated two-way ANOVA results for the effects of task type on complexity

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Intercept	2551.472	1	2551.472	1636.480	.000
TASK.TYP	59.323	2	29.662	19.025	.000
Error	182.417	117	1.559		

Table 11: repeated two-way ANOVA results for the effects of task repetition and task type on complexity

Effect		Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.
FACTOR1	Pillai's Trace	.265	42.105(a)	1.000	117.000	.000
	Wilks' Lambda	.735	42.105(a)	1.000	117.000	.000
	Hotelling's Trace	.360	42.105(a)	1.000	117.000	.000
	Roy's Largest Root	.360	42.105(a)	1.000	117.000	.000
FACTOR1 * TASK.TYP	Pillai's Trace	.036	2.169(a)	2.000	117.000	.119
	Wilks' Lambda	.964	2.169(a)	2.000	117.000	.119
	Hotelling's Trace	.037	2.169(a)	2.000	117.000	.119
	Roy's Largest Root	.037	2.169(a)	2.000	117.000	.119

The last question about the role of the task type was about the impact of task type on complexity measures in the case of repetition. Turning to the study of the results of tables 9 and 10, highly significant results were found for the independent variables 'task type' and

'repetition' on the complexity measures. The mean scores in table 9 show that in all of the task types there has been an increase in the complexity level during the second performance. The results of repeated two-way ANOVA in table 10 indicates a meaningful difference among three task types in the case of repetition, ( $F(2,117) = 19.025, p = .000$ ). A trend towards a task type effect was found on the complexity measure for the personal task type group. Decision-making task type was the second more complex one during the task repetition. Table 11, however, shows that the interaction between repetition and task type is not significant

### Discussion

The present paper is part of a research project designed to help our understanding of the instructional choices when language learning tasks are used. The underlying rationale is one in which there is a limited capacity processing ability and in which tensions between a concern to be fluent, a concern to be accurate, and a concern to take risks and use more complex language need to be balanced. The present study has focused on the impact of task repetition and then on three task types.

Using a range of measures, the researcher found some evidence that task repetition resulted in improvement in learners' oral discourse. The findings are supported by information processing theory that human beings possess limited capacity (Anderson, 2000) which does not allow the speaker to attend to all aspects of the language at the time of task performance. Second language learners with low level of proficiency do not have ready-made plans in their possession to facilitate language production under real time pressure (Farch & Kasper, 1986). When first carrying out the task, the learners would be initially more concerned with planning the content of the message. On the second occasion, on the other hand, having done the substantial conceptual work, the learners would be more concerned with paying attention to the formulation aspect of the task. It can be concluded that this can be an effect of highly contextualised cognitive rehearsal, releasing spare capacity on the part of the speaker to increase accuracy or complexity. The results of the present study are in line with findings of the previous studies (e.g., Bygate, 2001). So generally speaking, the results suggest that previous experience of a task is available for speakers to build on in the subsequent performance.

The findings of the study are also supported by Swain's (1985) output hypothesis, that in

order to speak we have to actually speak. Through the task repetition of the same task, learners may be pushed to notice their problems and try to repair them in the second attempt, because “under certain circumstances, output promotes noticing” (Swain, 1998, p. 67).

The results are also consistent with Skehan’s (1998) dual-mode system, which claims that L2 speaker’s processing capacity is limited because of which some areas of language have to be de-emphasized in order to attend to some other areas. As a result, actual performance may well be dependent on the prioritizing decisions of the language learner, as well as the characteristics of tasks and conditions under which tasks are performed. Task repetition is assumed to free the learner from real time pressure in terms of processing load.

The findings about the task type effects on the repeated performance indicate that while there wasn’t a strong effect for fluency in the case of task repetition in three task types, a significant impact was noticed about accuracy and complexity measurement in the case of repetition in three different task types. The follow-up post-hoc analysis revealed that there has been a significant difference between the personal task group and the narrative task group as well as between the personal task group and the decision-making task group. Having a close look at mean scores of the groups in two performances makes it clear that in the personal task type the subjects showed more improvement during the second performance. The results suggest that performance on repeated tasks is affected by exposure to different task types. “Hence the notion of ‘ discourse competence’ – the capacity to process certain types of discourse more easily than others- does appear to have some empirically identifiable psychological reality” (Bygate, 2001, p. 43).

## Conclusion

The findings of this research supported Bygate’s (1996, 2001) claim that task repetition may help develop the process of integration of speech capacities. We have argued that integrating processing capacities must be important for language development, and that this can be promoted through the use of task repetition. We have suggested that learners can help through repeated experience of the same tasks, and teachers may be able to use task familiarity to help learners’ language to develop.

The account emerging from the results of this research, also suggests that repeated encounter with a task may make it possible for various processes to occur: information can be

improved, reorganized, and consolidated; attention can be paid to different aspects of the language. Repeated encounters do not involve the learners in doing the 'same' thing, but rather in working differently on the same material. Repetition provides the students with in-built planning, it also provides a context for students and teachers to plan their subsequent language work.

The evidence also supports the view that the type of the task affects subsequent performance of that task. The impact of task type and repetition on the accuracy and complexity measures suggest that different task types involve different cognitive operations and have different load on the memory.

#### Implications of the study

The present study supports the findings of previous researchers regarding task repetition. The most important contribution of this study is that it provides learners and L2 educators with a clear explanation of how task repetition affected the L2 learner's (a) cognitive processes, (b) the fluency of their speech, (c) the accuracy of their speech, (d) the complexity of their speech through the increase of their vocabulary repertoire, (e) and finally their focus on form when their attention on meaning is reduced. Moreover, it has offered an explanation for the task type effect.

The present study has implications for both pedagogy and research. In terms of pedagogical practice, the findings of this study suggest that repetition can promote an optimal balance of attention between the planning of meaning and planning of form. There are certain likely implications taken from this study for language teachers and material preparation experts. Teachers can include rehearsal and task cycling in their daily teaching programs. Providing students with the opportunity to repeat a task is well worthwhile. Repetition of some kind enables learners to work with a language problem in a reasonably stable site.

Based on the results of the present study, task repetition and rehearsal are suggested as complementary methodological options for taking care of language form where meaning negotiation has centrality. It can help learners to integrate what they already know into what they do.

In terms of research methodology, investigation of the data revealed that categories of analysis can be extended beyond the global measure of fluency, accuracy and complexity. Discoursal features, lexical selection, collocations of the speech can also be investigated.

Varying the amount of time between repetitions might affect the performances. A further research can be performed by choosing reciprocal tasks instead of non-reciprocal in order to investigate the impact of interaction variable.

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Appendix

Examples of subjects' two performances in time 1 and 2

Narrative task

NS extracts: Time1 & time 2

First narration	Second narration
<p>There there were two brothers that one of them was older than the other.</p> <p>One day when... their parents weren't at home, the older brother said to the young that I know how to control the boat. Let's go to a trip.</p> <p>So they started their trip. When they started, the weather was good and sunny but after a little it it began to be wet and they suddenly... the weather changed.</p> <p>So they didn't, they couldn't control the boat and the boat was in a bad way.</p> <p>They didn't know what to do because of the changing the weather, and being in a bad situation, they couldn't couldn't control the boat.</p> <p>So the young brother said to the to the to his brother that we can use from other clothes to control the boat.</p> <p>So they helped to each other and they together could repair the boat.</p>	<p>Once there were two boys whose house were near the beach. They were from a poor family.</p> <p>One day that their family, their parents weren't at home, the older brother said to the young that I know how to control the boat, so they decided to go to a trip. He knew how to control the boat but not in the bad wa, bad con bad condition of the weather.</p> <p>So they sta, they began to start their trip.</p> <p>At first the weather was well but after half an hour, it changed suddenly and it began to rain.</p> <p>They didn't know how to control the boat, so the boat broke and they were in danger.</p> <p>The young brother said to his brother that we can control the boat by our clothes, because they the sail of the boat wasn't in the boat.</p> <p>They took off their clothes and they used from their clothes and they repaired the boat.</p>

<p>And finally, after a lot of times, they could reach, they could return to their city.</p> <p>and then they return our parents, their parents were waiting for them.</p>	<p>After a lot of times, I mean in the evening, they started at the morning, in the morning, but in the evening they could arrive to the seashore.</p> <p>They saw their parents who were waiting and they accepted them with open arms.</p>
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Personal Task

LZ's extracts: Time1 and time 2

First performance	Second performance
<p>Today I have important exam. Because I forgot to turn off the stove. Please goof. Please go to the my house..</p> <p>my house is Marmar.. Marmar street .. go to the ...A. Amirkabir street and turn to Baharak ... Baharak. The four door is my house and open.</p> <p>Open the door with keys ...and ...go to the small saloon and turn the la... turn the left ..t. go to kitchen and turn off the ...turn off the stove.</p>	<p>I have an important exam today. Because I forgot to turn off the stove can you go to my house and turn off my gas.</p> <p>My house is located to the Marmar street. ..e.mmm.go to the Amirkabir stree and then to Baharak street. My house is in the Marmar street. My house is number four.</p> <p>The key is in my bag, get it and open the door. Go inside the house, turn left and go to the kitchen and turn off the gas.</p>

Decision-making task

PB's extracts: Time 1 and Time 2

Time 1	Time2
<p>I supposed to go to a island for three months, and just three things I should have with myself there.I think the first thing that I have preferred to have is my guitar.I need it everywhere and every places. It is my best things that I have in my life now and the second thing I think I prefer to have ..a pencil and a piece of paper to write something, everything that I want to...have. The third thing that I want to have is food for my first week because after first, after a week I can find everything there and I don't need anything.</p>	<p>I am going to take a trip to a deserted island. I am supposed to take three things with me. If I go there I wouldn't take food with myself because I can find something there to eat. So I take three important things. The first important thing that I want to take is my guitar, because I love it. I think the most important instrument in the world is is guitar. The second thing that I think I would take with myself is the album of pictures from my family, because I love my family and I don't want to miss them. The third thing that I would like to take with myself is a piece of paper and a pen, because I want to write everything that I see there,</p>



## Teaching Vocabulary Items through Contextualization and Picture to Elementary Iranian EFL Students

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### Abstract

This research was conducted to investigate the effectiveness of teaching vocabulary items through pictures and contextualization to elementary Iranian EFL students. The subjects were divided into three groups each consisting of 32 male learners within the age range of 12-15. The subjects were assigned to three almost homogeneous groups, based on their scores on a general test which had been standardized and validated before. All the students came from the same linguistic background and the teacher and teaching materials were the same for the three groups. The experimental groups received different treatments. In one class vocabulary items were presented through pictures, and in the other class they were used in contexts and model sentences. In the third class, control group, the new words were presented through definitions and synonyms. The treatment of the study took 10 sessions. Before starting the treatment, two similar tests were prepared as the pretest and posttest. Each of them consisted of 45 multiple-choice items of vocabulary. They enjoyed the criteria of validity and reliability. At the first session, the pretest was administered to determine if there was any significant differences between the three groups. By utilizing one-way ANOVA technique, it was revealed that the three groups were almost homogeneous. At the end of the term, the posttest was administered. Then, the statistical techniques of one-way ANOVA and t-test were utilized to analyze the collected data. Analysis of the results in the posttest revealed significant differences between picture group and context group, on the one hand, and between these groups and the control group, on the other hand. The results showed that though both picture and context enhanced vocabulary development of the learners, picture seemed to be better than context. That is, picture group outperformed the other two groups significantly. Hence, it was concluded that the contribution of pictures in teaching vocabulary items to elementary Iranian EFL students led to a higher level of vocabulary improvement.

Key words: EFL, Elementary, Vocabulary, Context, Contextualization, Picture

## Introduction

Vocabulary as a major component of language learning has been the object of numerous studies each of which has its own contribution to the field. Laufer (1997) states that vocabulary learning is at the heart of language learning and language use. In fact, it is what makes the essence of a language. Without vocabulary speakers cannot convey meaning and communicate with each other in a particular language.

During the period of 1940-1970 vocabulary was neglected in teacher-preparation programs. As Allen (1983) mentioned, this was due to three crucial reasons. First, many felt that one must know how the words work together in English sentences; therefore, grammar should be emphasized more than vocabulary. Second, some methodologists believed that the meanings of words could not be adequately taught. So, it was better to avoid teaching them. Third, some specialists were afraid that being exposed to too many words might lead the students to make mistakes in sentence construction. However, any experienced teacher knows that even when students have more or less mastered the English grammar, they still face masses of unknown words as they continue to study.

A number of research studies recently conducted have dealt with lexical problems of language learners. Scholars such as Allen (1983) and Bowen (1985) have shown that lexical problems frequently interfere with communication; in other words, communication breaks down when people do not use the right words. Therefore, there is an increased interest in vocabulary as a component of every language. Vocabulary is viewed as a significant component of standardized language tests; and attention is being given by methodologists and program planners to the most effective ways to promote the command of vocabulary among learners.

There are various techniques and devices for teaching of vocabulary in methodology textbooks. Weatherford (1990) stated that there are a variety of classroom techniques for second language vocabulary learning. The techniques include rote rehearsal; the use of visual aids; rote-playing; vocabulary learning in a specific cultural context; vocabulary learning through art activities; the root-word approach; mnemonic techniques, such as the key word approach; use of the notion of semantic fields to illustrate conceptual relationships between words; two types of vocabulary learning through music (simple song, and the desuggestopedia method); physical activities, as in Total Physical Response instruction; study

of cognates and direct borrowing; study of loan translations; use of soap-opera style drama tapes in the language laboratory; analogies; computer-assisted instruction through drills and games; and synonyms.

One way to add new words to one's vocabularies is by locating words in the dictionary and learning what they mean. But this is a slow process to increase word power. Another way is through context. As we listen and read, we often meet new words in contexts. O'Harra (1984) claimed that context is the setting or surroundings of a word; therefore, when we listen to someone's talk, the context of a word is the statement that includes the word. Sometimes we read words in a written context. Thus, the paragraph may tell us what the new word means, or enough clues may be provided in the sentence which contains the word; or even one or two nearby words may explain the meaning of a new word we find in the text when reading.

Moreover, according to Raimes (1983), pictures can help the teachers and students in teaching and learning vocabulary, and other components of language. As a matter of fact pictures can help students to imagine the real object. In short, the concept of picture is the shared experience of many people because of their matching ability which enables them to match the words with pictures. It should be mentioned that pictures as mental representation of mind can better affect learning. Pictures are used in the classrooms as teaching devices and can be found to give practice in most skills and components and in most stages of teaching. Pictures can motivate students and nowadays, motivation is found to be an important factor in learning everything. Allen (1983) also has shown that the more modalities are involved in association, the more readily items will become available in various situations. Items should therefore be presented in association with visual representations (pictures, objects), aurally, and in association with activities of all kinds. Hence, there is a great need for research into the vocabulary teaching methods to guide us toward the most effective one.

#### *Statement of the problem and purpose of the study*

Although vocabulary has been the subject of many studies, few researches have revealed the effective techniques of vocabulary teaching. So it is of prime importance to attempt to find the most effective technique of vocabulary teaching. According to Allen (1983), all experienced language teachers confirm the important role of words and know that the lack of them leads to feeling of insecurity; on the other hand, the teachers' attitude toward teaching vocabulary and the classroom techniques varies enormously. Different techniques are used by

teachers, such as teaching the words: through lists, translation, synonyms, antonyms, contexts, realia, and so on. Some teachers believe before teaching vocabulary to their students, they should have been taught the grammar of the foreign language. Therefore, they give little or no attention to vocabulary. Allen (1983) also states that in many English language classes, even where teachers have devoted much time to vocabulary teaching, the results have been disappointing. Sometimes, after months or even years of English, many of the words most needed have never been learned. Especially in countries where English is not the main language of communication, many teachers want more help with vocabulary instruction than they used to receive.

Vocabulary is an inseparable part of any language learning process. It would be impossible to learn a language without vocabulary. The important role of vocabulary has been emphasized in all different methods in language teaching. According to Rivers (1981), "vocabulary cannot be taught. It can be presented, explained, included in all kinds of activities, but it must be learned by the individual" (p. 110). She continues, "As language teachers, we must arouse interest in words and a certain excitement in personal development in this area" (p. 110). She suggests that language teachers must help their students by giving them ideas on how to learn vocabulary and some guidance on what to learn.

Poor vocabulary knowledge of elementary Iranian EFL students is a matter of serious concern among those in and around education, and their quest for finding suitable remedies is getting more and more intense. If this study manages to show an effective technique in vocabulary teaching, we may get some steps closer to finding of a remedy for poor vocabulary knowledge of our elementary EFL learners. Therefore, this study presents contextualization and picture methods in order to find one of the most effective techniques of vocabulary teaching. In the former, the new words are taught in the context using contextual clues and the students infer the meaning of words from the context. In the latter, the new words are taught through pictures, and board drawings. It should be noted that these two methods together with the traditional way of teaching vocabulary through definitions, synonyms, and translations are mostly used by Iranian teachers to teach vocabulary items to elementary EFL students. So it is of prime importance to find the most effective technique of vocabulary teaching.



### *Research Questions*

Regarding the importance of the effective techniques of vocabulary teaching, purpose of the research and statement of the problem, the following research questions are put forward:

*\* Is picture more effective than contextualization in teaching vocabulary items to Iranian EFL students?*

*\* Is picture more effective than traditional way in teaching vocabulary items to Iranian EFL students?*

*\* Is contextualization more effective than traditional way in teaching vocabulary items to Iranian EFL students?*

*H0 I: Picture is not more effective than contextualization in teaching vocabulary items to Iranian EFL students.*

*H0 II: Picture is not more effective than traditional way in teaching vocabulary items to Iranian EFL students.*

*H0 III: Contextualization is not more effective than traditional way in teaching vocabulary items to Iranian EFL students.*

## Research Methods and Procedure

### *Subjects*

The subjects of this study were 96 elementary male students within the age range of 12-15 studying English at Simin Language Institute. They were randomly divided into three groups and by utilizing the statistical technique of one-way ANOVA, their close homogeneity was confirmed. Then, these three groups were randomly assigned to two experimental groups and one control group, each consisting of 32 students. The two experimental groups received different treatments including teaching vocabulary items through contextualization and pictures. The control group received traditional treatment. That is, the vocabulary items were taught through definitions and synonyms.

### *Instrumentation*

The instrumentation used in this study included a general test of language proficiency, a

pretest, and a posttest. The general test was a standard and validated test based on the book "New Generation" by Colin Granger and Digby Beaumont (1987) which is used at the institute. The aim of this test was to divide the students into three almost homogeneous groups. The pretest was a vocabulary test prepared by the researchers in the way described below: 100 vocabulary items were selected from the students' textbook. The researcher made a one hundred-item multiple-choice test and did a pilot study on a smaller group. 10 items were discarded and some changed. The reliability of the test was calculated to be 0.94.

To make the test valid, the researcher made a correlation between the students' grades on their final exam of the preceding semester and their grades on the researcher's test in the pilot study. The correlation was 0.8116. The ninety-item multiple-choice test was split into two equal halves based on odd and even numbers. One part was considered as the pretest, and the other one as the posttest. The aim of the posttest was to reveal the efficacy of the treatments provided to the experimental groups during the semester.

### *Procedure*

First, the general test was administered to 160 subjects. The time given was one hour and the correct answer to each item received one point. There was no penalty for false responses. After taking the exam, each subject was rendered a grade based on his performance on the test. Out of 160 students, 99 students whose grades were between one standard deviation above and below the mean were selected, and divided randomly into three groups. The homogeneity of the groups was confirmed through statistical technique of one-way ANOVA. Three subjects were discarded later because of the problems they had. Then, the vocabulary pretest was administered to the three groups. The time given for this test was forty-five minutes, and the students were asked to answer the forty five-item vocabulary test. The correct answer to each item received one point, and there was no penalty for false responses.

The whole research project took place in one semester and the students were taught ten units of the book "New Generation". During the semester, the new words of each unit were presented to the students through two methods of contextualization and pictures. In one of the experimental classes (contextualization group) the words were used in some model sentences, and by means of contextual cues the students inferred what the meaning of each word was. In the other experimental class (picture group), some pictures were prepared in which the new words were presented through them. The third class (control group), didn't receive these

types of treatment, but the new words were presented through definitions and synonyms. At the end of the semester vocabulary development of the students in all three groups were tested using the posttest. On the basis of these tests the efficacy of the two methods of vocabulary teaching were determined.(See the appendix for the test papers)

## Results

In order to find appropriate answers to the research questions of the study, several statistical procedures were utilized and the results are presented in the following section.

### Analysis 1

A one-way ANOVA was utilized to find whether the three selected groups were almost homogeneous. To do so, their grades in the general test were used. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

### One-way ANOVA for performance on the general test

Source	D.F.	SS	MS	F ratio	F critical
Between group	2	2.2424	1.1212	.0296	3.09
Within group	96	3633.9394	37.8535		

P<.05

As the results of the one-way ANOVA show, F ratio (.0296) doesn't exceed the F critical value (3.09) at the .05 level of significance. This implies that there was no significant difference among the three groups and as a result the three groups were almost homogeneous.

### Analysis 2

A one-way ANOVA was used to find how the control and two experimental groups performed in the pretest and whether they were homogeneous or not. To do so, their grades in the pretest of vocabulary was used. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

One-way ANOVA for performance on the pretest

Source	D.F.	SS	MS	F ratio	F critical
Between group	2	5.2500	2.6250	.0398	3.09
Within group	93	6129.2500	65.9059		

P<.05

As the results of the one-way ANOVA show, F ratio (.0398) doesn't exceed the F critical value (3.09) at the .05 level of significance. This implies that there was no significant difference among the control and two experimental groups and as a result the three groups were almost the same.

Analysis 3

Another one-way ANOVA was conducted to see how the control and two experimental groups performed in the posttest and whether the differences among their means were significant. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

One-way ANOVA for performance on the posttest

Source	D.F.	SS	MS	F ratio	F critical
Between group	2	1681.8958	840.949	10.5255	3.09
Within group	93	7430.3438	79.8962		

P<.05

As the results of the one-way ANOVA in the table 3 show, F ratio (10.5255) exceeds the F critical value (3.09) implying that there was a significant difference among subjects' performances on different methods of teaching vocabulary items. To find where this difference is located, a Scheffe Test was carried out, and the results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4

Scheffe Test with significant level .05 for performance on the posttest

<u>Mean</u>	<u>Method</u>	G r p 3	G r p 2	G r p 1
23.4688	Group 3 (control)			
25.3125	Group 2 (context)			
33.1250	Group 1 (picture)	*	*	

( \* ) Indicates significant differences among the groups.

Table 4 shows that these differences lay between group 1 (*picture* group) and group 3 (*control* group), and group 1 and group 2 (*context* group). In other words, group 1 performed better than group 2 and group 3.

Analysis 4

To see how each group performed in its pretest and posttest, paired t-test technique was utilized to compare the means of each group in its pretest and posttest performances. The results are presented in Tables 5, 6, and 7.

Table 5

t-test for paired samples of picture groups

Variable	Number of pairs	Corr	2-tail sig	Mean	SD	SE of Mean
Posttest <i>picture</i>	32	.955	.000	33.1250	7.156	1.265
Pretest <i>picture</i>				18.6875	8.873	1.569

Paired Differences

Mean	SD	SE of Mean	t-value	DF	2-tail Sig	t-critical
14.4375	2.940	.520	27.78	31	.000	2.042

95% CI (13.377, 15.498) p<.05

As the results in the Table 5 show, the t-value (27.78) does exceed the t-critical (2.042)

implying that the *picture* group performed significantly better in the posttest. That is, the treatment had a positive effect on the students in picture group, and their level of vocabulary improved.

Table 6  
t-test for paired samples of context groups

Variable	Number of pairs	Corr	2-tail sig	Mean	SD	SE of Mean
Posttest <i>context</i>	32	.975	.000	25.3125	8.544	1.510
Pretest <i>context</i>				18.3125	7.320	1.294

Paired Differences

Mean	SD	SE of Mean	t-value	DF	2-tail Sig	t-critical
7.0000	2.155	.381	18.37	31	.000	2.042

95% CI (6.223, 7.777)  $p < .05$

As the results in the Table 6 show, the t-value (18.37) does exceed the t-critical (2.042) implying that the *context* group performed significantly better in the posttest.

Table 7  
t-test for paired samples of control groups

Variable	Number of pairs	Corr	2-tail sig	Mean	SD	SE of Mean
Posttest <i>control</i>	32	.982	.000	23.4688	10.746	1.900
Pretest <i>control</i>				18.8750	8.087	1.430

Paired Differences

Mean	SD	SE of Mean	t-value	DF	2-tail Sig	t-critical
4.5938	3.181	.562	8.17	31	.000	2.042

95% CI (3.447, 5.741)  $p < .05$

As the results in the Table 7 show, the t-value (8.17) exceeds the t-critical (2.042) implying that the *control* group performed significantly better in the posttest. Therefore, as the results of the above analyses reveal, the hypotheses formulated in this study are rejected. That is, picture seems to be a good method in teaching vocabulary items to Iranian EFL students, and it is more suitable than context. Moreover, it was revealed that picture and context are better than the traditional way.

### Conclusions

In the preceding section, the obtained data from the performance of the control and two experimental groups was analyzed. Based on the findings, the null hypotheses were rejected. The three groups scored differently in the post tests, and the differences were statistically significant. As the results of the one-way ANOVA for performance on the posttest showed, F ratio (10.5255) exceeded the F critical value (3.09) and it implied that there were significant differences among subjects' performances on different methods of teaching vocabulary items. To find where these differences were located, a Scheffe Test was carried out and the results showed that the differences laid between picture group and control group, and also picture group and context group. In other words, picture group performed better than the other groups. Therefore, the null hypotheses were rejected. Consequently, by rejecting the null hypotheses, the researcher can claim that pictures are more useful and can play an important role in teaching vocabulary items to Iranian EFL learners.

### *Limitations of the Study*

Certain limitations are imposed on this study. First, since the presentation of abstract nouns is not as easy as the presentation of concrete words, only concrete words which refer to physical objects were used. Second, the language chosen was restricted to the elementary level of Simin Language Institute in Iran. Third, the subjects involved in this research were 160 male Iranian junior high school students.

### *Pedagogical Implications*

Since vocabulary is a very important part of the language, a teacher must equip himself with up-to-date techniques and methods of teaching them. So, the results of this research can be

valuable for language teachers. Also, it could help those dealing with foreign language teaching, such as syllabus designers, material developers, test makers, and the like.

#### *Suggestions for Further Research*

- Students at other levels of language proficiency, i.e. intermediate or advanced, can be subjects for another experiment.
- The same experiment with female students within the same age range would be necessary to confirm the findings of this study.
- The setting which was chosen for this study was a language institute. The same techniques could be used in other settings, for example, schools and universities.
- Other nationalities can be examined in a new research.
- The same research can be done on teaching "abstract" vocabulary items.
- In this study, picture and context were used to teach vocabulary items to EFL students. In another research, pictures and contexts can be used to teach other components of the language, such as grammar.

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## Appendix I

### Pretest & Posttest of Vocabulary

#### Vocabulary test (Pretest)

Student's Name: .....

- 1-The children are watching TV in the .....  
1. bathroom      2. living room      3. classroom      4. garage
- 2- There are a lot of apple trees in the .....  
1. cinema      2. hall      3. garden      4. bucket
- 3- David is in the ..... He is washing himself.  
1. class      2. park      3. kitchen      4. bathroom
- 4- Kate is playing the .....  
1. pencil      2. piano      3. book      4. glasses
- 5- Ella is putting on her .....  
1. radio      2. lamp      3. glasses      4. TV
- 6- The man is wearing a nice .....  
1. sack      2. blouse      3. shirt      4. chair
- 7- The girl wearing a blue .....is his sister.  
1. napkin      2. jug      3. tent      4. skirt
- 8- The boy who is wearing a brown .....is my brother.  
1. vase      2. quilt      3. fan      4. jacket
- 9- Sara is wearing a red .....and a green skirt.  
1. puppet      2. trousers      3. jeans      4. blouse
- 10- Is he wearing jeans ?  
No, he isn't. He is wearing .....  
1. rubber      2. trousers      3. dress      4. bed
- 11- His father usually has ....., cheese, and tea for breakfast.  
1. desk      2. mug      3. bread      4. fridge
- 12- Sam usually drinks .....juice in the afternoons.  
1-apple      2. cup      3. rice      4. egg
- 13- Ella sometimes eats boiled ..... for breakfast.  
1. eggs      2. bread      3. toast      4. cheese
- 14- James always eats .....and bread for breakfast.  
1. pan      2. board      3. cheese      4. kitten
- 15- There are some books on the .....  
1. light      2. glasses      3. cat      4. table
- 16- A.....can speak and walk.  
1. bat      2. robot      3. wall      4. car
- 17- Harry can't ride a.....  
1. chess      2. ball      3. bicycle      4. cooker
- 18- Bert can't .....dinner.  
1. climb      2. run      3. listen      4. cook
- 19- Where is my .....?  
I want to play tennis.  
1. ax      2. pen      3. racket      4. watch

- 20- Do you like to play football ?  
No, I don't. I like to play.....  
1. volley ball    2. walk    3. ruler    4. bicycle
- 21- Kate is writing a ..... for her friend.  
1. letter    2. pencil    3. stamp    4. post
- 22- Have you got a ..... ? I want to post this letter.  
1. stamp    2. desk    3. date    4. book
- 23- Can you drive a ..... ?  
1. horse    2. queen    3. car    4. bicycle
- 24- I can ride a .....  
1. robot    2. video    3. motorcycle    4. taxi
- 25-What is the .....? It's 12 April.  
1. address    2. date    3. box    4. letter
- 26- I can ..... in water.  
1. drive    2. cook    3. climb    4. swim
- 27- Kate's father can ..... a car.  
1. work    2. drive    3. study    4. run
- 28- There is a hole. You should.....  
1. eat    2. jump    3. write    4. read
- 29- I can .....into water, but I can't swim.  
1. make    2. close    3. open    4. dive
- 30- Can you ride a .....  
1. horse    2. glass    3. jug    4. chair
- 31- I am going to England.  
Have you got a ..... ?  
1. magazine    2. notebook    3. passport    4. piano
- 32- It is very dark. Have you got a ..... ?  
1. ball    2. torch    3. newspaper    4. ladder
- 33- There is a high ..... you should climb it.  
1. mountain    2. zebra    3. sack    4. tap
- 34- You can ski, because there is a deep .....  
1. bucket    2. snow    3. magazine    4. watch
- 35- I want to climb the wall. Have you got a .....  
1. rope    2. lighter    3. torch    4. rubber
- 36- He was killed in a car .....  
1. accident    2. net    3. light    4. magazine
- 37- There is a lot of ..... at 8 o'clock in the morning.  
There are many cars in the streets.  
1. kite    2. cinema    3. restaurant    4. traffic
- 38- A ..... is a large strong car for carrying things.  
1. lorry    2. gun    3. motorbike    4. taxi
- 39- Jenny is phoning in a .....  
1. fridge    2. telephone box    3. tape    4. sink
- 40- Cindy is lying in a bed at the ..... She had an accident yesterday.  
1. hospital    2. school    3. garden    4. lake
- 41- Please, listen to the ..... , then answer the questions.  
1.    2. light    3. table    4. tape

- 42- Kate is typing a letter with a ..... .  
 1. typewriter      2. fork                      3. zip                      4. newspaper
- 43- Let's go to the ..... to see a film.  
 1. bus                      2. zoo                      3. park                      4. cinema
- 44- Put your shirts and sweater in the ..... .  
 1. suitcase              2. cup                      3. fridge                      4. envelope
- 45- Keyhan is the name of a ..... in Iran.  
 1. cap                      2. book                      3. music                      4. newspaper

*Vocabulary Test (Posttest)*

*Student's Name:* .....

- 1- His mother is cooking lunch in the ..... .  
 1. dining room      2. freezer                      3. bedroom                      4. kitchen
- 2- Her father is mending the car in the ..... .  
 1. garage                      2. post office                      3. living room                      4. school
- 3- Their family are having dinner in the ..... .  
 1. bedroom                      2. bank                      3. dining room                      4. zoo
- 4- Sam is switching on the ..... .  
 1. lamp                      2. letter                      3. tin                      4. door
- 5- A lot of ..... are sitting in the hall and talking to each other.  
 1. people                      2. clothes                      3. doughnuts                      4. tables
- 6- That woman is wearing a beautiful ..... .  
 1. dress                      2. dish                      3. mat                      4. bag
- 7- My brother is wearing a .....and playing football.  
 1. blouse                      2. tracksuit                      3. mop                      4. dress
- 8- I wear a .....when it is cold.  
 1. sweater                      2. bell                      3. glasses                      4. bag
- 9- Jack wears a ..... when it is warm.  
 1. pan                      2. hat                      3. T-shirt                      4. bus
- 10- What are you wearing ?  
 I am wearing blue ..... .  
 1. jeans                      2. kite                      3. tap                      4. leg
- 11- Allen is drinking ..... .  
 1-potato                      2. milk                      3. cheese                      4. tomato
- 12- We use .....to make omelet.  
 1. carrot                      2. coffee                      3. banana                      4. tomato
- 13- My mother cooks ..... for lunch.  
 1. orange                      2. apple                      3. rice                      4. doll
- 14- Put the milk in the ..... .  
 1. sandwich                      2. wardrobe                      3. refrigerator                      4. suitcase
- 15- There are some oranges in the ..... .  
 1. cupboard                      2. tank                      3. neck                      4. book
- 16- Jack makes his .....when he gets up in the morning.  
 1. mop                      2. zebra                      3. door                      4. bed
- 17- Ella can .....the dishes in the kitchen.

1. wash            2. write            3. ride            4. play
- 18- They are playing .....in the yard.  
1. football       2. ski              3. swim            4. umbrella
- 19- I have got a robot. He can play .....  
1. mat            2. chess            3. bed              4. homework
- 20- Sam and James are playing .....  
1. tennis        2. car              3. dish             4. swim
- 21- Put the letter in the .....  
1. radio         2. address        3. paper            4. envelope
- 22- Write your ..... on the envelope.  
1. paper        2. color            3. uniform        4. address
- 23- What is your father's job?  
He mends the cars. He is a .....  
1. journalist    2. pop singer     3. waiter            4. mechanic
- 24- That man carrying the letters is a .....  
1. postman     2. teacher        3. singer            4. footballer
- 25- Harry is writing his homework on the .....  
1. vest         2. window        3. paper            4. chair
- 26- Ella can ..... the mountain.  
1. climb        2. put              3. wash            4. ride
- 27- My brother can .....when there is snow.  
1. open         2. wash            3. ski               4. cook
- 28- There is a snake. You should .....  
1. run           2. clean            3. swim            4. do
- 29- Bert can row a ..... in the sea .  
1. cup           2. boat            3. coat             4. poster
- 30- Alice's father can fly a .....  
1. bicycle      2. car              3. house            4. plane
- 31- There is a ..... . You can swim in it.  
1. lake        2. park            3. road             4. mountain
- 32- It is cold. Have you got a ..... ?  
I want to make fire.  
1. key          2. map             3. lighter          4. desk
- 33- I have got a ..... Aren't you hungry?  
1. ring         2. sandwich       3. drink            4. passport
- 34- When you go to a journey, you should have a .....  
1. duck        2. puppet         3. tape             4. map
- 35- The door is locked. Where is the ..... ?  
1. bus          2. nut              3. key              4. kite
- 36- A ..... is a place where two roads meet and the drivers should stop at it.  
1. yard        2. house            3. crossroads     4. garage
- 37- A car that carries sick people to the hospital is .....  
1. lorry        2. ambulance     3. van              4. boat
- 38- There are a lot of cars in the .....  
1. nest         2. rope             3. road             4. robot
- 39- I have got a headache, I should see a .....  
1. pianist     2. student        3. doctor          4. worker

- 40- Alice is a ..... . She looks after sick people.  
1. nurse            2. waiter            3. singer            4. mechanic
- 41- Keyhan Varzeshi is a weekly sports ..... .  
1. book            2. circle            3. magazine            4. box
- 42- Shajarian is a famous ..... in Iran.  
1. doctor            2. singer            3. footballer            4. police
- 43- I'm hungry . Let's go and have breakfast in the ..... .  
1. classroom    2. tin            3. restaurant            4. lake
- 44- How does your mother cook food in the kitchen?  
She cooks on a gas ..... .  
1. table            2. mat            3. cupboard            4. cooker
- 45- I want to buy a sandwich, but I haven't got any ..... .  
1. clothes            2. money            3. map            4. food

## Appendix II

### The Vocabulary Items Presented through Contexts

#### Lesson One

- 1- All the family are in the living room. The father is reading a newspaper and the children are watching TV.
- 2- Jame's mother is in the kitchen now. She is cooking lunch.
- 3- The boys are playing with a ball in the garden. They are playing under the apple trees.
- 4- A: Where is your car? It is not in your house.  
B: I have parked it in the garage.
- 5- When John came into the house, his mother said "Your hands are very dirty. Go and wash them in the bathroom."
- 6- There are some chairs and a table in our dining room. We eat dinner in the dining room.
- 7- The injured boy was taken to hospital in an ambulance. He had an accident in the street.

8- A: Do you like to go to cinema to see a film?

B: No, I'm not interested in cinema. Let's go to the park for a walk.

9- When I'm hungry, I usually go to a restaurant and have a meal.

## Lesson Two

10- It is very hot. That man took out his coat. Now he is wearing just a white shirt.

11- Anita wears a long dress in the house. It is very beautiful.

12- The girl wearing a blue skirt and a green coat is her sister. She never wears jeans or trousers.

13- Do you wear a coat in winter? No, I usually wear a jacket because it is warmer than a coat.

14- It is very cold. Put on your wollen sweater, if you're going out.

15- Ella often wears a red blouse under her coat, when she goes to work.

16- It's too warm today. I can't wear even a shirt. I just wear a T-shirt.

17- A: What do you wear when you go to school?

B: I wear a white shirt, grey trousers, and black shoes.

18- On Fridays, Eric goes to picnic with his friends. He usually wears a yellow T-shirt, blue jeans, and green trainers.

## Lesson Three

19- In the mornings, Jack has some cheese and bread and a cup of tea for breakfast.

20- A: What do you drink for breakfast, tea, coffee, or milk?

B: I usually drink milk because it's good for my health.

21- We have got two apple trees in our house. My mother makes apple juice and sometimes apple pie from this fruit.

22- A: Karen uses a kind of red fruit to make omelette. Do you know what that is?

B: Yes, it's tomato.

23- Our hen laid a large brown egg, and I had it for breakfast.

24- A: What did you have for lunch?

B: I had rice and stew.

25- A: What do you eat for breakfast?

B: First, I take sugar in tea and then I have it with bread and cheese.

26- Peter is very hungry. He is eating a ham sandwich.

27- If you want to keep the food cold, you should put it in the refrigerator.

#### Lesson Four

28- Khodadad Azizi is a very good footballer. He plays football well.

29- There is a net in the garden and the children are playing volleyball.

30- Look! There are two rackets and a net here. Let's go to play tennis in the yard.

31- I want to play tennis with my friend. But I can't find my rackets.

32- Michael and Allen played chess with each other. At the end, Michael checkmated Allen's king.

33- Harry is swimming across the river. He is swimming on his back.



34- When there is a lot of snow, I ski down the hill near my house. It is my favourite sport.

35- A child fell into the river. Her father dived into the water to save her.

36- When I play basketball, I wear my tracksuit.

#### Lesson Five

37- Monkeys can climb the trees well. They go up the trees very fast.

38- A: Can you drive a car?

B: No, I can't. But my father can drive. He's a taxi driver.

39- Look! The children are very happy. They are jumping up and down.

40- He is late for the bus. He is running very fast to the bus-stop.

41- Your hands are dirty. You should wash them before lunch.

42- Alice's mother is in the kitchen. She is cooking pizza for dinner.

43- Bob's father was not a good driver. Last year, he was killed in a car accident.

44- When the cars come to a crossroads, they should stop to let the other cars pass.

45- There's usually a heavy traffic at this time of day. Many cars move in the streets.

#### Lesson Six

46- A: What kind of car have you got?

B: We have got a Benz.

47- Harry's father bought a new red bicycle for his birthday. He doesn't

have to go to school on foot.

48- I can row a boat, but I travelled across the river in a motor boat.

49- Policemen usually ride on motorcycles in big cities, because it's easier than driving a car.

50- A: How do you go to Mashad, by plane or car?

B: I go by plane. I like flying in the sky.

51- When Philip broke his leg, an ambulance took him to hospital.

52- A: How did you carry these large pieces of wood?

B: We carried them with a lorry.

53- The road to the North of Iran is full of cars in summer.

54- When I was in the street, I wanted to phone my wife to tell her that I wasn't able to go home. But I couldn't find a telephone box.

#### Lesson Seven

55- Emily's friend is not here. She is in another city. So, Emily is writing a letter for her.

56- She wrote a letter, put it in an envelope, and posted it.

57- A: What's that on the envelope?

B: It's a stamp. You should stick a stamp on to a letter, then post it.

58- A: What's your address?

B: It's 32 Azadi street, Tehran.

59- Today's date is the 20th of May.

60- Give me a piece of paper. I'm going to write your names on it.

61- A: Where are you going? B: I'm going to Canada.

A: Have you got a passport to cross the border? B: Yes, I have.

62- There are many weekly magazines in Iran, such as Keyhan Varzeshi, Zane Rooz, and Film magazines.

63- My father buys Keyhan newspaper everyday. He reads it to know about the latest news of the world.

### Lesson Eight

64- Allen is sick. He can't go to school today. He should see a doctor.

65- Fiona's mother is a nurse. She looks after sick people. Her job is very difficult.

66- Jack is a mechanic. He works in a garage and mends cars.

67- David works in a post office. He carries a bag full of letters. He is a postman.

68- I like music very much, and my favourite singer is Ali Reza Eftekhari.

69- Alice went to her friend's house. There was a party and there were many people at the party. All of them were happy.

70- We have got a robot. Its name is Brain Box. It can speak, walk, and clean the house. My mother is very happy to have it.

71- It costs two thousand tomans. I can't buy it, because I haven't got enough money.

72- Cindy likes music very much. She also plays the piano well.

Lesson Nine

73- My father is very old. He can't see well. He wears glasses when he reads a book.

74- At night, when it gets dark, my mother turns the lamp on.

75- A: Where is your brother?

B: He's in his room listening to a tape. He likes music very much.

76- Janet works in a company. She is a fast typist. Every day, she types many letters with a typewriter.

77- Switch on your torch and show me the way. Here is very dark.

78- A: I want to smoke a cigarette. Have you got a lighter?

B: No, but I have got a box of matches.

79- Her mother laid the table, then said "Dinner is ready; come to the table."

80- Kate is in the kitchen. She has washed the dishes and now she is putting them into the cupboard.

81- Jack said good night to his father and mother and went to bed to sleep.

Lesson Ten

82- Scotland is a cold country. In winter, there is often a heavy fall of snow.

83- Damavand is a very high mountain near Tehran. Next Friday, I'm going to climb it.

84- There is a big lake near our city. You can swim and go fishing there.

85- There are three ways here. I don't know where to go. Take out your map, and show me the right way.

86- The children tied a piece of rope to the tree and used it as a swing.

87- Horse is a nice animal. It carries many things and you can also ride on it.

88- A: How do you carry your clothes when you travel?

B: I put my shirts, socks, sweater, and coat in a suitcase.

89- A: Open the door, please.

B: But it is locked and I haven't got the key.

90- We have got an electric cooker in our kitchen and my mother always cooks food on it.



## Relations Network in the Interactive ESL Class: Analysis of Individuals, Groups, and a Whole Classroom Network

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### Bio Data

Li Na is a research student in the English Department of the School of International Studies at Zhejiang University, R. R. China. Her research interests lie in Second Language Teaching and Learning, Classroom Arrangement, Cognition and Human Development. Her current research interest is Cognitive Styles and Language Learning.

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### Abstract

In this research, our purpose is to come up with some implications for the interactive class of English as a Second Language (ESL). We scrutinize interactive classes and do our research from microanalysis (from a perspective of individuals) to macro-analysis (from a perspective of the whole class and a sense of classroom community). We analyze individual differentiations to get implications for setting up simple group relations. Then we extend the group to a two-layer-relation network. Based on the first two parts, we analyze relations among groups---another layer of the classroom relations network. We suggest that Cooper's "empathy" model and Rovai's "sense of classroom community" being utilized in arranging an interactive class of ESL, and argue that a balanced and organic relations network is crucial in the teaching-learning process. We also explain Chinese cultural elements reflected in an interactive classroom setting and argue that cultural awareness is very important in the arrangement of an interactive class of ESL.

Keywords: Interactive Class ESL Individual differentiations Setting up relations  
Simple group discussions Large group discussions Relations among groups  
Cultural elements Relations network Sense of classroom community Empathy

## Research Background

Student-centered classrooms have long been advocated, and how to meet with students' needs has become one of the issues in the pedagogical field. One concept should be held when a student-centered course is being planned is that students are far from identical. Many pedagogical experts and educational psychologists have been doing a large amount of research studies on the differentiations among the students. Items including age, previous education, attitude towards education, preferred learning style, previous language learning, and personality make each student a unique person (Peck, 1974; Willis, 1996; Dewaele, 2005; Chung, 2005). Peck also argues that even if the students in one class are all from the same language group, they inevitably have different learning styles and needs (1974). In our research, although all the students have the same cultural background, differences in learning needs, expectations, emotions in the classroom will be raised to support this point of view.

Changes in the concepts of the teachers and experts have led to goals of meeting with the expectations and needs of each student. Since school psychology has long been influenced by clinical psychology, it concerns much about individual differences (Medway, Cafferty, 1992). Thus many individualized programs with their advantages for curriculum and course planning have been discussed since 1960s, but those individualized models have a drawback in that it gives "heavy burdens for the teachers in planning curriculums and difficulties in deciding when to treat the students as specialized individuals" (Chung, 2005. pp. 2). Experts, from the educational field and the psychology realm have been struggling to figure out models to alleviate this drawback of those individualized programs.

Another flow of views on the classroom setting is to regard the classroom as a community formed by all kinds of relations among the students and the teacher. In this sense, a classroom is a relations network with information and emotion flowing through. This attracts many socio-psychologists to apply views in social psychology to curriculum planning (Chung, 2005). Using a social psychological perspective to examine the classroom setting can be actually more legitimate (Medway & Cafferty, 1992). A classroom can be evaluated with the standard of being ecological (Wang, 2006) which was previously used only in a social context. According to Wang (2006, p. 57), "the essence of ecology is life and its diversity, integrity, openness and coexistence." As we look at a classroom with diversified students, well-organized formation, harmonious interaction and opened goals, it can be regarded as an ecological community. How the interaction network alleviates the drawback of individualized

programs will be discussed in our paper.

If we take the classroom as a social context, then the questions we are interested in are as such: How are the students and the teacher connected together? In what way does this social context influence the students? How can these influences be measured? In what way will the students' needs be met in this context? A large number of studies have been done to answer these questions. The classroom context can affect students' uptake (Ellis, Basturkman, & Loewen, 2001) and diversified forms of interaction can be valuable resources for students to make use. The essential elements of community refer to mutual interdependence among members, connectedness, interactivity, overlapping histories among members, spirit, trust, common expectation and shared values and beliefs (Rovai, 2002a). In Rovai's paper, he defined four essential components of classroom community: spirit, trust, interaction and learning. Spirit, simply speaking, is a feeling of involvement and belongingness in the class; trust is "the feeling that community can be trusted and feedback will be timely and constructive" (2002a, p. 42). To combine these two components together, we figure out a simple definition: positive emotions that can enhance learning activities. Interactions in the classroom setting can be instructor-generated or learner-generated, task-driven or socio-emotional driven. Students set up relations and realize learning purposes through interaction. On the other hand, relations in the context and realization of learning purposes influence the spirit and trust. Since the appearance of distance education, and computer technologies used in education, many experts have done research in order to figure out models and implications for the community sense in asynchronous learning and distant learning classes (Gunawardena, 1995). Based on the rationales and past researches, Rovai also invented an instrument for sense of classroom community measurement (for computer-based distance learning though): Classroom Community Scale (CCS) (Rovai, 2002b). When a traditional classroom is evaluated, it is not appropriate to apply this CCS directly since these two kinds educational ways are somewhat different, which was acknowledged by Rovai (2002b). However, the basic principles and standards can be drawn upon. In our paper, our group modifies this CCS to evaluate sense of community in an oral English class for English majors at their sophomore year.

The importance of a sense of community and standards for evaluating its levels being recognized, the question becomes that if a well-organized community can have positive effect on students' uptake and learning process, how to make full use of the resource in the



classroom and set up all possible positive relations? Cooper brought forth an "Empathy" model that gives implications for teaching and learning. Empathy, simply speaking, is to go attach oneself mentally and emotionally to another. Empathy "develops over time and with frequency of interaction and which is highly dependent on the actors and context of the interaction" (Cooper, 2004, pp.12). In that research, three different levels of empathy (fundamental empathy, profound empathy and functional empathy) and the positive effects to the interactions were found and discussed from interview data and classroom observation. Among the three sorts of empathy, profound empathy can raise enthusiasm and connection in a most successful way, but this kind of empathy is restricted by factors including the size of class, limited time, and rigorous curriculum (Cooper, 2004). The theoretical significance of Cooper's model in our research lies in that an interactive class for ESL is an ideal place to apply "Empathy".

Since our research is under a Chinese context, the background of English teaching in China should be provided. For a long time, memorization and teacher-centered class were valued in Chinese ELT, but changing practices have taken place, altering the focus on linguistic ability to the practical use of English in real contexts, emphasizing student-centered class, active participation in English learning and teacher as a "conductor" rather than a "performer" (Jin & Cortazzi, 2006). Some models do bring implications for curriculum design, such as the multidimensional participation model for English Teaching (Jin & Cortazzi, 2006) containing student engagement from different perspectives; however, there exist some difficulties to implement the theories because of lack of willingness to communicate (WTC) in Chinese class of ESL. This lack of willingness can be traced back to rooted Chinese cultural origins such as other-directed self, face-protected orientation (Wen & Clement, 2003). In fact, Asian students including Chinese students have similar problems in the interactive class of ESL. In a qualitative research done in two New Zealand Language Schools, the results indicate that Asian students have negative attitude towards the interactive teaching approach (Li Mingsheng, 2004).

A new direction of English Teaching is to integrate Chinese culture into ELT (Yun Wei, 2005) and it is understandable that a cultural frame under Chinese classroom context needs to be drawn before implications can be got for ELT (Chen Min, 2005). In order to get a better understanding of cultural characteristics that influence ELT in China, we review the cultural elements in the classroom in order to better analyze the interactions, students' needs and

emotions. Confucianism and Taoism are two major cultural codes in Chinese education, broadly speaking, in a whole Chinese society. In Confucian code, two key concepts guide human relationships: hierarchy and obedience (Yang Hu & Stacey, 2003). This gives implications for the teachers to arrange classroom settings that match Chinese cultural awareness. In Chinese classrooms, teachers are often regarded as the most important persons and students need to show respect to them; and good teachers are expected to play the role of a mentor or parent, who are caring, helpful, willing to pass on their experience to the students (Cortazzi & Jin, 1996). Chinese students, though not the only ones around the world, seek safety more eagerly and appreciate group belongingness in the classroom. Face saving is the typical manifest of safety seeking (Yabuuchi, 2004). In Chinese society, self is defined by others, and Chinese people internalize the requirements from the outside world and turn them into their own behavior norms and values (Liu Chenghua, 2003). We can regard a class as a miniature of the society. The students play their roles carefully and are very concerned about the relations with others and others' opinions about themselves. In Chinese culture, people tend to be more close to the members that belong to the same group and keep away from the people that are in another group. The close and harmonious relations within a group are an important characteristic in a collective and high-context society (Mcfeeters, 2003). This Chinese cultural item has impact on the students. In a survey done by the staff of Chinese University of Hong Kong among Chinese college students, it was found that the interpersonal relationship and perceptions of social contexts were significantly related to life satisfaction (Chen, Cheung, Bond & Leung, 2006). In Chinese classrooms, this cultural item cannot be ignored because this collectivism has effects on learner's recall, transfer and attitudes toward different methodologies of teaching in the class (Mcfeeters, 2003; Cortazzi & Jin, 1996). For example, Chinese students may prefer collaborative learning to individualized learning. We also argue that a positive group context could drive Chinese students to perform more actively.

Interactive class of ESL accords with the educational policies for ELT. The aim of the curriculum is to improve students' English proficiency in communication. The purpose of our paper is to come up with a feasible model for the interactive class of ESL in a Chinese context.

## Research Questions

- 4.1 In what way are the students different from each other?
- 4.2 How are these differentiations reflected in the group discussions?
- 4.3 How to set up different layers of relations to organize a whole interactive class of ESL?

## Methodology

### *Research Question 1 (RQ1)*

It would be a heavy task for the teacher to systematically analyze students' individual differences including various aspects such as personality, learning styles and gender; moreover, characteristics of a certain classroom context or a certain student are not fixed. The teacher, as the only person to observe the process of the class and to make the class arrangement, would find it much easier to improve a class according to students' behaviors and emotions in the real context. In this sense, holding "empathy" on mind, and observing the differentiations through observation and teacher-student interaction would be of great importance.

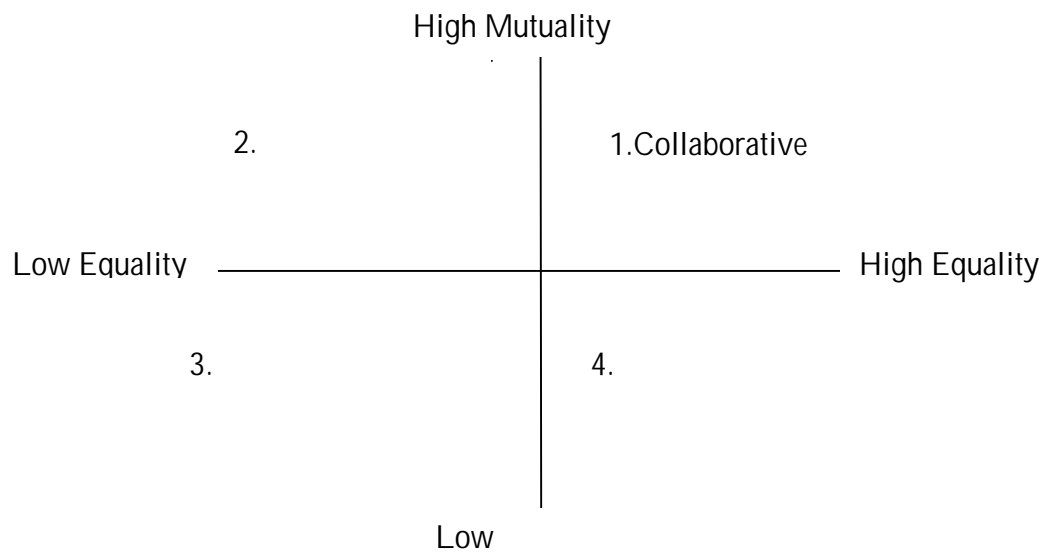
In this part, we will not be able to give very detailed analysis on the differentiations of students. We analyze some cases to provide some implications and perspectives. In fact, this question itself is an open-ended one in view of its countless possibilities.

We interview two students from an oral English course which is a typical interactive class and in which group discussion and task-based interaction is the main form. Totally, there are nine groups in this class, and all students are sophomore English majors. We first observe comprehensively the performance of the students for 20 minutes before we choose two students to be our interview participants. These two students respectively bear the characteristics of passiveness and activeness. The first interview is recorded and analyzed while the second one is analyzed based on the notes. Interview questions are not strictly preplanned; rather, we try to ask related questions according to the students' answer to the former question. In this way, students can provide us information that is more credible with ease. (Two interviews are shown in Appendix 1, pp. 23)

RQ 2

*Setting up simple relations in a small group*

RQ2 deals with setting up simple relations in an interactive class. We step up on the basis of the first part and begin to focus on interaction taken place in the classroom. Whether high quality of the discussion can be realized also depends on the composition of the group (Storch, 2002). In Storch's research, he found four kinds of pair work. The figure below is cited from Storch's paper, which shows four different kinds of pair work and their level of mutuality and equality.



Graph 2

"Equality describes more than merely an equal distribution of turns or equal contributions but an equal degree of control over the direction of a task" (Van, Lear, 1996, cited from Storch, 2002). Mutuality refers to the level of engagement with each other's contribution. In Answering RQ2, we measure the first two discussions' characteristics based on Storch's two-dimensional scale.

We record the discussions taken place in another oral English class for sophomore English majors in the same campus. It is a task-based interactive class. Every three students who form a group act as three roommates expressing some complaints and are asked to reach a final agreement. In this task, the teacher gives each student an instructing paper listing several items for them to negotiate. Through the interview with the teacher, we learn that the purpose of the task is to drive every student to engage in the group discussion and try to reach a solution. This dorm room situation is familiar to all the students so this task accords with

the theory of constructivism, which emphasizes the importance of former experience to the class performance (Sternberg& Williams, 2003). Through analyzing the tones, interaction process, performance and emotions of the group members, we compare differentiations among students and come up with implications for the group forming.

#### *Setting up two-layer relations in a large group discussion*

Another group discussion containing six students is formed deliberately after class rather than in a classroom context. Members are all sophomore English majors. This discussion simulates a negotiation between the company representatives and farmer representatives. Two students act as the company side, two as the farmer side, and another two students become the government representatives. The certain situation is like this: the company is trying to buy the land from the farmers. Then the negotiation is held to reach an agreement about money and other conditions. The government side acts as mediators.

#### *RQ3*

In answering this question, we try to extend relation network analysis to the class as a whole. Four teaching-learning forms can be seen in an interactive class for ESL: teacher-centered instruction, student presentation, and group discussion (main form). Since the first form is a secondary one in the interactive class, we will not discuss it in depth.

#### *Student presentation*

In an interactive language class, sometimes the students are required to give presentations to the whole class. Rovai's Classroom Community Scale (Rovai, 2002b) yields two interpretable factors: connectedness and learning. This questionnaire has 20 items with 10 related to connectedness and other 10 learning. According to his method, we draw a questionnaire (see Appendix 2, p. 24) to see the pertinences among different factors in a student presentation thus to get some implications for better arrangement of this presentation form. The first three items are about connectedness and another three are related to learning purposes. The seventh question is to test our hypothesis that familiarity with the presenter may influence the degree of learning and connectedness.

We choose another oral English class for sophomore English majors in which the students

are required to give presentations as their final examination. Totally 23 students deliver presentations in three consecutive weeks (one class each week). Other students are asked to evaluate the presenter's performance according to the items on the questionnaire. The specific average scores of each student on all the elements are shown in Appendix 3 (p. 25). The pertinences among the seven factors are produced from SPSS analysis shown in the "Result & Data Analysis".

### *Group discussion*

Based on RQ2, we focus on the establishment of relations network of an interactive class. We do the observation for six weeks in an Advanced English class for non-English majors. (One class each week) These students come from a variety of majors with comparatively good English proficiency. This class has fixed groups with 2-3 students within each group. The course's procedure (except two classes in the middle of that semester) is like this: the teacher gives a task at the end of each class for them to prepare and perform in the next period. The tasks usually require the group members work together after class, which builds up friendship and privities. These tasks extend group working to after-class time and provide more opportunities for the students to get a sense of classroom community. In each class, usually there are two students acting as hosts who have been in charge of contacting with other students before class and hosting the whole process of group performances. We choose this class because the relations network is complicated but has clear relation layers and we will discuss this network in the "Result" part. Moreover, in this class, group work has been done before class and thus during the class, relations among groups become the most obvious relation layer in the classroom network, and is our focus in this part. When we are doing the observation, we concentrate on the following factors: 1. Level of cooperation in the performance according to the aspects like their turns-taking, eye contact with the other members and repair. 2. Response of the other groups (mind concentration, eye contact, questions, debate), 3. Competitions and cooperation among the groups. We do observations during six class periods, and will present one period as a case study. In addition to that, we draw a relations network based on interactions among all the members of the class and the teacher. At the beginning of a class, we draw a picture of the classroom setting and add lines, which stand for interactions taken place.

## Results & Data Analysis

### *Results of RQ1*

S1 is a male student who does not like group discussion in the class. When asked why he feels so reluctant in the discussion, his answer is because he feels that he has nothing to talk about. He says he does not feel very nervous even if the other members are competitive because at this time he just keeps his mouth shut and let others talk. However, he feels very nervous when he is talking something to the group for he is very afraid of making mistakes and losing face. That means his anxiety (Kitano, 2001; Sprinthall, Sprinthall & Oja, 1994) does not come from the outside competition, but his self-perception and the fear of negative evaluation. He says he prefers one to one conversation and hopes the teacher can pay more attention to each individual student, which means he has the need and expectation of being noticed and cared about. To use Cooper's "empathy" model, this student appreciates profound empathy, which can be most easily realized through one-to-one conversation (Cooper, 2002). The inner conflict is his willingness to impress others and his fear of negative evaluation. The extrinsic obstacle is that group discussion is not an ideal environment to him and he does not receive enough attention. S1 is sensitive to the environment and is afraid of low evaluation thus it is difficult for him to adapt to a group context with low empathy. Once these extrinsic obstacles are too strong, he refuses interaction for self-protection, but this can consequently isolate him, which on the other hand prevents him from having a sense of community. To look at this case in another way, the student is in a vicious circle, which can be broken down if he could receive profound empathy from this environment and get a sense of community. Suppose S1 talks to an empathetic teacher face to face or discusses with a peer student who encourages him to express his views and shows much interest and enthusiasm in the discussion, he would restrain his inner conflict and gradually goes into a favorable circulation.

S2 is female student who is very active and confident in the class, who plays the "president role". She says she likes this kind of discussion and she wants to catch every opportunity to express her ideas. When the members in her group are very competitive, she feels a little pressed but she will still try her best to engage in the discussion. Through her words, we can see that she has strong intrinsic motivation, which can last for a very long time and facilitate her learning process (Sprinthall, Sprinthall & Oja, 1994; Sternberg & Williams, 2003). That's why she strives to be active even if the competitive environment brings pressure. S2 acts the

role of a leader in a group discussion and tries to motivate less active students to talk and at the same time, she hopes to get some feedback, if not, she feels frustrated. Reflected in her words, S2 is a democratic leader (see Sprinthall, Sprinthall, & Oja, 1994, chapter 17 about leadership) who pays much attention to the cooperation and cohesion of a group discussion. She tries to motivate other members and create an ideal atmosphere in the group. Rather than adapting to the environment, S2 actively sets up interactions and connections. If we compare an interactive class as an organic body, students like S2 feel much easier to get a sense of community thus belong to a group that can act as the “spine” of the whole class.

When we compare the characteristics of S1 and S2, in terms of their different psychological states and expectations, we raise a question: Whether can students with different characteristics be compatible in the same group? How can a group be formed with high quality that can meet the members’ expectations to the most extent?

*Graph 1* is a comparison between S1 and S2, through which we may be curious about whether S1 and S2 can be compatible in the interaction.

Whether high quality of the discussion can be realized also depends on the composition of the group (Storch, 2002). We hypothesize that if S2 meets with S1, the pair work will not be of very high quality since S2’s way of motivating may not work on S1. Their expectations and needs are not compatible. We will discuss the group formation in details in the next section. S2 has an expectation of setting up connections thus she may be very active in talking to S1, and S2 acts actively while S1 acts passively. While her competitiveness may give S1 pressure and S1’s reluctance to give feedback may frustrate S2. Whether S2 can break S1’s extrinsic obstacle depends on in what way their interaction is going on, that is to say, whether S2 can provide profound empathy is the crucial factor for a successful discussion between S1 and S2. In the next part of this paper, our group focuses on the group forming and characteristics of the interaction in different groups.

			Manifestation
English Proficiency	S1	less proficient	not competitive
	S2	proficient	very competitive
Activity	S1	passive	needs to have more extrinsic motivation for interaction



	S2	active	enough inner motivation for interaction
Inner conflict	S1	fear of losing face	feels it difficult to interact naturally
	S2	not too much inner conflict	feels it easier to talk in the class
Extrinsic obstacles	S1	competition and pressure	anxious and nervous in interaction with a competitive peer student with low empathy
	S2	students who do not give feedback	frustrated if no feedback gotten in interaction
Attitude towards pressure	S1	negative	very passive/refuse to get involved in the competition/not willing to interact
	S2	less negative	still active under pressure/joins the competition willingly
Expectations	S1	profound empathy from the environment	prefers one-to-one conversation/easy to be hurt or frustrated
	S2	feedback and more interaction	actively expresses ideas/eager to set up as many connections as possible

Graph 1.

## RQ2

### *Simple relations in small group discussions*

In this part, we will first analyze how a certain discussion atmosphere is created and which positions on Cooper's coordinate (Cooper, 2002) the discussions are at. Students' expectation, motivation and emotion throughout the interaction are also discussed.

Below is a conversation between two students in one group simulating the situation of roommates negotiating the problems in a dorm room. (Actually, there are three members in the discussion, but we transcribe the beginning of the conversation handled by two students.)

1 S3: First I will discuss about you. Eh...I'm very sorry to say that you always smoke in the



maintain her ardor even though she does not get much feedback from S4. It is legitimate to say that S3 is far from empathetic. The sense of connection has not been set up, which seems less important to S3 in that her needs have been met already. To S4, who are passive and less competitive however, effect of this dominant/passive pattern of interaction is rather negative. In line 6 and 7, we can see that S4 only says "ok", but this passive feedback is enough to motivate S3 to keep on talking at length. In addition to that, S3 does much self-repair. In line 7, she makes several mistakes and does the repairs in a very swift way. In line 11, she makes a code switch to inquire a certain expression that she cannot figure out. However, before S4 can finish her feedback, S3 gives a refusal to S4's help with a "No". From S3's attitude towards mistakes in language, we can find that she does not like other-repair. In line 15 to 19, S4 makes a suggestion about "using a lamp", but S3 only gives a "maybe...?" as so called feedback and makes her own decision and imposes it to S4 (in line 21 and 22), which makes S4 a little embarrassed at last. S3's motivation comes from her own inner need and S3 shows competence in the group. She belongs to the category of paying more attention to the competition than to the community cooperation. According to the anxiety theory in the classroom, this kind of students are not likely to have anxiety in a high-competitive group and can also well adapt to the low-competitive group. Nevertheless, a group with members like S3 is hard to go on with cooperative work. On the other hand, S4 belongs to a category being in the less active position and expecting motivation from others. For such kind of students, a democratic leader is needed. Let's see the reaction of S4 from the very beginning. From the line 1 to line 6, she does not say anything except "Ok". Her anxiety comes from the uncertainty and doubt about her own language competence and fear of low evaluation. (Kitano, 2001) This competitive atmosphere increases this uncertainty. In line 13, 16, S4 uses an inquiring tone. In line 20, she uses "maybe" to shows her uncertainty. In this kind of groups, the mutuality and equality are both low, and is not a good environment for the students who have the same characteristics as S4 and whose performance depends on the extrinsic motivation. The implication for the group discussion is that a competitive student with low empathetic ability is better to stay with other competitive ones. Dominant/dominant discussion is better than dominant/passive one, because it at least has high equality although the discussion will not be in a friendly atmosphere.

Here is another discussion formed by another three students talking about the same topic.

- 1 S5: I am a little allergic to smoke, so every time you smoke in the room I'm very  
2 uncomfortable. (laugh) Eh... maybe you can change your habit and make sure that you  
3 don't smoke in the dorm room.  
4 S6: Oh, I... I'm sorry. I think I will accept your advice. But I really want... when I really  
5 want  
6 to smoke, where shall I go?  
6 S5: (laugh) I think you can just go to the balco-... balcony and smoke there. It is quiet there  
7 and I think it's a nice place for you... to smoke.  
8 S6: OK, I will think about it.                    ∴
- 9 S6: You know you always borrow clothes and music books from... from me, but you didn't  
10 even ask me whether I... would like borrow( (should be "lend") ) it to you. (code switch to  
11 Chinese to make the problem clear) It is something that I really cares ((should be  
"care")).  
12 S7: Oh, I'm sorry. I think sometimes I... eh... I want to borrow your things but you are not  
13 in  
14 your dormitory, so I used them and not ask for your permission. I think next time I want  
15 to  
16 use your things, I... will ask for your permission. ((There are some mistakes in S7's  
expression))  
15 S6: Ok, that sounds good. (laugh)

### *Transcript 2*

This discussion has a friendlier atmosphere. For one thing, compared to the first discussion, the students here have high equality in the turns taking. S5, S6 and S7 make almost the same amount of contribution to the discussion. They learn from each other in a friendly atmosphere, which is an important factor to establish a sense of community. In line1 to line 3, S5 states the problem in a relatively moderate way. She uses words like "a little", "maybe" to reduce the aggression. That means she has the attempt to create a collaborative atmosphere and uses her words carefully. In line 4, S6's response to S5 begun with "I'm sorry". Through line1 to line 6 we can see that the interaction between S5 and S6 are controlled and directed by both. First S5 states the smoking problem and provides a solution. Then S6 gives a feedback and brings forth another problem raised by S5's suggestion. This leads to another solution from S5. Each of them tries to get the information from the other and contribute their own share to the solution. We can see the same thing happens in the interaction between S6 and S7 (line9 to line15). This discussion has some characteristics of a collaborative one. In such a context, students feel less pressed and the anxiety is low because of the low level of competition. Since the three of them engage in others' contribution in a certain scale, the

discussion also bears some mutuality. Nevertheless, this mutuality is not obvious and the motivation from the partners is not enough. In line5, S6 uses a question to motivate S5's contribution and this works quite well. S5 gives a constructive suggestion later. However, we can see in line7 to line8, and line14 to line15, the feedbacks seem to be a little passive, which show that this discussion is not completely collaborative. Given passive feedback, students will feel disappointed or frustrated consciously or subconsciously. If they did not have enough intrinsic motivation, say, the willingness and desire to impress others, they would give up trying. Let us look at relations set up in this discussion as a whole; we might find the emotions are relatively positive. Two dimensions of sense of classroom community - learning from each other and setting up connections - are realized.

*More than one layer of relations in a larger group discussion*

This group has 6 students in it. More details about this group can be seen in 5.2.2. Below is a part of the transcript.

1 S8 (Company Side): I came here to buy the land and...the farmers have raised two questions

2 why we XXX and what benefits that we can bring to them, and I can...

3 S9 (Farmers Side): What compensations, not benefits.

4 S8 (CS): Compensations?

5 S9 (FS): Yeah.

6 S8 (CS): Simply we came here to buy the land...This is the main purpose, and secondly, I...I

7 think...eh...I just wanna point out why you are so poor? Because you just live on this poor

8 land...[3 seconds]

9 S10 (Government Side): Ok, I hope the company will...will pay attention to their words, thank 10 you! And I...

⋮

11 S10 (GS): Ok, you government (should be "company") part...

12 All the other students: Company part...

13 S10 (GS): Yeah! Would you please say how much compensation you can give the farmers if

14 if you wanna buy their land?

15 S11 (GS): I also...(laugh) want you to...to...eh...introduce your plan of the constructions...

16 How much do you want to lose ((very low voice)) and what compensations...

17 S12 (CS): We can give them money and give them jobs, of course, we...we will still build...

18 their houses...(turn to S8)

19 S8 (CS): And XXX

*Transcript 3*

This discussion has relatively high cohesion and is more task-driven. Different from the former two groups, this group is larger which means the relations are more complicated. Every member in the group has one companion and both act as belonging to a party in the negotiation. Three parties also form a second layer of relations. This is more like a social context with different layers of relations. During the observation, we find that two students in the same party discuss in a low voice from time to time and then provide an idea to other two parties. (These are not reflected in the transcript) Here a Chinese cultural element is reflected. Chinese people appreciate to stay within a small group in which the members are fully reliable and have many common grounds with them. Confronted with a problem, Chinese people prefer to have someone to discuss with before getting into the outside competition. This also reflects the importance of group belongingness to Chinese people. When it comes to an interactive class, we argue that the teacher should undergird students' sense of group belongingness, which can reduce anxiety coming from competition.

Now let us look at how the group work is going on. In line 3, S9 gives a repair to S8's statement, and in line 4, 5, S8 and S9 reach an agreement on a word choice. In Line 7 to line 8, S8 uses an inappropriate expression. This inappropriateness does not come from syntax mistakes but the aggressive words, which are not supposed to appear in a negotiation between a company and the farmers. Then S10, acting as a government official, plays her role to ease the ambience, pointing out the company part should not use these words. The students fully understand their own roles in the group and motivate themselves to fulfill the task. In a discussion that is put in a certain social situation, students are given social roles and this kind of tasks, which, if well used, can promote students' involvement. In 6 to 8, S8's verbal behavior put "company side" in a higher position, which will either lead to an unfriendly argument between two sides or control over the "farmers' side", but either will raise anxiety and damage the positive motivation in the group. Here, S10 acts as not only a government representative but also a mediator in the negotiation. First, she asks "company side" to pay attention to the word. This behavior recreates a balance between the other two parties and motivates the "farmers' part" to state their ideas. At the same time, she uses a "thank you" to show that the "company side" is still respected thus to avoid decreasing the motivation of the "company side". In line 11 to 13, there comes another repair, which is initiated by S10 and

done by all the other students. This kind of repair can increase the cohesion of the group. In line 13 to 14, S10 raises a question for the “company side” with “would you please say”. Expressions like this will strengthen the cohesion and reduce the competition among the group members because “would you please?” means one passes the opportunity of contribution to the other with respect and friendliness. Being respected and noticed is a basic need of the members of same rank, and it is true of the group work. In line 15 and 16, S11 contributes to the discussion by adding another creative item. “Also” means she pays attention to S10’s suggestion and regards herself as on the same side with S10. This shows that S11 knows her role quite well and abides by the rules of a negotiation. Dependence that happens in the group enhances the cooperation (Sprinthall, Sprinthall, & Oja, 1994). In 18 and 19, S12 turns to S8 for help and S8 then continues to talk. Help brings more cooperation and drives the whole group work to go on. In this group discussion, members are all engaged in the task and the contribution of others. With questions, repair, friendly dictions and certain direction shifting to a balance, the atmosphere in the group is a harmonious one, in which anxiety is low and the interactions in the group are successful.

In this group, the first layer of relations are highly cooperative, provides the students with safety and belongingness. In the second layer, relation between “company part” and “farmers’ part” is competitive, but “government part” moderates this competition and leads the discussion to be a more cooperative one. A common goal and shares of contribution make this two-layer relation network cohesive.

#### Extending relation network to the class as a whole

Based on the third part, we extend relations within a group to a relations network of a whole class. Before that, several network forms should be brought forth first for a better understanding of the interactive class. Usually, these networks can appear in the same class in the teaching-learning process.

#### *Teacher-centered instruction*

This form usually appears at the beginning of the class when the teacher introduces the tasks and curriculum arrangement. In a class made up of Chinese students, teacher-centered teaching model is still highly applicable since China is a hierarchical society and the students are brought up in such context. However, the teacher needs to keep two other factors on his

mind. The first is “empathy” emphasized all through our paper and the other is equality. The teacher needs to show sincerity, respect, and enthusiasm to be empathetic. Empathetic observation is a very important tool for the teacher to understand students’ needs and expectations. For example, when giving instructions, if the teacher notices a confused facial expression of a student, he might need interact with him since confusion can abate sense of community (Rovai, 2002b).

It is true that the relationship between the teacher and the students can be hierarchical, while among the students, equality should be highly emphasized. In some classes, the teacher shows partiality to certain students, and then the consequence is that only several relations can be set up successfully while most students will lose sense of classroom community. That is to say, when it comes to the teacher, relations to all the students should be balanced. For instance, eye contact should touch every student especially those sitting far from the teacher, and some passive students who appreciate more profound empathy should call on the teacher’s attention.

### Students Presentation

Graph 3 shows the correlation among the 7 items

		Sincerity	Credibility	Connected	Interesting	Informative	Questions	Know Speaker
Sincerity	Pearson Correlation	1	.787	.829	.637	.581	.590	.383
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.000	.001	.004	.003	.071
	N	23	23	23	23	23	23	23
Credibility	Pearson Correlation		1	.673	.623	.722	.723	.273
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	.000	.001	.000	.000	.208
	N	23	23	23	23	23	23	23
Connected	Pearson Correlation			1	.702	.488	.414	.446
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.	.000	.018	.050	.033
	N	23	23	23	23	23	23	23
Interesting	Pearson Correlation				1	.784	.763	.287
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.001	.000	.	.000	.000	.185
	N	23	23	23	23	23	23	23



Informative	Pearson Correlation					1	.760	.349
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.004	.000	.018	.000	.	.000	.103
	N	23	23	23	23	23	23	23
Questions	Pearson Correlation						1	.146
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.003	.000	.050	.000	.000	.	.505
	N	23	23	23	23	23	23	23
Know Speaker	Pearson Correlation							1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.071	.208	.033	.185	.103	.505	.
	N	23	23	23	23	23	23	23

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

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

Graph 3.

We present this figure to show several points:

- "Sincerity" has highest correlation to "credibility" and "connectedness". This shows being sincere is of much importance in terms of setting up emotional connections. It has obvious correlation to the 3 items related to learning dimension, although the pertinence is not very high.
- "Credibility" has very high correlation to the learning dimension.
- The items within the same dimension has very high correlation with each other
- The "familiarity" has very low correlation levels with other items except "connectedness".

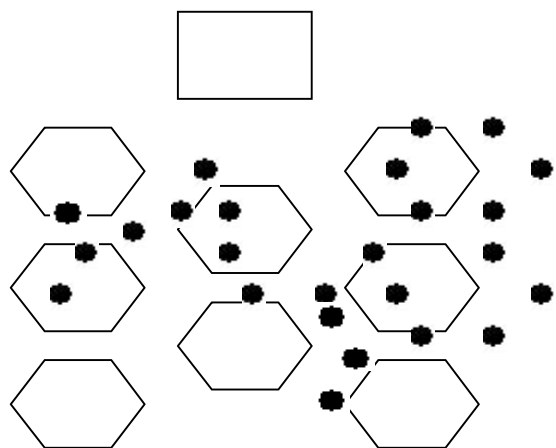
Implications drawn from these points:

- In our observation, we notice that sincerity can be shown in several aspects: eye-contact with the audience, the way the student delivers the speech (talking to the audience or just reading). A practical method for the teacher to use is to require the students to pay more attention to these aspects and take these elements as important standards when evaluating the students' performance
- When it comes to the content of the presentation, the teacher can give instructions about topic choosing and emphasize how to make the presentation logic and credible.
- Since items within the same dimension have high correlation with each other, improvement in any aspect can highly enhance the presentation.

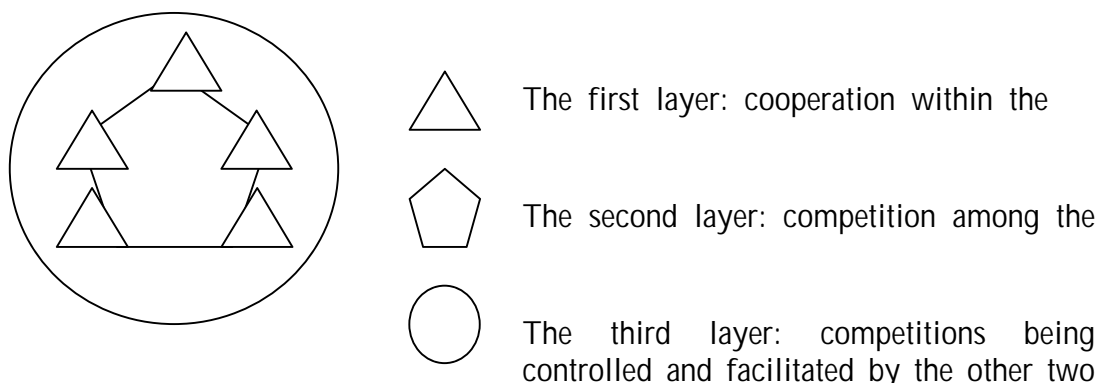
- Familiarity that plays an important role in the group discussion turns out to be of not so much importance in student presentation.

*Group performance or competition between groups*

In this Advanced Oral English Class, a creative arrangement needs to be presented: groups with 3 or 2 members in each are required to perform a task in front of the class, using PPT and other available facilities. Two students are the hosts, another two students form a “Consultative Group” who collect information from every group before class and provide the audience with explanations to some difficult expressions in the class. That is to say if there are eight groups, six are involved in the competition, while the other two groups act in a role of facilitating the class. Three layers of relations exist in this classroom: cooperation within the group, competition among the groups, and control and facilitation of the other two groups (See picture 2).



Picture 1



Picture 2

In this part, we have to emphasize Chinese cultural elements reflected in this classroom.

Chinese people prefer to have group belongingness, and to seek safety in a competitive environment. In Picture 2 we can see that the first layer meets this expectation. (We have already mentioned this in 6.2.2, pp. 11-13) When performing in front of the class, they feel less nervous than performing alone. China is high context society in which people's identity and value are most likely to be defined by other people and the environment, so do those small groups. Without competitions (the second layer of relations), the groups' identity and ability cannot be defined, which would lower the motivation. Another cultural element is the Chinese hierarchy, which can be reflected in the third layer of this relations network. The hosts and the other two consultants are above the competition and control the process. Since the students take turns to be hosts through the semester, this hierarchical relation layer does not threaten the equality which we emphasized in 6.3.1. (pp. 13-14).

In one period, five groups are asked to deliver simulative "Enterprise Proposals" which have been fully prepared before class. We describe the performance based on the notes taken in the observation and do the analysis at the same time. Apart from the questions we raise in this part, we also add some phenomena that can give implications for improvement of pedagogical methods.

Two students who are required by the teacher review what they have done in the last class. Since they just read the sentences on the computer without much eye contact with the audience, only the students sitting nearest to the platform look at the screen. Most groups are preparing their own presentations. We draw three views from this situation: First, this proved what we argued in 6.3.2 (student presentation form, pp. 14-15) that the sincerity of the presenter contributes to a sense of classroom community, which is reflected in the phenomena of successful interaction and relations establishment. Second, distance plays an important role in setting up relations. To compare the relations to information cables, the distance between two members of the classroom is like the length of the cable, while the quality of the interaction is like the strength of the signal. Third, relations network needs to be complete and organic to be brought into full play. Here only two layers of relations exist, the first and the third without competitions among groups. It is just as if the groups are still separated, and this can be one of the reasons that the members concentrate on their own work. We do not mean that the three-layer network is the best one or can be applied to any interactive class, but we argue that this network is in accordance to Chinese culture thus can be well applied to a Chinese interactive class of this kind.

Then two hosts go to the platform. The host begins with "Thank you for our reporters, they did a really good job!" and then start to state the rules of the group's presentations. This transitional sentence not only addresses the two reporters but also draw the attention of other groups.

We now describe the process of 3 group presentations:

Group 1: The topic is "Wedding Planning Company Proposal". Three female students stand in a line, speak one by one and each is in charge of one part of the presentation. Their presentation can be regarded as a rough combination of three separate presentations because they just divide the content into three parts and not so much cooperation can be seen. Within the group, no repair or turn taking is made when one is talking, even no eye contact with the other two members. As to the presentation, it is comparatively successful in terms of sincerity and information. The presenters speak rather than read and make full eye contact with the audience.

Response of other groups: Almost all the students look at the presenters and seem to be interested in the presentation. After the presentation, no question is raised.

Group 2: The topic is "Christmas Party Planning Proposal". And their ways of presenting the performance is similar to Group 1. While their voice is comparatively lower and they are less confident than the students of Group 1 are. After the presentation, the teacher asks a question, the three students give the answer together.

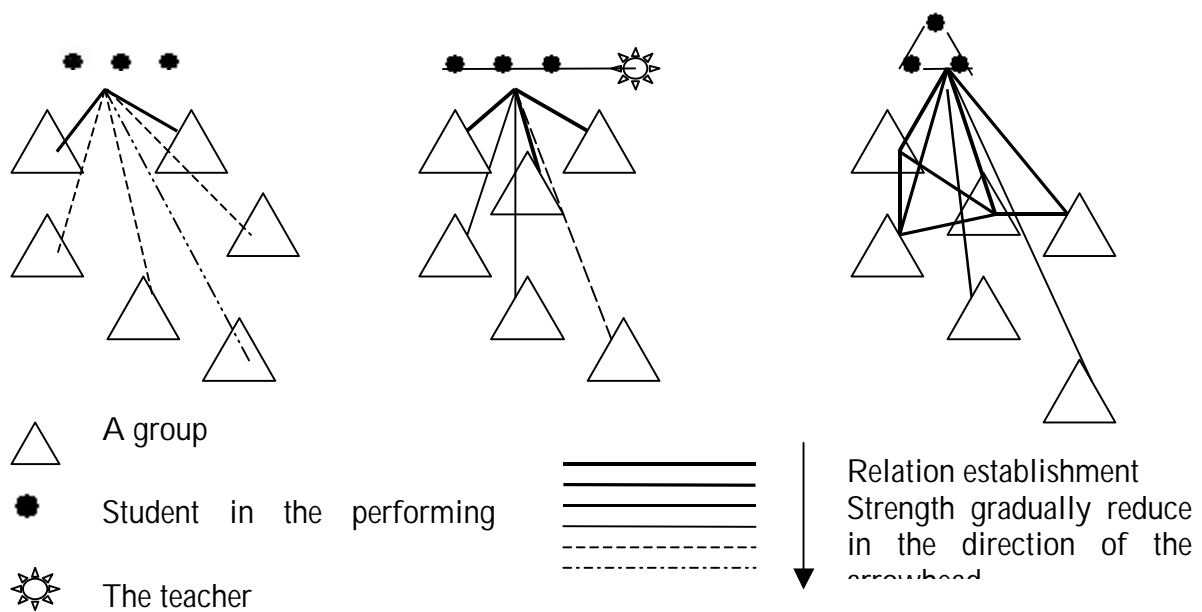
Response of other groups: Most of the students listen to them and look at the screen carefully and a couple of students sitting far from the platform do their own work. When the teacher asks a question, almost all students pay attention to the interaction between the performing group and the teacher.

Group 3: The topic is about "Consulting Service Proposal". One of the students has very proficient oral English and acts as the leader in this group. These three students cooperate relatively better than Group1 and 2 in that they make the turn-takings and repairs, and try to modify other members' statements. They seek support from each other by eye contact and some non-verbal language. A student raises a question; the group members deliver the answer in a cooperative way and try to make their contribution on the basis of other member's ideas, and this question leads to more questions and later a hot debate among the students is generated.

Response of other groups: All the students pay much attention to the presentation, and later

half of the class join in the debate.

Relations establishment in three cases:



Picture 3

In the picture above, we can see the differences among the three group presentations. We assess the relations establishment according to eye contact, line of sight concentration, and verbal interaction. Group 1 does not deliver the presentation in a cooperative way. Group 1 sets up the strongest relations with the groups nearest to it, and strength of the relations reduces as the distance increases. This also proves what we have argued that distance plays an important role in relations establishment. Group 2's performance is actually similar to Group 1, but establishment of relations is intensified by the teacher's involvement. This is understandable in a Chinese interactive class in which the teacher's authority is not likely to be challenged. This implicates that although the teacher plays a less crucial role in the interactive class than in other classes, it is still important for the teacher to get involved in the relations network to facilitate the learning process. Group 3 is more successful in terms of

relations network establishment. When the relations are intercrossed, interactions in the classroom become open-ended and can extend to a large scale.

Implications for improving the interactive class of ESL

*For the teachers: Being empathetic when observing the process of the class and arranging the classroom setting*

In an interactive class, the teacher speaks less than in a traditional teacher-centered class. That does not mean that the teacher is less important, rather, the teacher need to observe the students performances, empathetically get to know the expectations and difficulties of the students, and then facilitate the relations network establishment, which can increase students' sense of classroom community. As we argued in answering RQ1 (pp. 4), students have so many differentiations that lead to a variety of expectations. It is rather difficult for the teacher to talk to every student and provide each with profound empathy, but it is possible to care more about those who act passively in the group work by only talking to them for a few minutes, encouraging them to be engaged in the relations network. Another important aspect is how to arrange all the students into groups. As we argued in RQ2 (pp. 5-6), students may act differently in different groups. Some teacher may ask the students to form the groups themselves. It is true that a group within which all the members are familiar with each other might reduce students' anxiety, but in terms of learning process, it does not always work, since familiarity does not equal compatibility. An effective approach might be that the teacher keeps observing the atmosphere and cooperation of each group, judges the compatibility of the members, and discovers the problems in relations establishment. After a certain period, the teacher may be able to understand the class better thus can make some changes in the group forming. For example, those students who are very competitive and also very aggressive (like S3, pp. 9-10) are better to stay with the students who have the same characteristics, those who are competitive and also can act as democratic leaders can stay with those who are passive in the discussion and in need of much extrinsic motivation. However, here we only provide some implications and reference, and our research has not been able to lead to a systematical framework for group forming.

*Setting up relations network in an interactive classroom which is more comfortable for the students*

Here “comfortable” means that the relations network need to accord with the cultural awareness and can arouse students’ sense of classroom community. We describe a model in 6.3.3 (pp.15-18) in which several relation layers are discussed. We have argued that these relation layers can work together to join the class together as an organic unity. The implication here is that when arranging the curriculum, the teacher needs to hold the awareness of setting up an organic relations network. Of course, a good relations network establishment is based on empathetic observation and an awareness to reduce obstacles in the process of setting up relations.

*Giving instructions and tasks that can facilitate the relations network establishment*

The teacher need to give students some instructions that can help them get involved in the relations network and feel more comfortable in the classroom. For example, as we argued in 6.3.2 (pp. 14-15), the teacher needs to emphasize the ways of presentation delivery and topic choosing. The teacher can also ask the students to prepare some material, which can be shared in the classroom community and will not lead to too serious competition.

Conclusions

In this research study, we analyzed an interactive ESL class in a Chinese context comprehensively and systematically. Individual differentiations lead to different expectations and performances of students in a class. When it comes to an interactive class, individual differentiations are reflected in the relations establishment. The teacher needs to observe the class empathetically and arrange the groups in order to provide comfortable group environments to as many students as he can. As to the whole class, an organic relations network is crucial in arousing a sense of classroom community and facilitating the learning process. Group belongingness, competition and the teacher’s control are all very important in setting up relations network in a Chinese interactive class.

However, we do not mean this three-layer relations model is the best one since we figure out this model based mostly on observation, and it hasn’t been tested in other interactive classes of ESL. To testify its validity, more experiments need to be done in various interactive classes of ESL, and comparisons between classes arranged with this model and

classes without are also needed in order to clarify its effect. Meanwhile, a model used to arrange the class is just one way to improve the teaching and learning process and is by no means the only one. We argue that teachers can come up with different models in their teaching processes based on empathetic observation, cultural awareness and scientific designs. Our research just provides some implications for the arrangement of classes and more efforts need to be made in order to get a full understanding of relations network establishment in the interactive class of ESL.

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#### Appendix 1.

##### Interview with S1:

It seems that you don't like this discussion very much. Do you think it is because you don't feel confident enough or you are just not interested in it?

Answer: I don't like this kind of discussion because I feel I have nothing to talk. (why?)

1. You think the topic is not interested enough or something?

Answer: Yes, maybe. I think this kind of topic is not practical enough.

2. If it is something that you are interested in, will you at least say something?

Answer: Yes, if I like the topic, I will say something, but not too much.

3. Do you feel a little pressed or nervous in a group discussion?

Answer: No, not really, if I don't know how to say, then I just keep my mouth closed and let other students talk.

4. Why do you think you are so reluctant to talk?

Answer: I don't wanna lose face especially when I'm not familiar with other members.

5. If you are talking with your roommates, do you feel nervous too?

Answer: Yes, as long as I'm talking in English, I'm afraid of making mistakes. This will make myself laughed at, even though my roommates may not mean to.

6. Do you think this discussion is to some extent helpful?

Answer: No, I don't think so.

7. So what kind of ways do you like to practice your oral English? One to one conversation?

Answer: Yes, that will be better. The teacher can have conversations with each individual.

##### Interview with S2: (based on notes, not the original sentences)

1. You seem to be very active in the discussion, do you like this kind of group work?

Answer: Yes, very much. I just want to catch every opportunity to express my ideas.

2. If other members in your group are competitive, do you feel nervous or anxious?

Answer: Maybe I will feel a little pressed, but I will still try my best to talk.

3. I notice that you are the leader of the group, what do you expect the discussion to be?

Answer: I hope every one can join the discussion, so I will do my best to talk to every member and also pay much attention to the atmosphere of the group discussion. And I need feedback from every one.

4. What will you do if you meet some one who are very reluctant to talk?

Answer: I will try my best to motivate him or her to talk, but if it doesn't work, I mean if he or she doesn't give me feedback, I will get frustrated.

Appendix 2.

A Questionnaire to Assess the Performance of the Speakers:

Please give a score according to the speakers' performance.

Strongly agree (5) Agree (4) Neutral (3) Disagree (2) Strongly Disagree (1)

1. I feel the speaker is talking to us sincerely.
2. I feel that I can rely on the speaker.
3. I feel connected to the speaker.
4. I feel interested in the speaker's presentation.
5. I feel I can learn a lot from the speaker's presentation.
6. I want to ask some questions or have some ideas on the presentation.
7. I know the speaker well in person.

PS: leave that range of blanks empty if you are the speaker

Day 1

<i>Name</i>											
Sincerity											
Credibility											
Connected											
Interesting											
Informative											
Questions											
Know Speaker											

Day 2

<i>Name</i>											
Sincerity											
Credibility											
Connected											
Interesting											
Informative											
Questions											
Know Speaker											

Day 3

<i>Name</i>											
Sincerity											
Credibility											
Connected											
Interesting											

Informative											
Questions											
Know Speaker											

Appendix 3.

	Shirley	Maggie	Rose	Ramand	Jessica	Bonny	Sophie
Sincerity	& ! ε	& ! ε	& !	& ! #	& ! '	& ! #	& ! '
Credibility	% ! -	% ! '	% ! -	% ! )	% ! )	% ! '	% ! ε
Connected	% ! )	& ! ε	% ! '	% ! ε	% !	% ! (	% ! )
Interesting	% ! '	% ! -	% ! 9	% ! 9	% ! 9	% !	% ! (
Informative	% ! 9	% !	% !	% ! #	% ! \$	3.06	3.3
Questions	% ! ε	% ! ε	% ! #	3.21	2.76	3.11	3.08
Know Speaker	\$ ! ε	\$ ! '	\$ ! -	\$ ! ε	\$ ! (	\$ ! '	\$ ! )
Sincerity	& ! ε	& ! ε	& !	& ! #	& ! '	& ! #	& ! '
	Alen	Stephanie	William	Oleander	David	Steven	Charles
Sincerity	& ! ε	& ! '	& !	& ! 9	& ! #	& ! '	& ! 9
Credibility	% ! -	% !	% ! '	% ! '	% ! '	% ! +	& ! '
Connected	% ! '	% !	& ! #	% ! (	% ! ε	% ! (	% ! (
Interesting	% ! 9	% ! )	% ! )	% ! (	% ! 9	% ! )	& ! '
Informative	3.45	3.58	3.34	3.39	3.5	3.59	4.01
Questions	3.05	3.39	3.34	3.25	3.32	3.51	3.63
Know Speaker	\$ ! '	% !	\$ ! -	\$ ! '	\$ ! (	\$ ! '	\$ ! '
Sincerity	& ! ε	& ! '	& !	& ! 9	& ! #	& ! '	& ! 9
	Homwy	Terry	Bella	Vera	Warren	Cindy	Dowthy
Sincerity	3.48	4.10	4.30	4.39	4.42	4.59	4.34
Credibility	\$ ! -	% ! (	& ! '	& ! #	% ! )	& ! #	% ! '
Connected	\$ ! '	% ! (	% ! '	& ! '	% ! )	% ! +	% ! '
Interesting	\$ ! )	% ! 9	% !	& ! ε	% ! '	% ! (	% ! (
Informative	2.8	3.48	3.7	3.87	3.64	3.53	3.62
Questions	2.73	3.13	3.46	3.53	3.24	3.39	3.24
Know Speaker	\$ ! 9	\$ ! -	% ! 9	%	% ! 9	\$ !	% ! ε
Sincerity	3.48	4.10	4.30	4.39	4.42	4.59	4.34
	Phoenix	Ken					
Sincerity	4.55	4.27					
Credibility	& ! #	& ! '					
Connected	& ! '	% ! '					
Interesting	% ! -	% ! '					
Informative	3.77	3.65					
Questions	3.49	3.41					
Know Speaker	% ! ε	% ! #					
Sincerity	4.55	4.27					



## The Role of Multiple Intelligences (MI) in Listening Proficiency: A Comparison of TOEFL and IELTS Listening Tests from an MI Perspective

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### Abstract

TOEFL and IELTS listening tests have been said to be different in terms of theoretical foundations, research background, history and appearance and it has also been proposed that IELTS is more content based, task oriented and authentic (Farhady, 2005; Kiany, 1998). In this study cognitive demands of the two tests were compared by giving 151 language learners an actual TOEFL listening and 117 of the same participants a specimen IELTS listening test. The participants were also given a Multiple Intelligences Development Assessment Scales (MIDAS) questionnaire. The results suggest that despite the differences between IELTS and TOEFL listening tests, scores of each intelligence positively correlate with listening scores of both tests and only linguistic intelligence has a statistically significant correlation with listening proficiency as measured by TOEFL and IELTS. Furthermore, the results of regression analysis show that linguistic intelligence is included as a predictor of TOEFL and IELTS listening scores while other intelligences are excluded. The results provide quantitative evidence that only linguistic intelligence makes a statistically significant contribution to listening proficiency and despite the differences between the two listening tests, they only put a small linguistic demand on the test takers. The article suggests that English language teachers provide further assistance to language learners who might not enjoy a high level of linguistic intelligence.

Keywords: Multiple Intelligences (MI), TOEFL, IELTS, Listening Proficiency, Linguistic Intelligence

### Introduction

Listening comprehension is one the four language skills needed for effective communication in everyday conversational and academic contexts and it is also a source for obtaining the

necessary input for language development. However, according to Oxford (1993) for many years the role of listening comprehension in language learning was taken for granted. For example, during the audio-lingual era, language learners had to listen to the teacher and repeat sentences automatically. Perhaps Krashen could be regarded as the most influential scholar in the field who motivated further research into various aspects of listening comprehension by introducing listening as a medium for the acquisition of language through comprehensible input (Krashen, 1987, 1988). Various studies of L2 listening comprehension revealed that listening is a complex process which involves information processing (Anderson, 1985), use of strategies (Thompson and Rubin, 1996; Vandergrift, 1996) and contribution of different factors influencing comprehension such as text, speaker, task and listener (Rubin, 1994). Long (1990) suggested that having the relevant topical knowledge exerts a powerful influence on listening performance.

Different definitions of listening comprehension and research orientations in this area indicate that phonological perception, imagination of facial expression, gesture, etc, inferencing, parsing, imagination of participants and contexts, awareness of social procedures and utilization of strategies have been the focus of attention. Each of these sources of variability in listening comprehension might be contributed by the intelligence of the learners which is no longer considered as unitary. From among various multidimensional theories of intelligence, the theory of Multiple Intelligences (MI) which was proposed by Gardner (1983) has been most influential and could be utilized to investigate whether learners' individual differences in terms of intelligence are related to their differential listening comprehension performance.

#### Emergence of intelligence tests

Modern attempts to study individual differences were pioneered by the British scientist Galton in 1885. He tried to investigate the relationship between the intellectual ability and skills such as reaction time and sensitivity to physical stimuli. In 1904 Binet was commissioned by the French government to develop techniques to identify those primary school children who lacked the necessary capabilities for succeeding in normal classes and had to be provided with special education (Fancher, 1985). A year later Binet and Simon produced the first intelligence quotient (IQ) test which contained 30 short tasks related to everyday problems of life and were arranged so as to be of increasing difficulty. After the

translation of Binet-Simon scale into English and its administration in the US, it was found that the test had to be revised and the inherent shortcomings could be removed. Terman (1916) of Stanford University found that the Paris-developed age norms did not work well for Californian children and therefore by adding some items and modifying others developed the Stanford-Simon test and extended the age range to adulthood. Terman utilized Stern's (1912) formula to express the relation between an individual's mental age and chronological age. According to this formula the IQ of an individual is calculated by dividing an individual's mental age by his/her chronological age and multiplying it by 100. With the outbreak of World War I Yerkes (1915) and his team of experts including Terman who were appointed by the US army developed the Army Alpha and Beta tests, the latter being a version of Alpha which could be used with non-English speaking or illiterate individuals. Spearman (1927) analyzed the intelligence test data collected mainly for pragmatic purposes prior to his investigation and by doing factor analysis opted for a two-factor theory of intelligence: general and special abilities. However, he was excessively enthusiastic about the general (g) factor and suggested that only individuals with a satisfactory level of general intelligence should be allowed to vote or have offspring. Thurstone (1938) accepted Spearman's proposal but disputed its importance by arguing that g is in fact a second order factor which is obtained as a result of combining the first-order factors which are related to one another. His identification of 7 types of intelligence which he called "primary mental capabilities" is regarded as the first multi-factor approach to intelligence. Guilford (1967) suggested that there are at least 180 elementary abilities which are made up of three dimensions: operations, contents, and products. Stenberg (1985, 1988 as cited in Malim and Birch, 1998) defined intelligence as the mental capacity to automatize information processing and to emit contextually appropriate behavior in response to novelty. He proposed a Triachic theory of intelligence which is made up of three sub-theories: componential, contextual, and experimental sub-theories.

The historical development of intelligence theories is indicative of the fact that IQ tests provide an incomplete picture of individual differences in terms of mental capabilities and the more recent ideas which emphasize the multidimensional nature of intelligence have been supported. From among these ideas, perhaps the theory of Multiple Intelligences has been most influential and its application in education has also been one of the most controversial topics.

## Multiple intelligences

According to Gardner (1999a) intelligence is the ability to solve problems, or to create products that are valued within one or more cultural settings. Gardner (1993) noted the traditional IQ tests unfairly measured only logic and language and disregarded other intelligences of the brain. He also added that all humans have these intelligences, but people differ in the strengths and combinations of them. Furthermore, he believed that all of the intelligences could be enhanced through training and practice. At first Gardner introduced 7 intelligences but after a few years added the 8<sup>th</sup> to the list:

1. Musical intelligence is the ability to perceive, transform, and discriminate between musical forms and includes sensitivity to rhythm, pitch and timber. Those who have a high level of musical-rhythmic intelligence display greater sensitivity to sounds, rhythms, tones, and music.
2. Bodily-kinesthetic intelligence is the ability to solve problems or form products using all or part of one's body. People in this category often prefer activities which utilize movement. They are generally adept at physical activities such as sports or dance.
3. Logical-mathematical intelligence is the ability to use numbers effectively, manage long chains of reasoning and involves an awareness of logical and numerical patterns. It is also defined as the ability for abstract deductive and inductive reasoning, inferencing and scientific thinking.
4. Spatial intelligence is the ability to form a mental model of the visual-spatial world, and to be able to maneuver the model. It also includes sensitivity to colors, lines, patterns, spaces and forms, and the relationships between them.
5. Linguistic intelligence is the capacity to use words effectively both orally and in writing. It comprises sensitivity to the sounds, meanings and functions of language. In this category, people have high verbal memory and have an ability to manipulate syntax and structure.
6. Interpersonal intelligence is the area which is concerned with interaction with others. It is the ability to understand the feelings, motivations and moods of other people, and respond appropriately to them. People in this category are characterized by their ability to communicate effectively and empathize easily with others



7. Intrapersonal intelligence is the ability to understand oneself, to assess one's strengths, weaknesses and emotional states, and act effectively using this knowledge. In this category people are highly aware of their abilities and are capable of understanding their own goals and motivations.
8. Naturalist intelligence designates the human ability to discriminate among living things such as plants and animals, as well as sensitivity to other features of the natural world such as clouds and rock configurations.

Gardner (1999a) supported his theory of MI by providing evidence for the multiple nature of intelligence. He maintained that damage to a specific area of the brain did not lead to the patient's failure to do tasks which were controlled by other areas. He argued that evolution of human could not be made possible unless some intelligences could develop before other mental capabilities and noted that under environmental pressure spatial intelligence was perhaps the first intelligence to develop in human beings. Evidence for the support of MI also includes presence of core operations, susceptibility to encoding, a distinct developmental progression, support from experimental psychology, and from psychometric findings.

#### Listening comprehension

Different definitions of listening comprehension focused on different aspects of this skill. Clark and Clark (1977) proposed two definitions of listening comprehension. They suggested listening comprehension in its narrowest definition is the process by which listeners come to an interpretation for a stream of speech and listening comprehension in its broader definition involves the process by which listeners use those interpretations for their intended purpose. Wolvin and Coakley's (1985) approach to listening was basically cognitive. They defined listening as the process of receiving, attending to and assigning meaning to aural stimuli. Rost (2002) defined listening as a process of receiving what the speaker actually says, constructing and representing meaning, negotiating meaning with the speaker and responding, and creating meaning through involvement, imagination and empathy.

In the process of listening, first sound waves strike the tympanic membrane and cause vibration. The energy released as a result of vibration is then carried to the central nervous system. In the nervous system the phonemes are identified and syllables and different aspects

of intonation such as tone units and pitch should be perceived (Brazil, 1985; Cutler and Butterfield, 1992). According to Rost (2001), research in spoken-language recognition indicates that each language has its own preferred strategies for decoding the aural stimuli. For instance, they suggest that in Japanese which is syllable-timed language stress is located at fixed distances from the boundaries of words while in a stress-timed language such as English the main stress is placed on the utterance's focal syllable.

After the recognition of individual words, information about the syntactic structure of the clauses which are known as the units of parsing (Harley, 1995) is made available for semantic analysis. The role of schematic knowledge in listening comprehension has been studied (e.g. Schank & Abelson, 1977; Anderson, 1985) and Harley (1995) discussed how listeners make use of this repertoire for making different types of inferences. Thompson and Rubin (1996) found that more conscious and effective use of strategies increase the chances of success in L2 listening and results of a series of studies conducted to investigate the effect of listening strategy training also showed that metacognitive strategy use increases with learner listening proficiency level.

#### TOEFL vs. IELTS listening tests

The measurement of listening comprehension has been influenced by various language and testing theories and models. One of the proficiency tests which is widely used around the world is the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) which was first administered in 1963 (Spolsky, 1995). The listening section of TOEFL was developed to measure candidates' ability to comprehend academic English. The test measures examinees' English language proficiency in situations and tasks reflective of university life in North America. The listening test measures the test takers' comprehension of details and facts, vocabulary, main ideas and supporting ideas and finally communicative function of utterances. It also measures abilities such as making inferences about the content and relationships. Listening section of the paper-and-pencil TOEFL is one of the three main sections of the test which is mainly discrete-point in nature. Since 2005 use of the Internet-based TOEFL (iBT) has been increasing in different countries and at present TOEFL iBT is available in most of the countries but the paper and pencil TOEFL is still used in a large number of testing centers (ETS, 2007).

In 1980 the British test of the English language appeared by the name the English

Language Testing Service (ELTS). The form of the test was no longer multiple choice but had an innovative format which reflected changes and developments in language teaching, learning and testing. ELTS was influenced by developments in 'communicative' language learning and 'English for Specific Purposes' and was based on analyses of language in real-life language use situations in academic contexts. (IELTS, 2007). The new test was meant to be based on Munby's (1978) 'notional functional syllabus' and later on Canale's (1988) model of 'communicative competence'. (Spolsky, 1995). ELTS later underwent some major revisions and finally in 1989 the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) became operational. At present the listening and speaking sections of IELTS are given to all candidates but candidates can choose to take either the academic or general training reading and writing tests. The first two sections of the listening comprehension test are related to social needs and the last two sections are concerned with language use in educational or training contexts. Another characteristic of the listening section of IELTS is that various task types such as multiple choice and short-answer questions, sentence completion, note/summary/flow-chart/table completion, labeling a diagram, classification and matching are used (IELTS, 2007).

Kiany (1998) argued that IELTS in comparison to TOEFL is a more use-oriented and direct test while TOEFL is more usage-oriented and indirect. Farhady (2005) suggested that in addition to the differences in the appearance, history and theoretical underpinnings, TOEFL and IELTS are different in terms of research background. He argued that TOEFL is the most research-undergone of all foreign language tests but despite having such a strong research background, it has been used with almost the same content, format and fixed quantity. TOEFL has its origins in the psychometric approach to language testing and utilizes objective test techniques to ensure reliable measurement of language ability rather than language use in authentic contexts (Farhady, 2005). Farhady further noted that the kind of language which is used in the listening section of TOEFL is meticulous, articulate, and idealistic but in IELTS listening language use in real-life contexts is preferred.

#### Multiple intelligences and listening proficiency

The relationship between language proficiency and intelligence was first addressed by Oller (1978). In his words "language proficiency, rather than innate intelligence, may account for the lion's share of variance in the so-called IQ tests and in achievement tests as well" (p. 1).

To equate intelligence with language, Oller provided three pieces of evidence: 1) statistical evidence indicating a close relationship between performance on intelligence tests and measures of language proficiency; 2) striking similarities between IQ tests and language proficiency tests in terms of their content; and 3) neurolinguistic evidence showing overlaps between the areas responsible for language and performance on IQ tests. Another almost similar comment was made by Genesee (1976). Genesee proposed that according to the results of the study those in the highest IQ group perform in a way that it could be said that the IQ profile could predict the reading and language usage test scores. However, Gardner (1983) indicated that language learning, similar to many of human activities, is a complex interaction of a number of intelligences. This model offered a cognitive explanation for the differences in adult second language communicative competence, which the traditional views of intelligence did not.

With the development of multidimensional theories of intelligence which were intended to more efficiently account for individual differences, it could be argued that several aspects of listening proficiency could be influenced by different intelligences. In the process of listening comprehension, it seems that several aspects interact with Gardner's 8 intelligences. Sensitivity to tone, intonation and stress can have strong links with the musical intelligence and imagination of facial expression, gesture, posture, and head movements used in communication can be related to bodily-kinesthetic intelligence. Abilities such as inferencing, using analogies and reasoning in the process of listening can be influenced by logical-mathematical intelligence and spatial intelligence may enhance sensitivity to attitudes about personal space and help listeners spatially organize the incoming information. Furthermore, linguistic intelligence seems to be required at all stages of processing from sound perception to syntactic parsing and semantic analysis. Since communication does not happen in a vacuum, interpersonal intelligence for understanding the speakers' intentions, feelings and their social and cultural background might also play a pivotal role. Intrapersonal intelligence could also contribute to effective use of metacognitive strategies and to the amount of anxiety, self-esteem, and affective factors in listening. And finally, recognition of patterns in speech could also be facilitated by naturalist intelligence.

The theoretical and historical background of TOEFL and IELTS listening tests which have caused differences between the two tests in terms of content, task type, type of language and finally the kind of elicited linguistic behavior might impact test takers' listening performance.

If we assume that the listening section of IELTS is more communicative, content-dependent and authentic and that it is a more direct test of listening proficiency, then we may hypothesize that in addition to linguistic ability, other abilities of the test takers which are relevant to other aspects of language use in authentic contexts should contribute to the listening comprehension performance of IELTS test takers. In other words, IELTS listening test might be more cognitively demanding and require greater contribution of different intelligences.

Although the role of intelligence in language proficiency has already been investigated, almost no study has been done to tell us which of the Gardner's 8 intelligences has a greater role in listening proficiency and whether the results confirm the conclusions of previous studies which are based on IQ or aptitude scores. Besides, given the differences between the listening sections of TOEFL and IELTS, it is not clear whether different intelligences play differential roles in the two tests. Therefore, in the present study the following questions were formulated:

1. Do the 8 intelligences have any roles in listening proficiency as measured by a TOEFL listening test?
2. Do the 8 intelligences have any roles in listening proficiency as measured by an IELTS listening test?
3. Is IELTS listening comprehension a more cognitively demanding test in comparison to the listening section of TOEFL?

## Method

### *Participants*

Participants were Iranian male and female students majoring in English Language. 151 of the participants were able to take both MI questionnaire and TOEFL listening test and 117 students of the same population took MI questionnaire and IELTS listening test. Although many of the participants were familiar with TOEFL listening, the majority had not taken IELTS before. Therefore, they were familiarized with the listening section of IELTS by having them answer some sample listening questions and attend to the instructions which were provided in the sample test or by the test administrators. Among the participants who

took both MI questionnaire and TOEFL listening test, 17 (11.2%) were male and 134 (88.7) were female. Among those learners who performed on MI questionnaire and IELTS listening test, 13 (11.1%) were male and 104 (88.8%) were female.

### *Instrumentation*

For the measurement of MI, MIDAS which is a self report measure of intellectual disposition was used (see Appendix). MIDAS is completed by the person or other individuals such as parents or teachers who have enough information about the person. (Shearer, 1996). The users are asked to read each item and select what they perceive as the best answer at that point in time in their life. There are no right or wrong responses and the respondents are asked to select the option which best describes their characteristics. Research on the reliability and validity of MIDAS has revealed that the MIDAS scales can provide a reasonable estimate of one's MI. (Shearer, 1996). The MIDAS scales have been translated into Spanish and Korean and completed by approximately 10,000 people world-wide. In this study a Persian translation of the questionnaire using a 6-point Likert-type scale was utilized and its reliability with the original MIDAS was calculated. The 119-item Persian MIDAS was completed in 35-45 minutes and was then sent to the instrument developer for scoring. Alpha reliability of the profile scores based on the MIDAS turned out to be as follows: Musical: .70, Kinesthetic: .76, Logical-Mathematical: .73, Spatial: .67, Linguistic: .85, Interpersonal: .82, Intrapersonal: .78, and Naturalist: .82.

For the measurement of listening proficiency a retired TOEFL listening test and a specimen IELTS listening test were used. The listening section of TOEFL contained 50 questions and there were 40 questions on the IELTS listening test.

### *Procedures*

In the first phase the MIDAS questionnaire was administered and MI answer sheets were sent to the author of MIDAS for scoring. After a week's interval TOEFL listening comprehension was given to the students. Based on the number of correct responses, each participant was assigned a score which showed his/her English language proficiency as measured by a TOEFL listening test. One week later participants were given an IELTS listening test and were scored on the basis of the number of correct responses they provided.

## Results

Investigation of the role of MI in listening proficiency and comparison of the participants' performances on two different listening proficiency tests were carried out using correlation and regression analyses. Descriptive statistics indicates that on average the participants were able to score 16.54 on the TOEFL listening test, out of 50 questions and the average IELTS listening score was found to be 16.58, out of 40 questions (see Table 1). Tables 2 and 3 show the performances of the two groups on each set of questions included for the measurement of each intelligence.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of TOEFL and IELTS listening scores

	N	Mean	Std.	Max	Min
TOEFL Listening	151	16.54	4.30	27.00	10.00
IELTS Listening	117	16.58	6.43	35.00	5.00

Performances of the participants who took both MIDAS and TOEFL listening test indicated that they performed best on the interpersonal section and obtained the lowest mean score on the naturalist section of MIDAS.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of TOEFL group's MI performance

	N	Mean	Std.	Min.	Max.
Musical	151	47.35	14.45	14	93
Kinesthetic	151	45.45	18.03	6	90
Logical-mathematical	151	49.85	13.46	20	85
Spatial	151	53.81	14.92	20	94
Linguistic	151	51.69	15.93	16	91
Interpersonal	151	62.40	15.05	30	91
Intrapersonal	151	56.57	12.83	30	88
Naturalist	151	40.53	16.95	5	88

Other participants who performed on both MIDAS and IELTS listening test performed similarly on the MI questionnaire. They obtained the highest interpersonal intelligence and the lowest naturalist intelligence mean scores.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics of IELTS group's MI performance

	N	Mean	Std.	Min.	Max.
Musical	117	47.73	13.82	14	91
Kinesthetic	117	45.03	18.10	6	90
Logical-mathematical	117	49.95	13.38	21	85
Spatial	117	54.34	15.02	22	94
Linguistic	117	51.86	16.28	16	91
Interpersonal	117	61.92	15.48	30	91
Intrapersonal	117	57.00	13.01	30	88
Naturalist	117	41.97	16.73	11	88

In order to investigate the relationship between MI scores and performances of the participants on TOEFL and IELTS listening comprehension tests, the correlation coefficient between the participants' scores on each intelligence and their TOEFL and IELTS listening scores were calculated. The results showed that scores on all the intelligences positively correlate with both TOEFL and IELTS listening scores but only linguistic intelligence makes a statistically significant contribution to performance on the two listening tests. Table below shows that the correlation coefficients of linguistic intelligence with TOEFL and IELTS listening scores are .19 and .21 ( $P < .05$ ) respectively; however, even such a weak correlation might be very important in educational research (Hatch and Lazaraton, 1991, p. 442).

Table 4. Correlations of intelligences with TOEFL and IELTS listening scores

	TOEFL listening	IELTS listening
Musical	.08	.10
Kinesthetic	.11	.17
Logical-mathematical	.00	.11
Spatial	.09	.03
Linguistic	.19*	.21*
Interpersonal	.06	.10
Intrapersonal	.00	.09
Naturalist	.02	.12

\*Correlation is significant at .05

Since results of correlation analysis are not always dependable, further investigation of the role of MI in listening proficiency was done by running stepwise regression analysis. The



results indicated that from among the 8 intelligences, it is only linguistic intelligence that remains as the best predictor of TOEFL listening comprehension performance accounting for 3% ( $F=5.60$ ,  $p<.05$ ) of the variance. The results of the second stepwise regression analysis revealed that linguistic intelligence is also the only predictor of IELTS listening performance explaining 4% ( $F=5.79$ ,  $p<.05$ ) of the total variance.

## Discussion

The purpose of this study was to quantitatively explore the role of Gardner's 8 intelligences in listening proficiency and investigate whether differences in theoretical foundations, research background, history and appearance of TOEFL and IELTS listening tests lead to differential contribution of MI. Results of correlation analyses showed that all the intelligences positively contribute to both TOEFL and IELTS listening comprehension performance but from among the 8 intelligences only linguistic intelligence has a statistically significant relationship with the listening proficiencies. Results of stepwise regression analysis also revealed that linguistic intelligence can predict listening performance.

As it was already discussed, hypothetically all the listening activities contain some musical, kinesthetic, spatial, logical-mathematical, linguistic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalist aspects which might contribute to comprehension; however, the results of the present study suggest that despite the positive contribution of these intelligences, it is only linguistic intelligence that plays a statistically significant role in listening performance. In other words, various aspects of listening comprehension such as the music of language, social relationships of the speakers, imagination of physical environment and movements of the participants, etc could be related to performance on the listening section of both TOEFL and IELTS but none of these variables are cognitively as demanding to the listener as the immediate analysis of incoming linguistic data.

Furthermore, although it is claimed that IELTS listening is based on the communicative competence theory and is more task-based and authentic, it can not be concluded that these characteristics would lead to a kind of performance which requires processing of totally different aspects of language use to the extent that it would lead to differential contribution of each intelligence to IELTS listening performance.

The results find support in the research findings of Wu (1998) and Tsui and Fullilove (1998) that what differentiates skilled and unskilled listeners is the ability to cope with

linguistic processing suggesting that bottom-up processing is more important than top-down processing in discriminating the listening performance of L2 learners. The results also provide quantitative evidence in support of the idea that students with a high level of linguistic intelligence have highly developed auditory skills and process information through listening (Teele, 2004, p. 15).

At the end, it can be argued that except for L2 listeners with high linguistic intelligence who might be in an advantageous position in terms of linguistic processing, others are similar as far as the listening outcome is concerned. Therefore, teachers should provide English language learners with low levels of linguistic intelligence with further assistance and support and motivate them to perform more linguistic tasks so that they can better improve their listening skills.

#### Limitations

No experiment is without its limitations. Results of this study were based on the individuals' responses to the MIDAS questions and only TOEFL and IELTS listening comprehension tests were used for the measurement of listening proficiency. Although MIDAS has undergone reliability and validity research (Shearer, 1996), problems associated with the use of any questionnaire could also be found in the use of self-rated MIDAS. Moreover, since only TOEFL and IELTS listening tests were utilized for the measurement of the participants' performance, it can be argued that the results might be different if other listening proficiency tests which are more cognitively demanding were used. Future research might wish to use other sources of obtaining information about the intelligences of the learners and their listening proficiency. And finally, participants' mean scores on the listening tests indicate that the majority of them were intermediate level English language learners and therefore the results might not be generalizable to the learners who belong to other levels of listening proficiency.

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## Appendix

English version of MIDAS (Multiple Intelligences Development Assessment Scales)

### Musical

1. As a child, did you have a strong liking for music or music classes?
2. Can you sing in tune?
3. Do you drum fingers or sing a song?
4. Do you ever make up songs or write music?

### Kinesthetic

5. As a teenager, did you often play sports or other physical activities?
6. Did you ever perform in a school play or study acting or dancing?
7. Are you good with your hands at mechanics, making things, fancy food, and sculpture?

### Logical-Mathematical

8. Are you good at playing chess or checkers?
9. How are you at figuring numbers in your head?
10. Are you curious person who likes to figure out WHY or HOW things worked?
11. As a child, did you easily learn math such as addition, multiplication and fractions?

Spatial

12. Can you parallel park a car on the first try?
13. How well can you design things such as arranging, decorating, landscaping or working with flowers etc?
14. How easily do you put things together like toys, puzzles, electronic equipment?
15. Are you good at finding your way around new buildings or city streets?

Linguistic

16. Are you a convincing speaker?
17. Do you enjoy telling stories and talking about favorite movies or books?
18. Do you ever write a story, poetry or words to song?
19. Do you play with the sounds of words like making up jingles or rhythms?

Interpersonal

20. Do you have friendships that lasted for a long time?
21. Do you easily understand the feelings, wishes or needs of other people?
22. Are you a good judge of characters?
23. Do you ever have interest in teaching or coaching or counseling?

Intrapersonal

24. Do you plan and work hard toward personal goals, i.e., at school, work or home?
25. Do you know what you are good at and try to improve your skills?
26. Are you able to find unique and surprising ways to solve a personal problem?
27. Do you choose jobs or projects that match your skills, interests and personality?

Naturalist

28. Have you ever raised pets or other animals?
29. Are you good at growing plants or raising a garden?
30. Do you have any interest in studying science or solving scientific problems?



## Differential Effects of Etymological Elaboration and Rote Memorization on Idiom Acquisition <sup>[1]</sup> in College EFL Learners

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### Abstract

This study investigates differential effects of etymological elaboration and rote memorization on idiom acquisition and retention in Chinese college EFL learners. The sample ( $N = 70$ ) involved two intact groups of college students. Subjects in one group received instruction in the form of etymological familiarity while subjects in the comparison group were asked to memorize idioms on the basis of their given meaning. Subjects were then administered two post-tests: one to assess initial idiom acquisition, and another four weeks later to assess idiom retention. Statistical analyses produced sufficient support for both the first hypothesis (that the etymological familiarity condition would acquire more idioms than the rote memorization condition), and the second hypothesis--that the etymological familiarity would exhibit superior retention rates. The finding of this study suggests that for the purpose of encouraging long-term retention, elaborating on the original usage of idioms is preferable to asking students to learn idioms by rote.

**Keywords:** etymology, rote memorization, idiom acquisition and retention, Chinese college EFL learners

### Introduction

Idiomaticity has recently become a respectable area of study in psycholinguistics, linguistics, developmental psychology, and neuropsychology (Cacciari and Tabossi, 1993). This interest in idiomaticity is well founded, given that American or British English, for example, contains

many thousands of formulaic phrases and expressions that the ordinary speaker must somehow learn (as is evident in the many idiom and slang dictionaries currently available). Since language production relies heavily on an ability to string together prefabricated, memorized multi-word expressions, that is, whole phrases which are stored in memory, and retrieved from it, as *unbroken-up* chunks, people are not considered competent speakers of the target language until they master the various clichéd, idiomatic expressions that are ubiquitous in everyday discourse (Bobrow and Bell, 1973; Boers *et al*, 2004).

Since building and maintaining a large idiomatic expression stock is such an essential part of achieving proficiency in a language, especially for foreign and second language learners, many researchers in recent years have turned their attention to idiom studies, a domain that seems to have become something of a cottage industry within the field of SLA and TEFL. Associating an idiom with its etymology in particular has become an especially popular subject, as demonstrated by the recent appearance of many studies devoted to the topic (e.g., Gibbs, 1997; Boers, 2001, Boers *et al*, 2004; Grant, 2004; Grand *et al*, 2004; Kövecses and Szabó, 1996). Although an ample body of evidence now exists confirming the possibility and reality of etymological elaboration as an insightful technique for learning idiomatic expressions (Boers, 2001; Boers *et al*, 2004), the pertinent question for theoretical researchers to ask now is not whether through etymological elaboration, idiom acquisition occurs, but the extent to which it occurs and the variables that promote its occurrence.

Of greater relevance to language educators is the practical question of how methods designed to stimulate idiom acquisition fare in comparison to more direct approaches such as semantic mapping (Gibbs, 1997) and rote learning (Lewis, 1997). Although research over the past few years has validated etymological familiarity as an insightful method, little evidence has been adduced demonstrating its merits relative to other forms of instruction. Data of this nature should prove especially useful in illuminating the debate between those on one end of the spectrum who encourage a greater, sometimes almost exclusive, reliance on relatively holistic pathways to promote idiom acquisition (e.g., Boers, 2001; Boers *et al*, 2004) and others who call for more direct instruction of idiomatic expressions (e.g., Bobrow and Bell, 1973; Lewis, 1997).

The present study was undertaken to furnish data for this debate via a quasi-experimental design and to measure the differential effects of two methods on idiom acquisition: (1) etymological elaboration and (2) rote memorization. More specifically, the objective of this



study was to determine the extent to which etymological elaboration, in contrast to the rote memorization, facilitates idiom acquisition and retention in Chinese College EFL Learners. This paper firstly presents (1) views on the nature of idioms on which the two different methods were based, (2) methodology and design of the study, and then the result and conclusion is given at the end of the article.

#### Rationale for different instruction of idioms

Idioms have been the subject of investigation by linguists and psychologists for a number of years. Both groups have been concerned largely with the representation and status of idioms in the lexicon, that is, with the question as to whether idioms are stored, accessed, and subject to grammatical rules in the same way as single lexical items (Bobrow and Bell, 1973; Lewis, 1997). Whereas the experiments of psychologists by and large have investigated how speakers process non-literal language, linguists generally have tried to determine the status of idioms in the lexicon by comparing their syntactic behavior with that of single-word lexical items. The central question is whether or not idioms are decomposable into individual chunks or constituents that are semantically non-vacuous (Gibbs, 1983, 1991, 1992; Boers, 2000).

Since one of the traditional criteria for classifying an expression as idiomatic has been its non-compositional nature (Fernando and Flavell, 1981), many linguists claim that the lexical make-up of idiomatic expressions is completely arbitrary (e.g., Hatch & Brown, 1995). If an expression is said to be non-compositional, it is believed that its meaning cannot be inferred by simply adding up the semantics of its constituents. As a result, idioms appear to be quite arbitrary. This claim is equivalent to saying there is no possibility of learning idioms in any insightful way and that, instead, learners must persevere through a long and painstaking process of blind memorization (see Lewis, 1997; Boers *et al.* 2004). Because of this alleged arbitrary nature of idioms, it has long been taken for granted in second or foreign language teaching that the only way learners could learn such expressions was believed to be rote memorization because of the absence of reliable clues inside the expressions themselves (Cooper, 1999).

Whereas traditional linguists view idioms as arbitrary units, researchers in cognitive sciences argue that idioms are partly compositional and analyzable (see Hatch & Brown, 1995; Gibbs, 1997). The reason idioms were labeled arbitrary might be that most traditional

language scholars tended to examine only a few of these conventional phrases, such as *by and large*. Yet a closer look at idiomaticity, one that examines idioms more broadly and seeks greater generalizations across different idiomatic phrases, reveals that idioms are not frozen, arbitrary, but indeed partly motivated. This means that, while it is true that the idiomatic meaning is not fully predictable on the basis of a literal reading, the derivation from that literal sense can nonetheless be 'explained'. A general consensus among researchers now is that many idioms can be 'motivated' along various lines (Kövecses and Szabó, 1995; Boers, 2001; Boers *et al*, 2004; Gibbs, 1997; Lakoff, 1987, 1993). Many idioms appear to be motivated by conceptual metaphors or metonymies, for example, *hit the ceiling*, *get hot under the collar*, *flip your lid* motivated by the *anger is heated fluid in a container* metaphor, *lend a (helping) hand* by a metonymy where the hand stands for the action.

Of special interest to linguistic researchers, however, is a class of figurative idioms that are derived from associations in rather specific experiential domains, and that can be motivated by their literal usage in those original contexts (e.g., Boers, 2001; Boers *et al*, 2004). The idioms, for example, *a shot in the arm*, *keep one's finger on the pulse of something* instantiate metaphors or metonymies, but they are obviously motivated by their original usage in a concrete scene, that is, a health and medicine scene (i.e. doctor giving a patient an injection of drug or medicine to stimulate her/him, doctor putting his fingers on the pulse of a patient to diagnose). Although the idiom, *a race against time*, reflects the *time is a moving object metaphor*, it is also motivated by the imagery of a concrete scene (i.e. a racing contest). *A safe pair of hands* illustrates the *hand for the action* metonymy, but adds sporting imagery (at least for those who are aware that this expression is derived from ball games, especially cricket).

The central question for language educators to ask now is not whether idiom acquisition can occur through etymological familiarity, but the extent to which it occurs and the variables that promote its occurrence. In addition, more researches should be conducted in various settings with different samples to provide evidence in support of its merits relative to other forms of instruction. In accordance with prior research findings, the following hypotheses were posed:

Hypothesis 1: Subjects in the experimental group will acquire more idiomatic expressions through receiving instruction in the form of etymological elaboration than subjects in the comparison group who intentionally attempt to learn the same idiomatic expressions via rote

memorization.

Hypothesis 2: Subjects who acquire idiomatic expressions through etymological elaboration will exhibit higher retention rates than subjects who learn the same material through rote memorization.

The inspiration for this study and the fundamentals of its design are rooted in the study conducted by Boers, Demecheleer and Eyckmans (2004). Their study involved having one group who was told the literal, original usage of the target idioms while an equivalent group from the same population served as a comparison one who was NOT told the etymological information of the same material. The experimental group was informed, for example, that the idiomatic usage of *The Home Secretary is on the ropes* is derived from its literal usage in the context of boxing matches. A pretest and post-test were administered to measure the effects of the treatment. Scores on a between-groups revealed that the subjects who had been familiar with the etymological information acquired significantly more idioms than the comparative subjects.

Though building on the basic design of the Boers *et al.* (2004) experiment, the present study differs from it in several principal ways. First, the independent variable investigated in Boers *et al.* was etymological familiarity alone and the value of other methods was not measured at all. Sceptics may argue that the same results would be achieved through other direct methods. In this study, however, subjects did implement two strategies: etymological elaboration and rote memorization.

Perhaps the most salient way in which this study differs from its predecessor is with regard to the dependent variable involved. In Boers *et al.* the dependent variable was the number of the target idioms the subjects acquired after the treatment. The present study, however, was conducted to determine not only idiom acquisition <sup>[2]</sup> defined as the median number of idioms gained by a group or an individual subject from pretest to post-test 1, but also idiom retention defined operationally as the median number of idioms gained from pretest to post-test 2.

## Method

### *Design*

Since it was impossible for the subjects to be randomly selected, this study consists of a two-group, pre/post-test quasi-experimental design, involving two intact classes chosen to serve as the experimental and comparison groups. The duration of instruction in this study was four

weeks. Each week includes three class sessions. Each class session consists of two periods (40 minutes each). To minimize the chances of inter-subject communication between groups, Tuesday/Thursday classes were chosen to function as the experimental group ( $n = 35$ ), and Monday/Wednesday sections were selected to function as the comparison ( $n = 35$ ). Instruction in both groups was incorporated as part of the regular course curriculum for the respective sections. Only data from those subjects who had taken all the three idiom tests were used in this study. The final n-sizes of both groups were effectuated by excluding all dropped-outs.

### *Subjects*

The subjects were 70 newly enrolled college level Chinese EFL learners studying in the English Department of a university located in Shandong province, China. Of the students who participated, 47 were male and 23 were female, with an average age of 19.5. In terms of homogeneity, all the subjects have the same cultural and language background, with Chinese as their first language, on the one hand; they had learned the target language from the same standard textbooks approved by the State Education Commission for about six years, taken the same entrance examination, and recruited into the university with scores above the required level, on the other hand. The similar background and English proficiency that the subjects possess makes the two groups as equivalent as possible.

Table 1

The difference between the two groups on the pretest in idiom proficiency

Group	N	Mean	SD	df	F	Sig.
Exp	35	28.77	7.60451	1	.631	.430
Con	35	30.11	6.49783	1		

This kind of similarity, however, in no way rule out the possibility of heterogeneity in idiom proficiency between the two groups. Therefore, a pretest was administered to both groups to serve as a baseline and to control for inter-group differences in idiom proficiency prior to administration of the treatment. A one-way analysis of variance of means failed to reveal a

significant difference ( $P > .05$ ) (see Table 1 above). Because the participants were not randomly sampled, no claim is here made that the two intact classes chosen constituted a representative sample of all college foreign language learners.

### *Materials*

The material used to prepare subjects in the two groups for instruction was 50 idioms preselected by the researcher and his one colleague from the *Oxford Dictionary of Idioms* (Speake, 1999), the *Dictionary of Idioms and Their Origins* (Flavell and Flavell, 2000), and the textbook *New Horizon: College English* (Zheng, 2001) designated by the school authority for the students. Only idioms that the researcher and his colleague believed would be unfamiliar to most subjects were chosen. The process of idiom selection was subjective in that the researcher relied on previous experience teaching the target population rather than a frequency list to determine the appropriateness of target idioms. Although a few of the idioms selected were anachronistic, the majority of the idioms were relatively contemporary. As a source of etymological information for the selected idioms the researcher used the *Dictionary* edited by Speake (1999), which actually gives explanations as to the origins of the expressions. The *Dictionary* edited by Flavell and Flavell (2000) served as an additional source of etymological information.

The test consisted of two components: a 10-item gap-fill section (worth 60 points) and a 10-item multiple-choice section (worth 40 points). The design of these components was to produce a well-rounded and versatile instrument that would accommodate subjects' different cognitive styles. The first section is a gap-fill task where the learner was presented with a meaningful context from which the keyword of the idiom was missing. This task (essentially a modified cloze test) was designed specifically to elicit the key part of the idiom with the purpose of testing the learner's recollection. In the multiple-choice section, there were 10 sentences, in each of which an idiom was embedded. One correct answer (i.e. the correct paraphrase of the target idiom) and four distracters were supplied for each sentence. The students were required to tick the correct literal paraphrase of the target idiom from the five possible choices, which were labeled were A through E, with choice E consistently reading "none of the above." A random order of the answer choices was computer-generated to avoid possible confounding effect that might occur due to an organized distribution pattern.

The 50 idioms elected for the two groups (see Appendix) contained all 34 items that appeared on the two post-tests (30% of idioms tested in the first test was again used in the second test), plus an additional 14 idioms that the researcher and his colleague felt would benefit the subjects in their academic careers. The assignment of the total score for the two sections was determined on the different difficulty of answers rather than theoretical grounds. According to the previous teaching experience, the difficulty degree of gap-fill task appears to be higher than that of the multiple-choice. Before the implementation of testing, the tests constructed by the researcher were submitted to an experienced professor for his suggestions on which some modifications were made to enhance the reliability of the tests.

#### *Procedures of instruction*

After completing the pretest, subjects were instructed to begin their designated assignments. For the comparison group whose instructor was the researcher's colleague, the assignment was to memorize the 50 target idioms, each of which the idiomatic meaning was given in Chinese, along with a sentence made with it in English. Subjects were not informed of the original usage of the target idioms. Upon distribution of the idioms, subjects were informed that they would be tested on some of the idioms at the end of the semester. Subjects were not instructed to use any particular technique (e.g., the keyword method, semantic mapping) but were merely told to commit the idioms to memory.

Concomitantly, the experimental group whose instructor was the researcher began to receive instruction about the literal, original usage of the same idioms given to the comparison group. For example, with respect to the original usage of the idiom, *somebody is on the rack*, the students would first be told that "*The 'rack' was an instrument of torture, used in the past for punishing and hurting people, that is, their arms and legs were tied to a wooden frame and then pulled in opposite directions, stretching the body.*" And then they would be asked to interpret the idiom by combining its etymology and a meaningful context such as "*After three weeks had passed and she had still not heard from her daughter, Joan was on the rack.*" In order to enhance the learners' awareness of the literal usage of idioms, sometimes they would be required to hypothesize the original usage of the target idioms. Subjects in this group were instructed to focus on the etymological information and informed they would be tested over the original usage of the idioms at the end of the semester, and at

no time were subjects told to expect a test on the idioms themselves.

### *Data collection and analysis*

After the instruction for about four weeks, the first post-test was administered to both groups simultaneously to assess initial acquisition in their own classrooms respectively. The time limit was 50 minutes, the time of one period of a class session. To avoid biasing subjects, information concerning the nature and purpose of the study was not supplied. Subjects in both groups were told merely that they would receive the results of the test within several weeks. Approximately four weeks from the initial post-test, both groups were tested again to assess idiom retention rates over an extended period. The time interval between the two post-tests was determined on practical rather than theoretical grounds. After subjects completed the second post-test, subjects in both groups were notified as to the purpose of the study and the function of the tests. Participants were assured that their identity would remain anonymous.

After subjects completed the second post-test, all data pertaining to the experiment were collected, scored, and analyzed. In the process of scoring, the testing sheets for the two groups were mixed up and evaluated by the researcher and his colleague independently at first, and then, if the two scores were given by the two raters without greater discrepancies, the participant's final mark would be the mean of the two marks; if, however, the two scores were very different, the two raters would determine the final score in consultation. The correlation between the two raters in scoring the subjects was measured by the correlation coefficients. The internal consistency of the raters was quite high, since the Pearson Correlation coefficient reached .972 point with significant correlations ( $p < 0.01$ ).

After data collecting, statistical analyses were performed using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) for Windows, version 13.0 at the Computer Center of the university. To test Hypothesis 1 and 2, descriptive statistics, the mean, standard deviation, range and median, were computed for each group across all three administrations of the idiom test to examine the variability of the scores. A one-way analysis of variance test (ANOVA) <sup>[3]</sup> was then run, both within and between groups, to determine (a) the extent to which group performance changed over time and (b) the degree to which either group differed relative to the other at each administration of the test.

Results and discussions

Descriptive statistics across all three administrations of the idiom test for the experimental group (EG) and the comparison group (CG) were computed and presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics

		Administration			Gains & Retention		
Group		Pretest	Test 1	Test 2	Pretest to Test 1	Test 1 to Test 2	Pretest to Test 2
Exp.	Mean	28.771	82.943	80.886	54.172	-2.057	52.115
	SD	7.605	4.964	5.027	5.903	6.058	8.280
	Median	29	84	80	54	-4	53
	Range	28	20	22	21	22	38
Con.	Mean	30.114	72.886	66.000	42.772	-6.886	35.886
	SD	6.498	7.071	8.42	7.013	6.876	9.308
	Median	30	73	66	41	-5	35
	Range	21	24	34	32	31	46

Table 2 reveals a marked difference in performance on both idiom acquisition and retention post-tests between the two groups.

With regard to the idiom acquisition from pretest to post-test 1, the mean of the EG is 54.17, and that of the CG is 42.77. The median of the EG is 54, while that of the CG is 41. Both the mean and median demonstrate that the subjects of the EG acquired more idioms than those of the CG due to the treatment given to the former group. Moreover, the range of the scores for the EG is 21, whereas that of the CG is 32. The standard deviation for the EG (5.90 points) is quite smaller than that of the CG group (7.01 points). The comparison of the range and standard deviation of the two groups indicates that there was more variation among the subjects' scores of the CG from pretest to post-test 1 as compared with the EG group.

In addition, through a one-way ANOVA (see Table 3 below), we can see that the difference between the means of scores of the two groups on idiom acquisition is statistically significant ( $p < .05$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $F = 56.88$ ). The results from the idiom acquisition tests given to the two groups provided substantial evidence in support of the first hypothesis of this present study.



Table 3  
The difference between groups and retention within groups

	Between Group		Within Group	
	Acquisition	Retention	Acquisition/Retention (Exp)	Acquisition/Retention (Con)
Mean Square	2389.729	4448.057	120.91	829.729
df	1	1	1	1
F	56.881	57.323	2.339	12.219
Sig,	.000	.000	.131	.001

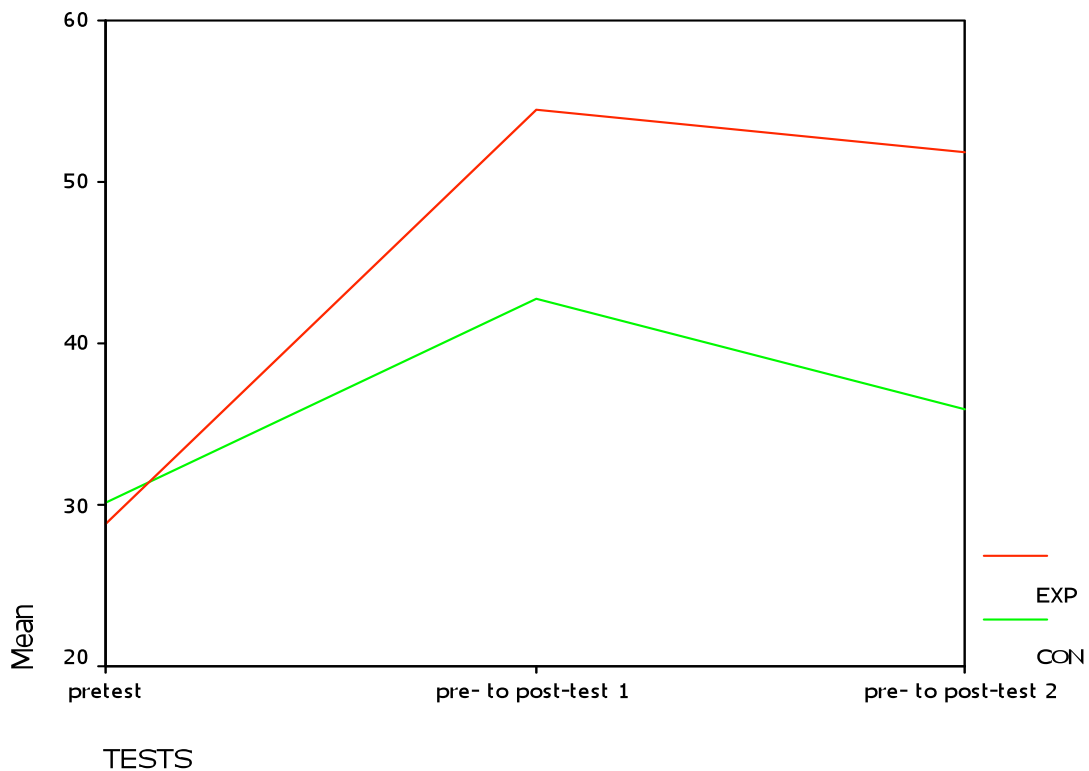
Concerning the difference between the two groups on the test for idiom retention from pretest to post-test 2, the data in Table 2 show that the mean of the EG is 52.115 and that of the CG is 35.886, with the median of the former group 53 and that of the latter one 35. The range of the EG is 38, whereas that of the CG is 46. The standard deviation for the EG (8.28) is smaller than that of the CG group (9.31). Considering the results from the descriptive statistics, one can claim that the subjects of the EG group acquired more idioms eight weeks later from pretest to post-test 2 and performed more homogeneously than those of the CG on the test for idiom retention. Based on the statistical data from one-way ANOVA (see Table 3 above), it is clear that the difference between the two groups on idiom retention test is statistically significant ( $p < .05$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $F = 57.323$ ).

From the comparison within groups, we can see that the mean difference between idiom acquisition (the mean from pretest to post-test 1) and idiom retention (the mean from pretest to post-test 2) was vastly greater for the CG group, which actually experienced a 6.9% decline in mean performance. One-way ANOVA reveals the decline is significant at  $p = .001$  ( $df = 1$ ,  $F = 12.219$ ). By contrast, the EG group experienced only a 2.057% decline without significant difference ( $p > .05$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $F = 2.339$ ). In support of Hypothesis 2, the subjects of the EG exhibited significantly higher idiom retention rates than those of the CG group.

Putting all obtained data together, the results of this study reveal that the performance of students in the experimental group was significantly better than that of students in the comparison group on both idiom acquisition and retention tests. This superior performance is very apparent in Figure 1 presenting the group trends. The line for idiom acquisition rises rapidly for the experimental group, but slowly for the comparison one, on the one hand; the

idiom retention falls slowly for the experimental group, but rapidly for the comparison group, on the other hand. Although only further research can ascertain the outcome of a third post-test, it is not unreasonable to assume--given the known behavior of the two groups--that the condition of etymological familiarity would surpass the rote memorization condition

Figure 1  
Grand Means



Although it is not clear what exactly might be going on in the learner's brain for the knowledge of original usage of idioms to have this attested mnemonic effect, several theories may help to explicate the behavior of the subjects in this study. One that offers a possible rationale for the experimental group's superior performance is the Dual Coding theory (Clark and Paivio, 1991; Paivio, 1986), which holds that the mental system consists of two separate subsystems---the imagery one whose functions include the analysis of scenes and generation of mental images, and verbal one which is specialized for dealing with verbal language. These systems are separate but interconnected, so that they can function in parallel, or in an integrated manner.

Paivio's dual coding theory supports the idea that people learn by connecting verbal

information and mental images, that is, when the learning materials involving related verbal and imagery information rather than verbal materials or imagery materials alone. It also appears that information presented through the imagery channel is more salient and better remembered than information presented through the verbal channel. As a global theory, dual coding theory is invoked to explain a variety of cognitive phenomena. As applied specifically to idiom acquisition and retention, the theory predicts that etymological information of an idiom can create or activate a mental image or a picture of a concrete scene in the students' mind, and this image can then be stored in memory alongside the verbal form, and which can subsequently provide an extra pathway for recall when encountering the idiom again (Gibbs, 1997; Boers *et al*, 2004). This theory, together with the "levels of processing" view, can offer an even more compelling explanation for the experimental group's performance.

Relying heavily on trace theory, the level-of-processing model (Cermak and Craik, 1979; Craik and Lockhart, 1972) postulates separate stages for sensory, working, and long-term memory. Craik and Lockhart (1972) suggest that learners process information or stimuli at multiple levels simultaneously and that the durability of a given memory trace is a positive function of the depth to which the encoding information is processed. In other words, the deeper the processing, the more information will be retained in the long-term memory. It remains unclear that the extent to which cognitive effort would be consumed for rote memorization, but it is explicit that challenging students to process an idiom through its literal, original usage would indeed engage them in problem solving and would thus require cognitive effort at a 'deeper' level, which can enhance retention. What is most important to note here is that, according to this model, a "deep" processing is achieved not by any quantitative operation, such as mental rehearsal and repetition, but by a qualitative one, which involves focusing on the "motivated" meaning of idioms by their literal, original usage or other lines such as metaphorical processing.

Despite substantial evidence in support of the hypotheses that etymological elaboration facilitates both idiom acquisition and retention, some skeptics may argue that it functions only if the idiomatic meaning is derived from its original usage in a fairly straightforward way. Perhaps the results of this experiment that are highly in favor of the experimental group could be attributed to the presence of 'etymologically transparent' idioms in the post-tests. With respect to "etymological transparency", however, Boers *et al*. (2004) contend that it is inevitably a subjective experience and should be conceived as a gradable concept with idioms

occupying a position on a continuum between extremely transparent (e.g., *by and large*) and extremely opaque (e.g., *give someone the cold shoulder*). In a previous study (Boers *et al*, 2004), however, the mnemonic effect of adding a touch of etymology to idioms was shown to be equally profound for opaque idioms as for transparent ones.

All in all, the encouraging results of this experiment indicate that the subjects of the experimental group exhibits superior performance on the post-tests for idiom acquisition and retention fare in comparison to the subjects who learn the material through rote memorization and this superior performance seems to be the result of etymological elaboration given to them.

#### Conclusion, implications and limitations

In this article, we have explored the mnemonic effect produced by etymological elaboration (i.e. elaborating on the original usage of idioms). While previous studies had already provided ample evidence of the potential benefits of this pedagogical technique (e.g., Boers *et al*, 2004), the present study was intended to investigate the impact of this technique versus rote memorization on idiom acquisition and retention. Two hypotheses were measured in this study: etymological elaboration can help learners (1) acquire more idioms and (2) exhibit higher retention rates than rote memorization. The experimental data reported in the study are quite encouraging with regard to both two hypotheses. The finding of this study suggests that for the purpose of encouraging long-term retention, raising learners' awareness of the original usage of idioms is preferable to asking students to memorize idioms on the basis of their given meaning.

Though this research has not been exhaustive, an attempt has been made to find an insightful use for etymology in teaching foreign language, especially teaching idioms. Idiomatic expressions are often a part-and-parcel of authentic material and many thousands of them exist in British or American English the learners must somehow learn. For most foreign or second language learners, it is a hard nut to crack to deal with such expressions in class because of their property of semantic eccentricity. In order to adequately grasp such expressions and keep them in long-term memory the learner requires a feasible strategy that follows a reliable approach (Krishna, 2006). As a teacher of English as a foreign language, he/she also needs to provide reliable strategies for students to learn idioms ubiquitous in

authentic language. The results of the study show that there possibly exist such strategies, one of which is elaborating on the literal, original usage of idioms when encountered in class. In addition, it would make sense in classroom contexts to challenge students to hypothesize the original usage of idioms because this task can engage them in problem solving and would require cognitive effort at a 'deeper' cognitive level.

The results of the study also suggest that, because of the mnemonic effect etymology produces on idiom acquisition and retention, etymology courses for language students of all grade levels should be in order. Unfortunately, such courses seem to be rare in foreign language classrooms in higher education of china. As a result, students often have little knowledge about the etymology of most figurative vocabularies and multi-word expressions. Given the efficacy of etymological elaboration in idiom acquisition, it does not make good pedagogical sense to subordinate etymology courses to other language courses. An etymology course, no doubt, should remain quite indispensable from foreign or second language classrooms in higher education.

This study, nonetheless, suffer from a few shortcomings. First, the time interval between the first post-test and second post-test was very short, only four weeks. Second, in the post-tests, the target idioms tested were embedded in a meaningful context, but not presented in isolation. There would probably be an unclear cut between the function of contextual clues and etymological familiarity in idiom tests. Finally, the subjects were not randomly selected and the implementation of the study was within one university. Studies can be conducted with samples randomly selected in different universities and see the results.

#### Notes

[1] Although the term "acquisition" is conceptually different from the concept "learning" in the field of SLA (e.g., Krashen, 1982), the two terms are used interchangeably in this present study.

[2] Although the term "acquisition" is sometimes used as a blanket term to encompass the notion of retention, for purposes of analysis and operationalization, the two constructs acquisition and retention are considered separate in this study and are measured independently.

[3] According to Geoffrey *et al.* (1992, p. 128-9), the analysis of variance can be used to

analyze experiments with any number of conditions, including, of course, two-group experiment because the  $t$  test is a special case of the  $F$  test. To be more specific, if you were to conduct a  $t$  test and an  $F$  test on the data from the same two-group experiment, you would reach exactly the same conclusions. The reason the conclusions would be identical is that the two statistical tests are algebraically equivalent, that is,

$$F = (t)^2 \quad \text{and} \quad t = \sqrt{F}$$

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## Appendix

The 50 target idioms selected for the subjects

### *Idioms tested in the first post-test*

The gap-fill section:

A shot in the arm; Show your true colors; Be off one's trolley; Take it on the chin; Burn your bridges; A one-man band; Put a damper on something; Be left high and dry; Pull something out of the hat; Keep one's finger on the pulse of something.

The multiple-choice section:

Go with the flow; Bite the hand that feeds you; Jump in at the deep end; Play second fiddle to someone; At the drop of a hat; Live from hand to mouth; A flash in the pan; Run the gauntlet; Rest on your laurels; Keep your cards close to the chest.

### *Idioms tested in the second post-test*

The gap-fill section:

Be worth one's salt; Keep a tight rein on someone; In the nick of time; Ride roughshod over someone; Come home to roost; Keep one's finger on the pulse of something; A chip off the old block; Below the belt; Take the bait; Keep your cards close to the chest.

The gap-fill section:

A ball and chain; Beat about the bush; Let the cat out of the bag; Make a beeline for



something; Lose your shirt; Kill the goose that lays the golden egg; Play to the gallery; Set off on the wrong foot; Pull something out of the hat; A flash in the pan.

*The 14 idioms NOT tested in the post-tests*

The gloves are off; The dice are loaded against someone; Have a finger in the pie; A feather in your cap; in the lap of the gods; Ride herd on someone; Cry for the moon; Cut the Gordian knot; Shoot from the hip; Do a hatchet job; Get your second wind; Have bigger fish to fry; Meet somebody halfway; One for the road.



## A Review of 'Interest In The Learning Of English' in the Chinese Context

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### Abstract

This paper explores 'interest in learning English' from motivational perspectives and how 'interest' changes when extrinsic factors intrude. We have looked mainly into 'interest in learning English' in the Chinese context because we find 'interest in learning English' weakens as students progress from low grades to higher ones. A possible explanation of this phenomenon is that the examinations and tests drive the decline in intrinsic motivation. In other words, extrinsic motivation is responsible for intrinsic motivation declining. Consequently, students lose their 'interest in learning English'. And this sheds some light on how to understand the causes of the current 'high investment and low efficiency' in English learning and why many Chinese learners of English are instrumentally motivated. This paper also stresses the importance of 'interest' in learning English and how to keep it alive for students' learning purposes.

Key words: interest, learning, integrative motivation, examination, intrinsic, extrinsic.

### *Background sketch of learning English in China*

Interest in learning English in China is high because "it is regarded as an important instrument for China to gain access to Western science and technology and to actively participate in the total global family of nations" (Ford, 1988, p. 4). Interest in learning is mostly discussed within the framework of motivation so that "the study of motivation has been dominated (and directed) by categories like integrative, instrumental, intrinsic, and

extrinsic" (Ushioda, 2001, p. 128). Integrative motivation refers to "an interest in and willingness to get to know about a new group of people and their culture, coupled with a willingness to learn a language to do so" (Schmidt & Watanabe, 2001, p. 314).

According to Liu and Teng (2006), there are about 300 million people learning English in China (professionals and non-professionals), which makes up a quarter of the total population, of which learners in primary schools, secondary schools and universities are now up to 100 million in total. Therefore, whether the learners are successful in English or not touches thousands of families, schools and teachers all over China. Chen *et al.* (2004, p.4) state that English learning in China has been labeled as 'high investment but low output'. Commenting on the situation in the learning of English, Li (1996), the former vice premier who was then in charge of education in China stated:

foreign language teaching and learning has been time consuming but of low efficiency. Chinese students start learning English when they are in the junior secondary school in the countryside and those in the cities are required to learn from grade 3 in primary schools. However, many schools in the cities begin teaching English from grade one in primary schools. English is the only subject that lasts for so long while achieving so little in China (p.1, our translation).

Li identifies a critical, if not devastating situation in teaching English as a foreign language in China. However, failure and unsuccessful learning are not uncommon worldwide. Dörnyei (2006) indicates that failure to achieve goals in learning an L2 is widespread internationally even though many people have invested much effort in studying new languages.

Causes of the unsatisfactory results for English in China have been investigated, but much of the research in the area has been focused on learning strategies (Stern, 1983; Wen, 2003; Yang, 2004; Zhang, 2003) rather than interest in learning English. Krapp, Kidi, and Renninger (1992) claim that interest is a critical element in learning success and have classified 'interest' into three categories: personal interest, situational interest, and interest as a psychological state. According to Krapp *et al.* (1992), personal interest refers to emotions such as love from one's inside leading to being intrinsically motivated to join in an activity. Applied to language learning, learners learn the language because they like it and find enjoyment in the activity rather than because they are seeking rewards outside of the activity itself. They seek the pleasure and satisfaction that participation in the activity itself brings.

According to the social psychology theory of motivation established by Gardner and Lambert starting in the 1950's, motivation is the central predictor in learning success. Gardner's main research has been in Canadian settings, exploring motivation in second language learning, in which distinguishing types of integrative motivation and relating motivations and actions was the key to his theoretical framework. Gardner's (1985) simple but vivid description of motivation was as follows:

many of us want to be millionaires, but if this desire is not associated with a concomitant effort to achieve the goal we are not really motivated to become millionaires. It is a pipe dream, something to think about, but not something that we set out diligently to achieve. When the desire to achieve the goal and favourable attitudes toward the goal are linked with the effort or the drive, then we have a motivated organism (p.11).

Gardner's comments focused on two aspects: interest and action. One needs to be interested in doing the job. However, that is not enough. One needs actions to realize the goal. Gardner's research into integrative motivation was related to the question of 'how could people learn a language well if they don't like it?' His simple question has a fundamental importance for language learning. Namely, if one is not interested in the target culture, then, success in that language is very unlikely, but on its own, this contains no claim about actions. In relation to intrinsic motivation, interest in language learning reflects love and enthusiasm as well as the desire to perform an activity simply for the pleasure and satisfaction that accompany the action and these feelings of pleasure derive from fulfilling innate needs for competence and self-determination (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Deci *et al.* 1991).

However, intrinsic motivation is not the only thing that drives learners. According to Gardner (1985), instrumentally motivated students are basically not 'interested' in English but rather in material rewards that may result from learning English. They learn the language because they think it brings along concrete benefits, good jobs or other tangible rewards. This kind of motivation means that instrumentally motivated students are more likely to stop learning once their goals are obtained. In contrast, it is claimed that integratively motivated students would sustain their interest in learning and become more successful than others (Gardner, 1985; Dörnyei, 2005). These students maintain their learning because their learning interest is established intrinsically, namely, from inside the learners. However, instrumental motivation has proved to be a more effective practical method to achieve learning goals in FL contexts (Dörnyei, 2003, 2005, 2006) and this is the case in the Chinese setting (Jiang, 2004;

Yuan, 2005; Yang, 2004). Nevertheless, Dörnyei's (1990) study shows that integrative motivation is necessary for achieving a higher proficiency in the target language. Therefore, integrative and instrumental motivations help learning in different ways. But they may also be blurred so that sometimes they are mingled together and sometimes they compete.

Some Chinese researchers think that some motivational variables (e.g. 'integrative motivation') do not fit in the Chinese context (Hua, 1998; Shi, 2000). Consistent with this, a study conducted in Taiwan by Warden and Lin (2000, p. 544) concluded that in the Taiwanese EFL environment "an integrative motivational group is notably absent." Hua (1998) and Shi (2000) hold a different opinion about 'integrative motivation', arguing that integrative motivation does not necessarily mean that learners are physically involved in the target culture because the learners can be more emotionally interested in the people and language of the target communities.

### *Interest declining*

The emotional aspect of integrative motivation is 'fragile' and can be exhausted or lost due to too great an emphasis on instrumentality. The issue of 'interest' in learning English in China has been addressed by Jiang (2004) using questionnaires. According to Jiang's (2004) research, students' overall interest in English is low in China. Jiang surveyed 106 students in Zhejiang Province of the PR. China and the result suggested that only 12% of the students found enjoyment in learning English. In an earlier study that addressed changes in interest, Liu (2003) states that "forty-nine percent of the teachers find that students' interest in learning foreign language declines as time moves on" (p.17, our translation). Zhang *et al.* (2000) investigated 1309 junior secondary school students in eastern Jiangsu Province, China. The purpose of this research was to investigate the causes of poor English learning in year 8 and year 9 using questionnaires and interviews. They surveyed 10 rural junior secondary schools where more poor students were supposed to be located. They found that 61% (800 students) were not interested in English, afraid of English or even felt disgust when learning English. Considering elements such as location and the educational level of Jiangsu Province, which has been regarded as high, it is reasonable to assume that many other parts of China, for example the less developed southwest Yunnan Province would have more underachieving learners than in Jiangsu Province.

As described in the previous sections, Chinese students' interest in the learning of English

declines as they progress through school (Wang *et al.* 1998, Jiang, 2004). Zhang (2002, p. 19) stated that "students in the remote areas are not generally interested in English and they find there is no point to learn it." Considering the limited interest in English for many Chinese students and in order to improve students' interest in learning English, Yan (2004, p. 1) suggested that to "stimulate and cultivate students' learning interest is the task for English learning during primary and secondary school education period." This suggests that 'interest in English' is important for students when they begin learning but it is even more important to sustain it in the long term. In line with Yan (2004), Wang *et al.* (1998) think that early rather than later training of interest is better. They think that strong interest in English is important and primary school is the ideal period in which to begin.

Wang *et al.* (1998) observed a decline in students' interest in the learning of English from primary school to secondary school. In order to improve students' interest in English, Wang (1999) asserted that "developing interest in learning should enjoy priority, children should be provided with various kinds of modern facilities in order to create a relaxing, interesting, active and real language learning environment" (p. 3, our translation). Reflecting different values, Hau and Salili (1996) commented on Chinese students in terms of their interest in learning. They say "students are encouraged to learn by drill and their interest in learning will be cultivated later through their repetitive work" (p. 134-135).

Chinese research on students' interest 'decline' is consistent with what Harter's (1992) research results revealed. Harter's (1992) research suggested that as students advanced from low grades to higher grades, their intrinsic motivation waned and in the process extrinsic rewards imposed a negative influence to minimize the intrinsic motivation.

Harter's research result is in line with the general situation of English learning in the Chinese context. Examinations play a significant role in learning English. '*Kao kao kao, laoshi de fabao, fen fen fen, xuesheng de minggen*' which literally means 'examinations, examinations and examinations are the formula of a teacher; points, points and points are the lifeline of a student', reflects a widely-shared understanding of current teaching and learning in China. According to Harter (1992), this examination-centered learning system has a negative impact on students and it causes students' 'interest' to decline. Examinations become the only instruments to evaluate students and they are the things that matter for students. Students' 'interest' in English is gradually exhausted. This general status is associated with the extrinsic context: an educational system in which the purpose of learning

is to go to a higher and better school. Examinations and tests have become the key measure to appraise schools as well as students. Under this circumstance, 'interest' in learning English has been shifted from 'intrinsic' to more 'extrinsic' to sustain the learning of English.

Zhang *et al.* (2000, p. 22) stated that "once entering junior secondary school, subjects that are examined increase dramatically, especially for English courses and the exams make their lives unbearable." It is reasonable to assume that these external factors have a strong impact on the students. Tachibana, Matsukawa, and Zhong (1996) investigated 801 Chinese and Japanese pupils and found that the students' interest in learning English declined after junior secondary school both in Japan and in China. Zhang *et al.* (2000) and Zhong (1996) reflect a general picture: students' interest declines and this seems to be connected with an educational practice which focuses on examinations.

Shu *et al.* (2004) argued that teachers are crucial agents in cultivating students' interest in foreign language and this is echoed by Pintrich and Schunk (1996, p. 171) "enthusiastic teachers help foster students' interest and motivation in learning." Similar to Shu *et al.*'s theory, Zhu (2001) argued that providing success for students in the early learning experiences is a vital responsibility of teachers.

Shu *et al.* (2004) and Zhu (2001) seem to share commonalities regarding how students' interest is created in learning and the roles of their teachers in this process. Therefore, having 'interest in English' is associated with the language teacher, at least in the Chinese context. Liu (2002, p.17, our translation) further expands the area connected to interest by stating that "teaching content, teachers' attitudes to students, teaching approaches and teaching methodologies all impact directly on students' interest in studying the course". Therefore, developing students' interest in the learning of English is imperative. Jiang (1996, p. 6) states that "once students lose interest in English, learning is no longer enjoyable." This reinforces the role of the teacher as a motivator – a role that cannot be filled by textbooks.

Xu (1997) pinpoints that textbooks are problematic in developing students' interest in English. Xu says:

- 1) Text should be based on dialogue and communication considering the limited vocabulary for junior secondary school students, it is difficult to introduce foreign culture;
- 2) China is a huge agricultural country and the majority of students come from the countryside; many of them have never been to the nearest city and may not use English in the future, a foreign culture is too remote for them, and

- 3) There will be resistance once the textbooks are compiled  
"too foreign and too fashionable."

(p. 9, our translation)

Within the Chinese context, developing students' interest is associated with teachers, who are the main sources of the language and the teacher-student rapport relationship. Xu's comments (1997) above reflect the existing problems and gaps between the textbooks and students in the classrooms and it appears that these nation-wide textbooks have a strong but largely negative impact on the majority of the students' interest in the countryside. From this perspective, students' interest in learning English is in the hands of their English teachers, which is connected with the rapport between teacher and student. Therefore, it is important to explore students' interest in learning English from teachers, and the ways in which those teachers use textbooks and methodologies so that we can help support improvement in these areas to facilitate students' interest in the course: a shift from locating the interest in learning English outside the learner to inside the learner while recognizing that factors outside the learner will continue to influence what goes on in their hearts and minds.

## Conclusion

In the article, we have reviewed how interest is interpreted in the Western literature and compared this interpretation to how it is understood in the Chinese setting. We have reviewed the importance of 'interest' in learning and a general background of 'interest' in the learning of English in the Chinese context. By reviewing the literature and the background of English learning, we have argued that the low efficiency of teaching and learning of English in Chinese system is due to the lack of 'interest' in students and their loss of interest as they progress through school. In this paper, we also suggest placing emphasis on 'interest' and motivation in English because developing 'interest' in learning is one of the key ways to enhance students' academic performance. It is important to develop students' interest in English by working on different ways to support teacher-student rapport as well as elements of the curriculum to sustain interest. Therefore, steps need to be considered to improve students' interest in the learning of English which are detailed below:

Steps at Ministry level: In order to enhance students' interest in English and to ensure its sustainability, the Ministry of Education needs to understand the causes of the decline in interest and make relevant adjustments. As we have pointed out, repeated examinations and



instrumental English learning are the two main reasons that need to be explored. Excessive external examination and pressures not only cause intrinsic motivation to be short-lived but also damage the possibility for individual students to learn.

Steps at school and local level: Interest in English can be sustained only if the external pressure diminishes so that a supportive learning environment could be created by teachers to improve students' learning performance. In the past 20 years, English learning was large scale and inefficiency abounded. Developing students' interest becomes possible when tension is eased, and a context is created where both teacher and students share in learning the language and culture, not only for examination, but to develop a sense of willingness to interact with the target culture and its people. On the basis of this, learning from intrinsic interest could be possible. By analyzing and exploring the causes of students' interest in learning, we have suggested re-examining the use of textbooks and emphasizing the importance of teachers as the introducers of a different culture and the main source of students' learning in order to promote students' interest and to develop a process that moves the source of that interest from outside to inside.

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## English Language General Secondary Certificate Examination Washback in Jordan

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### Abstract

Washback is a common term in applied linguistics referring to the influence of testing on teaching and learning, which is a prevailing phenomenon in education. This study examined the nature and scope of the impact of the English General Secondary Certificate Examination (GSCE) on English second secondary language teachers in Al-Karak district located in Jordan. The purpose of this study was to investigate how English language teachers in Al-Karak district who teach second secondary students perceived the impact of the GSCE on their selection of teaching methods. The target population was all English language teachers teaching the second secondary class in Al-Karak District in the scholastic year 2006/2007. A survey questionnaire which consisted of (37) Likert type items was used in order to collect the required data. The questionnaire was divided into two parts. The first part of the study aimed at measuring how the GSCE affected English language teachers' method selection in terms of four domains: activity/time arrangement, teaching methods, materials teachers would use in the classroom and content teachers would teach. The second part of the questionnaire, however, investigated the effect of other factors related to the GSCE on teachers' method selection in terms of four domains: students' learning attitudes, teachers' professionalism in teaching, teachers' perceived external pressure in teaching, and perceived importance of the GSCE. Findings of the study indicated that both the GSCE and the other related factors have affected English language teachers' method selection with a slight statistical difference in favor of the GSCE washback effect. Another indication obtained from the study was that English language teachers in Jordan used the grammar-translation method in teaching English. The results, also, showed that two types of washback existed in secondary schools in Al-Karak namely: positive and harmful washback. In light of the results, the present study recommended that: 1) teachers' should be provided with professional development opportunities, 2) teachers' monitoring and evaluation policy should be reconsidered, and 3) GSCE should integrate oral language skills as well.

Keywords: Washback, Examination, English, Foreign Language, Teaching, Methods.

## Introduction

The phenomenon of how external tests influences teaching and learning is commonly described as “backwash” in general education or as “washback” in language instruction. Literature has indicated that testing washback is a complex concept that becomes even more complex under a variety of interpretations of the phenomenon on teaching and learning (Cheng, Watanabe & Curtis, 2004).

Appropriate use of tests can promote teaching and learning. Recent research indicated that tests also influence different educational parties, particularly teachers and students' in different ways. Shohamy (1992), in her studies of Arabic as a second language and English as a foreign language for the modified Israeli examinations, indicated “the results obtained from tests can have serious consequences for individuals as well as for programs, since many crucial decisions are made on the basis of test results” (p. 299).

The GSCE in Jordan tends to touch the lives of both students as well as their teachers; in the sense that it is extremely crucial for students' further careers. Ahmad (2003) maintained that students consider, the GSCE as a path for further university studies and better employment opportunities. On the other hand, secondary teachers are also affected by the exam, through selecting certain teaching methods and techniques during the teaching/learning process. Bani-Hani (1992) reported that such exam is designed to promote changes in L2 teaching in Jordan. Generally speaking, public examinations have assumed a prominent role in influencing the quality of education. This was reported by many researchers such as (Wall and Alderson, 1996; Cheng, 2001; Andrews, Fullilove and Wong, 2002; and Burrows, 2004). Specifically, public examinations are powerful devices, in terms of their effect on the teaching and learning process.

## Theoretical background

In general education, the term washback refers to the influence of testing on teaching and learning (Alderson and Wall, 1993). Washback has become an increasingly prevalent and prominent phenomenon in education, “what is assessed becomes what is valued, which becomes what is taught” (McEwen, 1995a, p.42). There seems to be at least two major types of washback studies; those relating to traditional, multiple-choice, large-scale tests, which are perceived to have had mainly negative influences on the quality of teaching and learning.

Whereas the second type of studies has shown, however, positive, or no influence on teaching and learning. Many of those studies have turned to focus on understanding the mechanism of how washback is used to change teaching and learning (Cheng, 2003).

Washback is defined as "the positive and negative impact of tests on the teaching and learning process in classrooms" (Wall and Alderson, 1993, p.41). It refers to "the extent to which the test influences language teachers and learners to do things they would not necessarily otherwise do because of the test" (Hughes, 1993, p.117). Messick (1996, p. 241), however, emphasized that "washback, a concept prominent in applied linguistics, refers to the extent to which the interaction and use of a test influences language teachers and learners to do things they would not otherwise do that promote or inhibit language learning". He commented that, "some proponents have even maintained that a test's validity should be appraised by the degree to which it manifests positive or negative washback". Shohamy (1992, p.13) noted that, washback "is the result of the strong authority of external testing and the major impact it has on the lives of test takers". Shohamy (1997), furthermore, described the impact of public exams (washback effect), as the "most powerful devices, capable of changing and prescribing the behavior of those who are affected by their results, that is, administrators, teachers, and students" (p. 113). She further stated that, "public exams have often been used to impose new curricula, new textbooks, and new teaching methods by central agencies and decision makers who were aware of the authoritative power of the test" (p. 113).

#### The Mechanism and Assumptions of Washback

A very great significance is attached to the mechanisms through which washback operates, because any research into this phenomenon has to take such mechanisms into consideration. However, very few studies have been made with respect to the type and organization of the factors interacting with the test, and each other, to bring about beneficial washback. Even those few studies are based on pure speculation and not backed by research findings.

Bailey (1996) suggested that a basic model of washback can be constructed on the basis of a distinction between three different elements in teaching and learning. Bailey referred to these elements as: "participants" (including students, teachers, material developers and publishers), "process" (including actions taken by participants which may eventually lead to learning), and "product" (including the outcome and quality of learning). Hughes moreover



maintained that by affecting the perceptions and attitudes of the participants, a test can affect the process and product of learning thus promoting the desired effects. Alderson and Wall (1993, pp. 120-21), on the other hand, in an attempt to understand the washback phenomenon, suggested the following hypotheses, ranging from the most general to the more specific ones:

- (1) A test will influence teaching.*
- (2) A test will influence learning.*
- (3) A test will influence what teachers teach.*
- (4) A test will influence how teachers teach.*
- (5) A test will influence what learners learn.*
- (6) A test will influence how learners learn.*
- (7) A test will influence the rate and sequence of teaching.*
- (8) A test will influence the rate and sequence of learning.*
- (9) A test will influence the degree and depth of teaching.*
- (10) A test will influence the degree and depth of learning.*
- (11) A test will influence attitudes to the content, method, etc of teaching and learning.*
- (12) Tests that have important consequences will have washback and conversely.*
- (13) Tests that do not have important consequences will have no washback.*
- (14) Tests will have washback on all learners and teachers.*
- (15) Tests will have washback effects for some learners and some teachers, but not for others.*

Alderson and Wall (p. 130) believed that the washback hypotheses they put forward can be even more complex, so, they suggested a number of steps when studying the term of washback, the researcher needs to:

- 1- Clarify the definition and the scope of the term,
- 2- Specify the nature and predicted effects of the test,
- 3- Take into account the context in which the test is used as well as the decisions made on its basis,
- 4- Consider the research findings in the areas of performance and motivation, as well as, that of educational innovation and change.

Hawkey (2004) conducted a study entitled "*A Study of washback regarding the impacts of IELTS, especially on candidates and teachers*". In this study, the researcher's main focus was to ensure that the test is as valid, effective and ethical as possible. The instruments were subjected to a range of validating measures including: descriptive analyses (mean, standard deviation, skew, kurtosis, frequency). A total of (572) IELTS candidates from all world regions participated in the study. Findings from the study indicated that, (90%) of the teachers participating in the study agreed that IELTS influenced the content of their lessons,

(63%) of those teachers, also, agreed that the exam influenced their methodology. The study concluded that, there appears to be strong IELTS washback on the preparation courses in terms of both content and methodology.

Another study that intended to test washback within a high-stake test was that of Manjarres (2005). The general objective of the study was to describe the washback effect of the English national examination held at public schools in Colombia. The central question of the study was whether the English Test had any washback effect on teaching English, and whether the exam tested students' grammatical and linguistic competence. The researchers analyzed the tests students took in 2003 and 2004. The gathered data was then compared with the classroom practices recorded from the observations, (five lessons were observed), an interview with three students, a formal interview with an English language teacher, and an interview with the latter together with another English language teacher of the school. A class examination done in class was also collected and analyzed. The results of the study showed a positive relationship between the exam and the teachers, that is, English language teachers adjust their strategies in order to meet students' expectations, this was also noticeable when teachers depended on other materials to perform better in the classroom (i.e. previous test formats). The study also showed that teachers were not familiar with how to develop students' communicative competence; one of the teachers' admitted that, listening and speaking skills were not evaluated in the exam. In addition, teachers' main focus was on developing students' grammatical skills (i.e. gap filling exercises, graph interpretation, and translation of discrete items).

Ying (2005) in his study investigated the washback effects of the Spoken English Test (SET). The findings of Ying's study showed that teachers do some times use different approaches and methods when teaching and that they look at the exam as crucial and important and influences students. However, SET teachers seemed to concentrate on communicative competence, they neglected the usage of grammar and translation. The SET exam was set to measure students speaking skills. Textbook evaluation revealed that the influence of SET on the design of the textbook series only occurred at the superficial level, i.e., it influenced the contents and formats of the speaking elements in the textbook series. This indicates that the design of the textbook series received more influence from the teaching syllabus than from SET, which was confirmed by the interview with the textbook writer. The findings of the study may bring insights to the washback effect of tests on

teachers, in terms of, changing their teaching methods when teaching for a high-stakes exam. The findings may also stimulate textbook writers to pay attention to the overall construct of grammatical exercises in the development of English textbooks.

Another project that focused on an EFL exam held in Greece, was that conducted by Tsigari (2007), titled "Investigating the Washback Effect of a High-Stakes EFL Exam in the Greek context: Participants' Perceptions, Material Design and Classroom Applications". This research project was an attempt to examine the washback effect of a high-stakes exam on the teaching and learning process that takes place in intermediate level classes leading to that level. The researcher interviewed 15 native and non-native EFL teachers, actively involved in teaching FCE. The results led to detailed analysis of textbook materials using a specially-designed instrument. The analysis of the data showed that the exam did influence the materials teachers use when teaching, but it did not show any washback effects upon teachers teaching methods. Implications from Tsigari's study showed that other factors beyond the exam, such as the exam designers understanding of the underlying principles of the exam and their ability to create an affective exam through the materials used, seemed to play a greater role in determining the influence of the exam rather than the exam itself. The final part of the study looked at the effects of the exam reported by students. The analysis of the data showed that students' attitudes and feelings as well as their motivational orientations towards learning the language are affected by the exam.

The present study examined the concept of washback as a phenomenon whose significance in language testing theory and practice stems from its relevance to the implications for a shift of interest in the field of testing. According to the researchers' knowledge, no local studies have been conducted in this specific area of investigation, neither on teachers' nor on learners. Factors, mostly due to lack of time, made the researchers tend to investigate the washback effect only in Al-Karak district. The investigation, however undertook the effect, if any, of washback on teachers' instruction, as well as, on their teaching methods.

In Jordan, the exam is administrated under the supervision of the Ministry of Education where every district administers the GSCE at the same time nationwide. In spite of the large number of public and private universities, a vigorous competition exists; because most students expect to study certain subjects which may improve getting better jobs upon graduation. Some of those who failed to pass the GSCE, have the choice of re-taking the GSCE and try to gain better marks or enter private universities. It's worth mentioning here

that, taking the GSCE produces high stress and anxiety for students; especially by the time the examination approaches (Al-Rabee, 2004).

Question formats regarding previous GSCEs in English tend mainly to include: reading short passages taken from the curriculum, multiple choice items, short-answer questions related to subjects on grammar, and a writing test assessing students' linguistic competence. However, the exam entirely neglects measuring students' oral skills (i.e. listening and speaking). Although a more communicative-oriented curriculum in secondary school English education is being used in classrooms, the GSCE in English held from 1995-2005 had not shifted the focus from testing students' grammar knowledge towards communicative competence (Ahmad, 2003).

### Methodology

The purposes of this research were to map the field and to obtain an in-depth understanding of the washback process integrated with a language assessment component. The methodology, therefore, was quantitative measures reflecting a simple one-shot survey design. The research questions provided the framework necessary to uncover the characteristics of teachers' behaviors and methods that relate to washback. These questions were as follows:

- (1) What is the impact of GSCE on English language teachers' method selection?
- (2) What are the factors, if any, that tend to affect English language teachers' teaching methods in Al-Karak district?
- (3) In light of the answers of the first and second questions, how is GSCE washback manifested? And what forms does it take?

The population of this study consisted of all second secondary school English language teachers (males and females) who teach English for the second secondary grade in public schools, in the academic year 2006/2007. The study was conducted in Al-Karak districts of: Al-Mazar, Al-Karak, Al-Qaser and Southern Ghour. The researchers obtained the data concerning the population from the Directorates of Education in Al-Karak district. According to the reports of the planning departments in each directory, the total number of English language teachers was estimated to be about (112) second secondary English language teachers distributed in (78) schools, as follows:

Table (1): The number of teachers participating in the study

Directory of Education	Male	Female	Total
Al-Karak	14	21	35
Al-Mazar	15	17	32
Al-Qaser	15	16	31
Southern Ghour	7	7	14
Total	51	61	112

Since the number of the population tended to be relatively small, the researchers decided to include all the English language second secondary teachers. That is the sample tends to be purposive, integrating all members of the population of the study. The participating teachers were all Jordanians having the same socioeconomic environment, where their native language is Arabic. But it must be noticed that 20 teachers were not included in the study; they were chosen as a prior pilot sample.

To achieve the purpose of the present study, the researchers developed a questionnaire depending mostly on a similar questionnaire derived from a related study conducted by Chen (2002) entitled: *"Taiwanese Junior High School English Teachers' perceptions of the Washback Effect of the Basic Competence Test in English"*. The researchers modified some parts of the questionnaire in light of the objectives of the present study. Chen's questionnaire was chosen because it deals with teachers' selection of teaching methods when instructing or teaching for a high-stakes exam, such as the GSCE. This proposed evaluative questionnaire (see washback Appendix) was directed to secondary school English language teachers in all directories of education in Al-Karak district.

The objectives of the questionnaire employed in this study were to obtain data regarding two crucial issues relevant directly to the questions of this research. The first issue has to do with the impact of the GSCE on secondary school English language teachers' selection of teaching methods. The second issue, however, was related to other factors that might affect teachers' selection of methods other than the GSCE. Questions 1 to question 19 were related to how the GSCE influences teachers' selection of methods in terms of four basic domains: activity/time arrangement (questions 1-5), teaching methods (questions 6-10), materials they would use in their classroom (questions 11-14), and the content they would teach (questions

15-19). The other part of the questionnaire, questions 20 to question 37 were about factors commonly associated with the teachers' method selection when teaching English for second secondary students. Factors commonly associated with how teachers might perceive the impact of public examinations differently were expressed in terms of four major domains: perceived students' learning attitudes (questions 20-23), teachers' professionalism in teaching (questions 24-27), teachers' perceived external pressure in teaching (questions 28-31), and teachers' perceived significance of the GSCE (questions 32-37).

The statements assessing the expected response of the participants were adopted through a five-point Likert scale. On the scale, statements were coded as 1 = Strongly Agree, 2 = Agree, 3 = No Opinion, 4 = Disagree, and 5 = Strongly Disagree. Eight experts in statistics were consulted in identifying the analytical levels of estimating values of mean scores of each item in the instrument (i.e. questionnaire). The experts identified the levels of means as follows:

1. Mean scores (5-3.5) as having strong effect.
2. Mean scores (3.49-2.5) as having moderate effect.
3. Mean scores (2.49-1.5) as having little effect.
4. Mean scores (1.49-1) as being immeasurable.

The instrument, which consisted of 42 items employed in the present study (see Appendix), was validated by a jury comprising nine judges, namely, (three university professors, three experienced EFL teachers, and three English language supervisors). The jury members were asked to state their views about the instrument with regard to: item suitability, item relevance, clarity, and language diction. Moreover, the jury was asked to give suggestions with regard to improving the research instrument. After studying the jury's comments, the instrument achieved 94% satisfaction from the respondents. Upon the jury's comments and suggestions, ambiguous and irrelevant items were either omitted or modified. The final version of the questionnaire consisted of (37) items instead of (42).

On the other hand, the test-retest method was used to compute the reliability of the instrument, the questionnaire was first administrated on 20 second secondary English language teachers' (from outside the sample of the study), and then administrated once again on the same group three weeks later. Spearman's coefficient of correlation formula was used in order to find out the reliability coefficient which was 0.85 for the first part of the study, and 0.88 for the second part. Such ratings were considered to be sufficient for the purpose of

applying the questionnaire. However, the present study integrated the following variables:

A) Independent variables:

1. Part one of the questionnaire comprised the following domains:

- a) Activity/time arrangement (items 1-5)
- b) Teaching methods (items 6-10)
- c) Content teachers would teach in the classroom (items 11-14)
- d) Materials teachers would use in the classroom (items 15-19)

2. Part two of the questionnaire comprised the following domains:

- a) Students' learning attitudes (items 20-23)
- b) Teachers' professionalism in teaching (items 24-27)
- c) Teachers' perceived external pressure in teaching (items 28-31)
- d) Teachers' perceived significance of the GSCE (items 32-37)

B) Dependent variable: English language teachers' responses to the questionnaire items.

The teachers' responses to the survey questionnaire were computed and analyzed using the SPSS program. The following statistical measurements were used:

- 1- Means, standard deviations for each item of the questionnaire.
- 2- One way ANOVA to compare means scores of different dimensions of each part of the questionnaire.
- 3- t-test for the differences between part one and part two of the study.

### Findings of the Study

The primary purpose of this study was to investigate the washback effect, if any, of the GSCE on secondary school English language teachers' in Al-Karak district during the second semester of the academic year 2006/2007. The discussion of the findings, however, is presented in the light of the questions of the present study. That is, findings related to the first question of the study; findings related to the second question of the study; and findings related to the third question of the study.

#### Findings related to the first question

Question one inquires about the effect of the GSCE on teachers' teaching methods in terms of four domains, (Activity/time arrangement, Teaching methods, Materials teachers would use in the classroom, and Contents teachers would teach). Tables 2, 3, 4 and 5 demonstrate the mean scores, the standard deviations, and the degree of effect it has on these four domains.

Table (2): The Effect of the (Activity/Time Arrangement) Domain.

Item	S.A %	A %	N.O %	D %	S.D %	Mean	Std. deviation	Item Effect
1- I feel motivated by the GSCE to implement activities that may promote my students' test-taking skills.	15.7	25.8	31.5	27.0	0.00	3.30	1.04	Moderate
2- I feel time allotment in class would be different if the GSCE were cancelled.	38.2	3.4	32.6	15.7	10.1	3.44	1.40	Moderate
3- I spend more time instructing grammar other than communication skills because I think grammar is more likely to be tested on the GSCE.	27.0	39.3	27.0	6.7	0.00	3.87	0.89	Strong
4- I arrange my classroom activities based upon different factors but not just based upon the objectives of the GSCE.	0.00	31.5	27.0	36.0	5.6	3.16	0.94	Moderate
5- I teach test-taking strategies, especially as the GSCE testing dates get closer	56.0	23.0	19.1	0.00	1.1	4.34	0.87	Strong

Table (2) shows that according to secondary school English language teachers' participating in the present study, the (Activity/Time Arrangement) domain tends to affect their teaching when instructing for the second secondary class. Instructing grammar rather than communication skills (item 3) has a rather strong effect on this domain. Teaching test-taking strategies (item 5) has a strong effect as well. This indicates that the GSCE affected teachers' teaching where they tend to be motivated to implement activities to promote their students' skills for the test. This might, also, indicate that teachers felt their main concern was to review all of the content of the textbook rather than conducting activities. That is, time constraints tend to make teachers act in a traditional way in terms of teaching methods. Traditional methods in TEFL invite teachers to emphasize memorization and grammar instruction, which in turn, highlights the learner's linguistic competence, rather than their communicative competence. It is also shown from the above Table that teachers in Al-Karak adopt methods that emphasize grammar; teachers will emphasize students' linguistic knowledge accordingly (item 3). Obviously, since the GSCE tends to test students' grammatical abilities rather than their communicative competence.



Table (3): The Effect of the (Teaching Methods) Domain

Item	S.A %	A %	N.O %	D %	S.D %	Mean	Std. deviation	Item Effect
6- I select my teaching methods in a way that tend to help my students to succeed on the GSCE.	77.5	10.1	10.1	1.1	1.1	4.62	0.80	Strong
7- I select teaching methods that tend to help develop my students' skills, which are more likely to be tested, on the GSCE.	64.0	21.3	12.4	0.00	2.2	4.45	0.87	Strong
8- I neglect some teaching methods that are un-able to prepare my students for the GSCE.	9.0	4.5	25.8	34.8	25.8	3.64	1.18	Strong
9- My teaching has been influences by the GSCE.	11.2	14.6	22.5	16.9	34.8	2.51	1.39	Moderate
10- I rarely select my teaching methods that tend to help my students succeed on the GSCE.	42.7	16.9	12.4	7.9	20.2	2.46	1.58	Little

Table (3) shows clearly that English language teachers' teaching methods are strongly affected by the GSCE exam. Evidently, the mean scores of items 6,7and 8 tend to be high and have a strong effect, while the mean score of items 9 tended to be moderate. However item 6 (I select my teaching methods in a way that tend to help my students to succeed on the GSCE) got the highest mean which indicates the extent by which EFL teachers are affected by the exam. GSCE teachers felt the need to develop their students' skills so that they can get high scores in the English exam. Item (7) indicated that teachers tend to develop students skills in an attempt to help them pass the GSCE. In other words, the activities teachers use in their classroom were test-oriented, although it must be mentioned here, that teachers concentrated on the grammar-translation method while teaching. This is mainly because the GSCE's question pattern aims at only measuring students' grammatical abilities rather than their communicative ones.

Table (4): The Effect of the (Materials teachers would use in the classroom) Domain.

Item	S.A %	A %	N.O %	D %	S.D %	Mean	Std. Deviation	Item Effect
11- I use materials in addition to the textbooks if they will help my students succeed on the GSCE.	38.2	28.1	27.0	4.5	2.2	3.96	1.02	Strong
12- I give students worksheets to review questions expected to be on the GSCE.	28.1	18.0	32.6	12.4	9.0	3.44	1.27	Moderate
13- I give my students the Ministry of Education previous tests in order to familiarize them with the GSCE.	38.2	29.2	23.6	7.9	1.1	3.90	1.02	Strong
14- My choice of supplementary materials is influenced by the GSCE.	40.4	15.7	25.8	18.0	0.00	3.79	1.16	Strong

Table (4) displays the means and standard deviations of teachers' selection of additional materials in the classroom which can help students succeed in the GSCE. Items (11 and 13) have strong affects on teachers' methods selection. This reflects teachers' keenness on supplying students with whatever it takes, in terms of supplementary materials that reflect the tests objectives, in order that students can pass the exam. All items in this domain got relatively high means except item (12) which has a moderate effect. This is an indication of the power of the GSCE exam on teachers' teaching options.

Table (5) The Effect of the (Content Teachers would Teach) Domain.

Item	S.A %	A %	N.O %	D %	S.D %	Mean	Std. Deviation	Item Effect
15- I skip over certain sections in the textbook because they are less likely to be tested on the GSCE.	6.7	2.2	20.2	20.2	50.6	4.06	1.19	Strong
16- I adjust the sequence of my teaching objectives based on the GSCE.	30.3	16.9	28.1	11.2	13.5	3.39	1.37	Moderate
17- I include some relevant content to help my students perform well on the GSCE.	23.6	33.7	28.1	7.9	6.7	3.60	1.13	Strong
18- I display the objectives of the GSCE through out my course content.	12.4	25.8	37.1	16.9	7.9	3.18	1.10	Moderate
19- I cover every section in the textbook although some sections are unlikely to be tested on the GSCE.	55.1	13.5	15.7	10.1	5.6	1.98	1.27	Little

Table (5) shows that GSCE teachers tended to cover as much content related to the GSCE

as possible. This is evident items (15 and 17) that got the highest mean scores. This might indicate that teachers attempt not only to cover all the sections of the textbook whether they are likely to be tested or not, but they also try to include all relevant content which might help their students perform better in the GSCE. The teachers participating in the study, also, attempted to promote their students' familiarity with the content and test format.

The use of one-way ANOVA clarified part one of the study (how does the GSCE influence teachers' methods' selection). The results showed that the GSCE did in fact influence teachers' teaching methods' in terms of the four domains of: time arrangement, teaching methods, materials teachers would use in the classroom and content teachers would teach. This means that teachers tended to change and modify their teaching methods constantly. This may be attributed to the fact stated earlier that states that GSCE is very crucial for both the students and teachers. According to Table (7), the GSCE has a significant effect ( $\alpha \leq 0.05$ ) in terms of the three domains namely: time arrangement, teaching methods, and content. While it was shown that the material domain did not have any significant effect on teachers' methods selection. This may be explained through GSCE teachers concern of the exam itself, rather than the overall development of students' levels in English.

Table (6): One way ANOVA analysis of the first part of the study

Domain		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Time	Between Groups	24.0	66	.364	2.14	.024
	Within Groups	3.74	22	.170		
	Total	27.7	88			
Method	Between Groups	13.0	66	.198	4.92	.000
	Within Groups	.883	22	.040		
	Total	13.9	88			
Material	Between Groups	29.1	66	.44	1.46	.162
	Within Groups	6.64	22	.30		
	Total	35.7	88			
Content	Between Groups	13.1	66	.19	14.9	.000
	Within Groups	.293	22	.01		
	Total	13.4	88			

#### Findings related to the Second question

Question two inquired about the effect of other factors, if any, on teachers teaching methods in terms of four domains: students' learning attitudes, teachers' professionalism in teaching,

teachers' perceived external pressure in teaching, and teachers' perceived importance of the GSCE. Tables 7, 8, 9 and 10 demonstrate the means, the standard deviations and the effect of every domain on teachers' selection of teaching methods.

Table (7): The Effect of the (students' learning attitudes) Domain.

Item	S.A %	A %	N.O %	D %	S.D %	Mean	Std. deviation	Item Effect
20-I teach, whatever I think is important to teach, no matter whether my students like it or not.	2.2	10.1	13.5	32.6	41.6	1.99	1.08	Little
21- I spend less time on certain sections of the textbooks because my students are less interested in them.	18.0	15.7	18.0	33.7	14.6	3.11	1.34	Moderate
22- I often teach what will be tested because my students expect me to do so.	4.5	43.8	9.0	21.3	21.3	3.21	1.30	Moderate
23- My teaching tends to be influenced by students' learning attitudes	3.4	10.1	9.0	33.7	43.8	1.96	1.12	Little

Table (7) explains the relationship between teachers' learning attitudes and teachers' teaching methods when instructing for the GSCE, which was shown to be low. This is evident from item (23) which asked teachers if their students' attitudes affected their teaching. Accordingly, this item got the lowest mean score(1.96) which means that teachers don't care much about students' attitudes and expectations This might also reflects how traditional GSCE teachers tend to be, where their teaching methods are mainly structured so much to serve the purpose of the exam without any regard to learners attitudes or feelings. This might indicate that teachers are familiar with the type of questions that might be on the exam paper, while students aren't, and that they are able to apply similar questions in class to help students be familiar with different types of questions that might be in the exam.

Table (8): The Effect of the Teachers' Professionalism in Teaching Domain

Item	S.A %	A %	N.O %	D %	S.D %	Mean	Std. deviation	Item Effect
24- I expect my students to perform well on the GSCE.	16.9	38.2	40.4	3.4	1.1	3.66	.84	Strong
25- I feel embarrassed if my students perform less well on the GSCE than	37.1	28.1	7.9	14.6	12.4	2.37	1.43	Little

other students taught by my colleagues.								
26- I get feedback on my teaching from the GSCE.	29.2	25.8	32.6	1.1	11.2	3.61	1.24	Strong
27- My personality influences my selection of teaching methods.	16.9	37.1	15.7	18.0	12.4	2.72	1.29	Moderate

Table (8) introduces the effect of teachers' perspectives of professionalism in teaching on teachers' teaching methods, which was considered moderate. From the above Table; it is clear that teacher's personality did not influence their teaching methods. That is, (item 25) indicates that GSCE teachers' tended not to be influenced or embarrassed if other students (taught by other colleagues) got higher grades in the GSCE. On the other hand, teachers expected their students to pass the exam and get important feedback on their teaching (item 26). Moreover, GSCE teachers' expressed that they had strong faith in their students' ability to pass the exam (item 24). That is, they indicate strong confidence regarding the way they taught and the methods they used, regardless to whether it is appropriate or not.

Table (9) illustrates questions related to the amount of pressure teachers' face from different external sources. These include: schools principle, other teachers and students' parents. The data indicated that neither felt any pressure from their school principle (item 28) nor even from students parents (item 30). Yet, GSCE teachers' felt some pressure from their colleagues (item 29). This might mean that the teachers in light of such peer pressure might consider improving their teaching methods especially when it comes to comparing the results of those teachers to the improving results of a colleague. Again, the test's control of teachers' method selection is so evident, i.e., if they change a certain method it must be relevant to the test. In other words teachers who perceived the GSCE as an important high-stakes test were more likely to perceive pressure from external forces when teaching.

Table (9): The Effect of the (teachers' perceived external pressure in teaching) Domain

Item	S.A %	A %	N.O %	D %	S.D %	Mean	Std. deviation	Item Effect
28- I feel pressure from my school principal to improve my students' test scores.	43.8	31.5	9.0	13.5	2.2	1.99	1.13	Little
29- I feel pressure from other teachers to improve my students' test scores.	18.0	19.1	16.9	33.7	12.4	3.03	1.33	Moderate
30- I feel pressure from student' parents to improve my students'	46.1	27.0	4.5	16.9	5.6	2.09	1.30	Moderate

test scores.								
31- My school's policy influences my selection of teaching methods.	42.7	33.7	4.5	14.6	4.5	2.04	1.21	Little

Table (10) shows the level of the teachers' perceived importance of the GSCE as moderate and to some extent positive. (Item 32) has the highest mean score which indicates that teachers realize the significance of the GSCE results and that these test results are used to make crucial decisions that tremendously influence students' lives and future careers. In contrast, (item 33) has the lowest mean score, indicating that, teachers' will not benefit from their students' scores in GSCE. Clearly, this might affect teachers in terms of not improving the teaching strategies they apply in class mainly because of the lack of encouragement they get, whether this encouragement means a salary raise or raising his teaching spirit.

Table (10): The Effect of the teachers' perceived importance of the GSCE Domain.

Item	S.A %	A %	N.O %	D %	S.D %	Mean	Std. deviation	Item Effect
32- I regard the GSCE as a test, which will influence students' future career.	28.1	33.7	21.3	3.4	13.5	3.60	1.30	Strong
33- Students' GSCE score result will have significant sanctions to most teachers.	49.4	29.2	7.9	11.2	2.2	1.88	1.11	Little
34- The GSCE is a fair test to students.	1.1	12.4	12.4	32.6	41.6	1.99	1.07	Little
35-The GSCE is able to test my students' language ability.	5.6	25.8	10.1	27.0	31.5	2.40	1.32	Moderate
36-The GSCE provides little feedback about students' learning.	20.2	33.7	5.6	22.5	18.0	2.47	1.32	Moderate
37- The GSCE has changed my school's language teaching policy.	30.3	23.6	11.2	22.5	12.4	2.63	1.43	Moderate

Table (11) summarizes the effect of the second part of the study related to how other possible and related factors might influence teachers' method selection in terms of the four domains of: students' learning attitudes, teachers' professionalism in teaching, teachers' perceived external pressure while teaching, and teachers' perceived importance of the GSCE. It was shown through the use of one-way ANOVA that three out of four domains did in fact influence teachers' methods' selection: students learning attitudes, proficiency, and importance, while the (pressure) domain did not influence teachers' methods' selection. This implies, again, teachers' tendency to be traditional. Traditional teachers are those teachers whose teaching emerges from contextual factors other than that of the students' needs,

feelings and attitudes.

Table (11): One way ANOVA analysis of the Second part of the Study

Domain		Sum of Squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Attitudes	Between Groups	30.5	51	.600	2.75	.001
	Within Groups	8.06	37	.218		
	Total	38.6	88			
Proficiency	Between Groups	25.7	51	.506	1.80	.031
	Within Groups	10.3	37	.280		
	Total	36.1	88			
Pressure	Between Groups	20.6	51	.40	1.10	.383
	Within Groups	13.5	37	.36		
	Total	34.2	88			
Importance	Between Groups	22.9	51	.45	2.74	.001
	Within Groups	6.0	37	.16		
	Total	29.0	88			

Findings related to the Third question

Findings related to question three and through using a t-test revealed a statistically significant difference between part one and part two of the study.

Table (12): Comparison between the 1<sup>st</sup> question and the 2<sup>nd</sup> question of the study

	Effect	Mean	Std. Deviation	T-Value	df	Sig.
The GSCE influences the teaching methods Selection	Strong	3.78	0.40	*88.53	88	0.000
Other factors influences the teaching methods selection	Strong	2.63	0.36	*68.43	88	0.000

\*Significant at level ( $\alpha \leq 0.05$ )

As can be seen from Table (12) the mean scores of the first part of the study (the GSCE influences the teaching methods selection) was estimated to be (3.78), while the mean score of the second part of the study (other factors influence the teaching methods selection) was estimated to be (2.63). Such a difference in washback effect could be attributed to the crucial role the GSCE plays in the educational system in Jordan. The exam has a critical effect on both teachers and learners and especially teachers. Teachers are responsible for improving students' test scores, which in turn, pushes them to select the best teaching methods to help their students pass the GSCE.

Discussion of the findings, conclusions, and recommendations

The present study was an attempt to analyze the washback effect on secondary schools English language teachers' teaching methods. It also aimed at identifying other factors that might affect the teachers' selection of methods while instructing for the GSCE. Moreover, this study tried to identify how washback was manifested in secondary school English classrooms, and highlighted the forms washback takes in the Al-Karak context.

Discussion of the findings related to the first question

To review, question one inquired about the impact of GSCE on English language teachers' method selection. The findings showed that most of the teachers who answered the questionnaire felt that the GSCE influenced and affected their selection of teaching methods because English language at Jordanian secondary schools is driven by measurement, and also, because English language teachers in Jordan are regarded as the primary source of English language learning. This created pressure on such teachers which made them keen on developing their students' linguistic competence to develop their students' language abilities. The teachers pointed out that they have to change and modify their teaching methods in order to meet the testing objectives of the GSCE.

Teachers reported that the time given to teach was not enough and that their instruction was constrained by time. Teachers' also reported that if they were given more time they would be able to make use of other materials and contents to help students gain better marks on the test. The teaching process depended on the curriculum, and was regarded as a teaching guide directing teachers in what to teach and how to help their students prepare for the GSCE. The instructional time teachers were given was just sufficient to cover the curriculum. Although the teachers wanted to make use of other related material to familiarize their students with the format of the GSCE, no additional time was available for them to do that. However, the study reported when teachers might sometimes have extra time to supplement textbook-based learning such as quizzes and reviews, such time was dedicated to promoting their students familiarity with the content and test format of the GSCE. The present study reflected time constraints regarding the amount of time given to instruct for a high-stakes exam, which in turn, influenced their teaching methods. These results, however, are similar to those of Read (1999), Chen (2002), Manjarres (2005). They all pointed out that time is significant for teachers; for it tends to affect teachers choice of methodology.



The study, also, revealed that teachers still depended on the traditional method of teaching English, which is based on improving students' translation and grammatical abilities rather than improving their overall communicative abilities (i.e., listening, speaking, reading and writing). This might be due to the fact that the GSCE does not mainly focus on examining these skills. Wall and Alderson (1996) in this regard tried to distinguish the impact of positive washback and negative washback by assuming that teachers would selectively use the efficient means such as those suggested by Teachers' Guides to develop their students' skills that would be assessed in the examinations if the impact of public examinations was positive. Under negative washback, Wall and Alderson (1996) stated that: "teachers would use whatever methodology they felt most expedient to help them to prepare their students for the examination" (p. 200).

Thus, teachers in the future should try to shift from concentrating only on developing students' grammatical competence toward promoting students' overall communicative competence. As for the teaching methods teachers use in class, findings of the present study indicated that teachers modified their teaching methods in order to meet the objectives of the exam on the one hand, and in order to improve students' scores on the other hand.

Teachers in their classes focused on promoting students reading and writing skills, and they did not integrate any listening or speaking skills. The reason for this, as mentioned before, was that the exam does not include any spoken communicative tasks and questions. We agree with (Andrews 1994; Hawkey, 2004) who pointed out that high-stakes exams led teachers to use different teaching methods in order to engage their students in certain exam tasks. Yet the findings of the present study disagree with those of Cheng (1997) where she noted changes in terms of teaching content, but she did not observe any changes in teaching methods teachers use in the classroom. She commented that the revised exam "is likely to change the practice for the exam, but not the examination itself" (p. 52).

The term (materials) was used in this study to refer to exam-related textbooks and past papers, while the term (content) was used to refer to the sections and parts of the official English curriculum published by the Ministry of Education in Jordan. The findings of the present study highlighted teachers' use of supplementary materials that would help their students to be prepared for the GSCE. The findings, also, revealed that all teachers agreed that they tried to cover specific sections of the textbook which have relevant content that might help students perform well in the GSCE. It must be noted in this regard that Jordanian textbooks

especially the official English curriculum needs to be more focused on developing students' communicative abilities (i.e. interpretation, expression, and negotiation) rather than the presentation of grammatical rules and forms.

Recent literature discussed washback on materials in terms of material production, the use of materials, students and teachers views of exam materials and the content of materials but no studies relevant to teaching methods. Studies conducted by Cheng (2001) as well as Hayes and Read (2004) who agreed that teachers tend to select certain materials and contents to help students familiarize with test and the questions expected to be on the test. Lam (1999) added that "teachers believe that the best way to prepare students for an exam is by doing past papers" (p: 91). Most of the related literature indicated that when teaching towards high-stakes exams teachers tend to use different kinds of exam related materials to help their students' familiarize with the exam. The findings of the present study were in harmony with some of the hypotheses of both Alderson and Wall (1993) mentioned earlier. Here are some hypotheses, stated earlier, that were so true for the present research:

- 1) *A test will influence teaching.*
- 2) *A test will influence what teachers teach.*
- 3) *Tests that have important consequences will have washback.*
- 4) *Tests will have washback on teachers and learners.*

Discussion of the findings related to the second question

Many studies have pointed out that public examinations might affect some aspects of teaching while not affecting others (Chen 2002; Cheng et al, 2004), or they might affect some teachers in different ways than others (Alderson and Hamp-Lyons, 1996). Findings obtained from this study report a certain degree of washback effect on Jordanian secondary school English language teachers as a result of the GSCE.

The finding of the second question (What are the factors, if any, that tend to influence English language teachers' teaching methods in Al-Karak district?) indicate that, apparently, teachers were not affected by students' learning attitudes when instructing for the GSCE, in terms of, meeting their students' expectations when it comes to teaching what will be tested. Recent literature indicated that tests were commonly assumed to bring out some changes in motivation and, thus, in behavior associated with teaching and learning. Learners, particularly those with high orientation toward success or towards avoidance of failure in the public

examination, would expect their teacher to cover what would be tested (Barrette, 2004). The finding of the present study regarding the effect of students' learning attitudes on teachers' methods were not similar to those of Wall and Alderson (1993), Caine, (2005), who indicated that teachers are influenced by students learning attitudes. It's fair to say in this regard, if teachers perceived that their students would expect them to cover what would be tested in the GSCE or if students have higher expectations on their test performance, teachers would perceive more impact of the GSCE on their choice of teaching methods as well as their instruction.

The study also revealed that teachers are not affected by their personality in terms of the methods they select, according to table 8; teachers admitted that they will not feel embarrassed if students taught by other colleges got better marks in the exam than their own students. Findings from the present study, also, indicated that a significant relationship existed between teachers' awareness of the importance of the GSCE on students' lives together with its influence on their choice of teaching methods. Table 10 indicated that teachers are actually worried about how their students will perform in the exam. Cheng (2003, p. 296), in her study found that some teachers would feel guilty if they did not familiarize their students with the test formats. Cheng et al (2004) pointed out when teachers were more aware of the formats, skills and/or contents that will be tested in public exams, their teaching methods as well as their instruction were more likely to be influenced by the public exams. The results derived from the present study were in accordance with this literature.

#### Discussion of the findings related to the third question

The findings related to the third question clearly indicated that the GSCE in terms of three domains (activity/time arrangement, the content teachers would teach, and teaching methods) affected teachers' teaching methods. The fourth domain (the materials teachers would use in their classroom) did not have any significant effect on teachers' selection of methods. Other factors mentioned in this study also affected teachers' methods selection, except the 'teachers' perceived external pressure in teaching' domain, which had no affect on teachers. The findings regarding the third question clearly showed that there were statistically significant differences between the two parts of the study in terms of their effect on the methods teachers use in the classroom. It is obvious from Table 12 that the GSCE affected

the teachers' method selection with a relatively high mean score of (3.78).

Cheng (2001) argued that the relationship between a test and its impact, positive or negative, might not be as simple as that at first glance. The quality of washback might be independent of the quality of the test. A poor test can generate a beneficial effect if it makes teachers and students do good things that they would not otherwise do, such as, preparing lessons more thoroughly, paying attention to the lesson, and taking the subject being tested more seriously. Similarly, Tsagari (2007) indicated that a poor test might be associated with positive effects and a good test with negative effects due to educational factors other than the quality of the test.

According to the present study, two types of washback effect have appeared after analyzing the data. The first part of the study regarding how the GSCE in English affects teachers' methods appeared to be positive or beneficial. That is, the GSCE in fact, brought a positive and powerful impact to the classroom, in the sense that, it affected English language teachers' selection of teaching methods, in terms of, providing students with feedback, and making sure to supplement the students' book with activities that qualify them to undertake the test. If the effects of public examinations are beneficial, such effects will encourage the whole range of desired changes mentioned before, as associated with "positive washback." Public examinations should be educationally beneficial when they can affect the teaching and learning process. Hughes (2003) mentioned that positive washback is clearly observed when teachers try to improve and develop the skills that the test is designed to measure. Accordingly, public examinations should be educationally beneficial when they can reinforce behavior and attitudes of the involved parties, such as, teachers and students in order to carry out changes that enhance and reward teaching and learning results.

The other type of washback as observed in the current study concerning other factors that might affect teachers' method selection, was that of harmful washback. Generally speaking, harmful washback appears when it does not affect the core of the teaching and learning process. For example, teachers' responses showed that their personality did not affect their teaching methods nor the techniques they used, in the sense that, they have harmful attitudes towards the exam and working toward its objectives. Another harmful aspect was that teachers adapted traditional teaching methods, in terms of developing students' grammatical and translation skills at the expense of their overall communicative skills. This aspect was considered to be harmful, because students were not taught by teaching methods which are

supposed to develop their overall language skills.

### Conclusion

Washback tends to be a challenging phenomenon to research and measure. This study showed that GSCE affects teachers' selection of teaching methods. This effect on teaching methods is due to the significance of the exam on students and also on teachers. As washback studies have indicated, tests often provide teachers with reasons for activities and techniques that qualify students to perform well in the test.

This study also implied that teachers' selection of methods was also affected by other factors mentioned earlier which created what is called harmful washback. For example, teachers were slightly affected by pressure from different sources. They were also affected by their students' expectations and attitudes. This implies that teachers' main focus was on preparing their students' for the exam, in whatever way they think is efficient, and only hope that they get good marks in the exam.

At the end of this section, it must be mentioned that oral proficiency when teaching English in Jordan must be a demand; teachers should concentrate on developing students speaking and listening abilities, and this of course can't be accomplished without the understanding of teachers and test designers that English is considered to be a global language and it ought to be taught using an oral-based methodology. English language teachers in Jordan should focus on using English actively in the classroom rather than using analytical procedures that focus on explaining grammatical rules, and they ought to encourage direct and spontaneous use of the foreign language in their classrooms. In brief, English should be taught through hearing and speaking the language first, and then, understanding its grammatical rules.

### Recommendations

Based on the findings reported in this study, the following recommendations are made for different educational parties.

#### 1. Provide Teachers with Professional Development Opportunities

The Ministry of Education in Jordan should provide teachers with more training on how to use test data to critique and improve their instruction. These goals can be achieved through the coordination of universities, which provide most pre-service and teacher education programs. Without professional development aimed at understanding and using test data,

teachers might not know how to use this information to improve their instruction.

## 2. Change Teacher Monitoring and Evaluation Policy

Evaluation of teachers may require a more systematic approach to monitoring and evaluating teacher performance. However, school administrators should work with teachers to help them identify their instructional weaknesses. If not, this may lead teachers simply to teach to improve test scores instead of students' learning.

## 3. Develop the GSCE

All teachers throughout the study claimed that the exam didn't measure students' communicative abilities, especially in speaking and listening. For effective language learning entails an integration of four language skills. The Ministry of Education in this regard should try to include such tasks over the years in order to help students be better prepared for their future carriers and higher studies.

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APPENDIX: *washback questionnaire*

PART A: What are the effects of the General Secondary Certificate Examination on my teaching ?

	Item	Strongly agree	Agree	No opinion	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1	I feel motivated by the GSCE to implement activities that may promote my students' test-taking skills.					
2	I feel time allotment in class would be different if the GSCE were cancelled.					
3	I spend more time instructing grammar other than communication skills because I think grammar is more likely to be tested on the GSCE.					
4	I arrange my classroom activities based upon different factors but not just based upon the objectives of the GSCE.					
5	I teach test-taking strategies, especially as the GSCE testing dates get closer.					
6	I select my teaching methods in a way					



	that tend to help my students to succeed on the GSCE.					
7	I select teaching methods that tend to help develop my students' skills, which are more likely to be tested, on the GSCE.					
8	I neglect some teaching methods that are un-able to prepare my students for the GSCE.					
9	My teaching has been influenced by the GSCE.					
10	I rarely select my teaching methods that tend to help my students succeed on the GSCE.					
11	I use materials in addition to the textbooks if they will help my students succeed on the GSCE.					
12	I give students worksheets to review questions expected to be on the GSCE.					
13	I give my students the Ministry of Education previous tests in order to familiarize them with the GSCE					
14	My choice of supplementary materials is influenced by the GSCE.					
15	I skip over certain sections in the textbook because they are less likely to be tested on the GSCE.					
16	I adjust the sequence of my teaching objectives based on the GSCE.					
17	I include some relevant content to help my students' perform well on the GSCE.					
18	I display the objectives of the GSCE through out my course content.					
19	I cover every section in the textbook although some sections are unlikely to be tested on the GSCE.					

PART B: What are other factors that affect my teaching?

	Item	Strongly agree	Agree	No opinion	Disagree	Strongly disagree
20	I teach, whatever I think is important to teach, no matter whether my students like it or not.					
21	I spend less time on certain sections of the textbook because my students are less interested in them.					
22	I often teach what will be tested because my students expect me to do so.					
23	My teaching tends to be influenced					

	by students' learning attitudes.					
24	I expect my students to perform well on the GSCE.					
25	I feel embarrassed if my students perform less well on the GSCE than other students taught by my colleagues.					
26	I get feedback on my teaching from the GSCE.					
27	My personality influences my selection of teaching methods.					
28	I feel pressure from my school principal to improve my students' test scores.					
29	I feel pressure from other teachers to improve my students' test scores.					
30	I feel pressure from student' parents to improve my students' test scores.					
31	My school's policy influences my selection of teaching methods.					
32	I regard the GSCE as a test, which will influence students' future career.					
33	Students' GSCE score results will have significant sanctions to most teachers.					
34	The GSCE is a fair test to students.					
35	The GSCE is able to test my students' language ability.					
36	The GSCE provides little feedback about students' learning.					
37	The GSCE has changed my school's language teaching policy.					



## Motivating Writers: The Power of Choice

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### Abstract

Motivation plays a key role in education. This action research study evaluated the effectiveness of the power of choice of proximal academic goals as a strategy for boosting student motivation in an undergraduate composition and rhetoric course. Students were given choices to select easier or more difficult assessment tasks prior to essay examinations. The results indicated that more students in this sample group selected the most challenging tasks when given the choice. The implications of this study suggest that this approach has the potential to be a valuable motivational strategy in academic writing courses.

Keywords: EFL, Motivation, Action Research, Academic Writing

### Introduction

Motivation for achieving competence is an endearing characteristic of human nature; however, it is not always intrinsic or self-directed. Teachers are continually challenged to motivate their students to learn and to develop self-efficacy. Furthermore, teaching practitioners who strive for continuous measurable improvement (CMI) are often challenged to find effective strategies to help boost motivation.

It is difficult to find a standardized definition for motivation. However, the word's Latin root "movere," which means "to move," suggests that motivation can be defined as a process that starts with a need that activates behavior which in turn moves someone towards achieving a goal. Luthans (1995) suggests the process of motivation consists of progressive relationships between needs, internal drives, and the achievement of goals.

In educational contexts, goals or objectives are of paramount importance as they drive

curriculum design; in addition, they are also a rationale for motivation. An excellent example of the importance of objectives is goal-driven or backward curriculum design as proposed by Wiggins and McTighe (2000). With this approach, curriculum designers start with objectives and then develop tasks that meet course objectives.

In this research study, the effectiveness of providing opportunities for personal choice of academic goals will be examined as a motivational strategy. This approach is based on motivational goal-setting theory. A research survey of experts in psychology and organizational theory at Northwestern University showed that goal-setting theory ranked first for validity and second for usefulness when compared to other motivational strategies (Lee & Early, 1988). In addition, management and organizational behavior theory advise that goal setting is a valuable strategy for increasing motivation (Dailey, 2000).

The power of choice for selecting proximal goals has the potential to be a very effective motivational strategy for pedagogy and andragogy. A salient example is the highly successful approach to curriculum design introduced by Nunley (2002) known as Layered Curriculum™. This approach has been successfully applied to multiple subjects including language learning, and has been used throughout the world. In this approach, students can select their own learning goals based on three levels of curriculum objectives that focus on higher levels of understanding (Nunley, 2002).

An example of incorporating the power of choice for an ESL/EFL writing course is providing learners the opportunity to select more challenging compositions that directly correspond to higher-grade bands. In short, more effort reflected by attempting more challenging tasks is acknowledged and potentially rewarded by higher grades. This facile approach can be used to encourage students to attempt tasks that are more challenging without the requirement for multiple curriculum objectives as with the Layered Curriculum™ method. In addition, if students attempt more challenging tasks, it can be inferred that they generally realize more benefits as learners. As stated by the US Secretary of Education, "Give yourself an even greater challenge than the one you are trying to master, and you will develop the powers necessary to overcome the original difficulty" (Bennet, 1996).

In this research study, a hybrid motivational strategy was examined: the power of choice coupled with the power of proximal goal setting. The general purpose of this study was to investigate the effectiveness of implementing a basic goal-setting choice model in an undergraduate composition and rhetoric course within an EFL/ESL context. The overall

objective was to test a strategy for motivating students to do tasks that are more challenging and put more effort into their skill development. The specific objectives of the study were threefold: 1. to determine if students are willing to perform more difficult tasks if given the choice; 2. to determine if students who choose to pursue more difficult tasks realize measurable benefits; and 3. to evaluate the potential of using goal-setting theory for task and/or curriculum design.

#### Review of literature

The process of learning is underpinned by motivation; therefore, the psychology of motivation is of paramount importance in education. The field of educational psychology provides many important topics for research. Of particular interest is the application of curriculum, lesson, task, and assessment design to facilitate student motivation. Effective strategies that help motivate students to learn can be considered as valuable pedagogical tools that can help optimize the learning process.

#### *Teachers as Contemporary Managers*

Glasser (1988) asserts that teachers are very similar to modern managers because they direct and facilitate learning in the classroom. Both teachers and managers are in a position to offer punishments, rewards, direction and task plans, and these are clearly managerial tasks. Students can be viewed as autonomous learners; however, practical experience shows that extrinsic facilitation and management of learning is necessary.

Traditional management strategies are widely known to focus on the power of the manager as in top-down bureaucratic models. In contrast, contemporary management approaches focus more on sharing power, delegation, and employee empowerment (Bratton, Grint, & Nelson, 2005; Johns, 1996; Luthans, 1995). Similarly, traditional teacher roles are widely known to be more teacher-centered whereas contemporary teaching roles focus more on facilitation, student autonomy, and self-efficacy (Brophy, 1998; Brown, 1987; Cottrell, 2001; Diaz-Rico & Weed, 1995; Nunley, 2002).

#### *Motivation Theory*

From a practical perspective, teachers and managers know from experience that motivation is required for success. Experience shows that students often do not enjoy their learning tasks,

yet they must maintain motivation to be successful. Motivation is essential for learning.

Motivation theory defines two types of motivation: extrinsic and intrinsic. Extrinsic sources of motivation are usually applied by others and involve systems of rewards and punishments. In contrast, intrinsic motivation is usually self-applied and lies in the affective domain of feelings and emotional responses (Johns, 1996; Slavin, 2003). A substantial amount of motivational theory related to education has focused on the value of intrinsic motivation. This school of thought proposes that intrinsically motivating conditions can be facilitated through task design and the application of affective strategies (Cottrell, 2001; Moskowitz, 1978; Slavin, 2003).

A noteworthy motivational sequence for learning is proposed by Wlodkowski (1984). He asserts there are three stages that can help facilitate motivation: attitude and needs in the beginning stage; stimulation and affective strategies in the middle stage; and competence and reinforcement strategies in the final stage. Firstly, the attitude component suggests that teachers strive to facilitate positive attitudes towards learning the subject at hand and to establish expectancy that task demands can be met successfully. In addition, the needs component suggests creating a collaborative rather than competitive environment. In the second stage, stimulation requires the stimulation of learners' attention, and the affective component suggests creating a positive group atmosphere. In the third stage, the competence component suggests creating activities that facilitate feelings of accomplishment and progress as products of effort. Finally, the reinforcement component suggests creating activities that will point to the positive results of tasks and that will lead to praise and/or rewards.

A similar motivational model is proposed by Glasser (1988). Glasser highlights the following motivational elements: survival, love and belonging, power, and freedom. This model is very similar to Wlodkowski's sequence as it addresses essential affective concerns. Firstly, the survival element relates to feelings of comfort and security. Secondly, the love and belonging element suggests a positive group atmosphere that is less competitive and more collaborative. Thirdly, the power element relates to feelings of empowerment that are related to achieving one's goals. Finally, the last element, freedom, relates directly to student autonomy and opportunities for students to make choices.

The last two elements are of particular interest: power and freedom. Power relates to empowerment and satisfaction in making progress towards one's goals. This concept suggests that as students make progress, they feel a sense of power from improving their

skills and gaining more knowledge. Power, therefore, can be viewed as highly motivating. Next, the element of freedom is also highly motivating. If students are given opportunities to make choices, they are more likely to become more intrinsically motivated to reach their goals.

### *Goal Setting Theory*

Research shows that setting goals and making commitments to achieving goals increases motivation and performance (Bandura & Schunk, 1981; Latham & Locke, 2002). Goal setting is generally successful when the goals have the following elements: proximal as when they represent a task to be done in the near future; specific, for example, write one paragraph with no more than one mistake rather than global (do a good job); and challenging as when goals are difficult but reachable. In addition, management and organizational behavior theory proposes a similar "SMART" model for setting motivating goals. SMART is an acronym that represents specific, measurable, achievable, resource-based, and time specific. (Dailey, 2000).

Brophy (1998) suggests that teachers should encourage their students to take goals seriously and commit to accomplishing them. Goals can be listed and students can be asked to select a choice that corresponds to an expected level of effort. This approach aligns with the concept of performance contracting as proposed by Tollefson et al. (1984). This approach facilitates teacher-student interaction about goal setting and it formalizes students' commitments to goals. In addition, Slavin (2003) also suggests that teachers should provide opportunities for students to select their own goals to boost intrinsic motivation and increase self-efficacy.

## Methodology

### *Overview*

The sample group in this study consisted of undergraduate students in their first or second year at a Thai international college. These students were enrolled in English Communication (EC II) courses as part of their general education requirements. Participants in this study were studying academic writing and were assessed with essay examinations. Before written exams, students were presented with three choices: A, B, or C. The students selected which goal they wanted to pursue in preparation for an exam. Each goal required progressively longer and

more challenging compositions with more research and preparation effort. As the preparation time for the exam was limited, the goal setting was proximal and time-specific. As the requirements for the task were presented in detail, the goals were specific and measurable. In addition, because the goals required progressively longer compositions with more research, the goals were challenging and resource-based. Therefore, this goal-setting model clearly followed the basic requirements outlined by goal-setting theory.

### *Population/Sample*

Three EC II classes (group i: 20 students, group ii: 19 students, and group iii: 20 students) with a total of 20 male and 39 female subjects were selected for the study. In total, 129 choices made by 59 students were analyzed. The study group included students from the following bachelor degree programs: Business, Biological Science, Computer Science, Food Service, Finance, Marketing, Social Science, International Business, and SE Asian Studies.

### *Location*

This study was conducted at a Thai International College known for the rigor of the English programs and the quality of graduates. English studies are organized into four English Communication levels: EC I, EC II, EC III, and EC IV. The context for this study was EC II, which is an academic English composition and rhetoric course. In this course, the following rhetorical patterns are introduced, practiced, and assessed: cause and effect, response, and argumentation.

### *Sampling Technique*

To expedite the sampling and analysis of results, the results from the three classes were combined and studied as one group.

### *Procedures*

The English Communication Level Two (EC II) class utilized an effective approach for written assessments. A number of topics, typically three, were identified as possible examination topics and students prepared outline cards with source information and references. On the day of the examination, one of the examination topics was selected to be the examination topic.



The EC II assessment method for written assessments provided an opportunity to study the power of choice of proximal goals. Students were presented with the choice to write longer and more challenging compositions for the possibility of a higher grade. The basic 'C' level was designated as a five-paragraph academic essay with three support points and at least five references. Next, the "B" level was defined as a more detailed essay with six paragraphs and at least seven references. Finally, the "A" level was defined as a seven-paragraph essay with at least eight references.

The procedure for grading the essay examinations was as follows. Firstly, a grading rubric that focused on content and language control was used. The content grade was calculated using the following criteria: organization (35%), research (30%), and style/conventions (35%). After a content grade was assigned, a tally of language control errors across a random 25 lines of text was performed; each error resulted in a deduction of 1.5% from the total content score. Therefore, the final essay score was calculated by the following formula: (total content score) – (number of language control errors x 1.5%). Furthermore, for this study, there was one essay grader, which was the teacher in charge.

The graded exams were analyzed for the following characteristics: 1. What choices the students made; and 2. How their target (chosen) grades correlated with their actual grades.

## Results

The choices the students made are shown in Figure 1. This histogram shows that out of a population of 129 choices, 64 students selected an "A" goal, 48 students selected a 'B' goal, and 17 students selected a "C" goal. The results are noteworthy as they show that approximately 50 percent of the students selected the most challenging task, 37 percent selected the moderate-level task, and 13 percent selected the least difficult task. The findings clearly indicate that in this sample group, more students selected the most difficult task when given the choice. This result suggests that when given the choice, more students in this study gravitated towards more challenging tasks.

A set of data-plot graphs was generated to show the relationship between target grades and actual grades received. Figure 2 displays a data plot of the actual grades 64 students received when choosing an "A" goal. As shown in the graph, the mean is 82 percent, the maximum value is 94 percent, and the minimum value is 52 percent. Figure 3 shows a data plot of the actual grades received by 48 students who selected a "B" target. The mean for this group was

73 %, the maximum value was 88 percent, and the minimum value was 50 percent. Figure 4 displays a data plot of the actual grades that 17 "C" goal students received. For this group, the mean was 68%, the maximum was 79%, and the minimum was 50%.

The findings in Figure 2, Figure 3, and Figure 4 show the tendency that measurable benefits are realized by students who attempt more difficult tasks. The measurable benefits are reflected by the mean grades received, which clearly increase for goals with higher levels of difficulty.

### Conclusions and recommendations

The main objectives for this study were to determine if students are willing to perform more difficult tasks if given the choice, to determine if students who choose to pursue more difficult tasks realize measurable benefits, and to evaluate the potential of using goal-setting theory for task and/or curriculum design.

With regards to the first objective, more of the students in this study chose to pursue the most difficult task when presented with the choice. In this study, 50 percent of students selected the most difficult task, 37 percent selected the moderate task, and 13 percent selected the least difficult task.

With regards to the second objective, the majority of students realized measurable benefits by selecting a more challenging task. The actual grade mean for an "A" target was 82%, and the actual grade mean for a "B" target was 73%.

It can be inferred that the students who selected the more challenging tasks were motivated to practice and prepare more before assessments, which helped to facilitate the improvement and learning of writing and research skills. Therefore, it can be inferred that these students were generally more motivated to learn. This is a clear demonstration of the potential of using the power of choice coupled with goal setting as a motivational strategy.

With regards to the third objective, this study clearly shows the potential of the power of choice for proximal goal setting as a useful strategy for task and curriculum design. Setting proximal goals before tasks or assessments and at different stages in a course can help motivate students to put more effort into their work. The implications of this study suggest that goal setting and providing opportunities for learners to select their own goals can help motivate students to learn.

Practical applications of the power of choice are centered on providing students with more

opportunities to select their own proximal goals. Incorporating this motivational strategy into course and curriculum design is not labor intensive. For example, in an ESL/EFL writing course, three tasks that are progressively more difficult and correlate to higher grade bands could be presented to students before starting a task or assessment. As shown in this research study, composition length and research effort can be readily applied, as they are specific and measurable.

Recommendations for further study are focused on the research of the effectiveness of the power of choice of proximal goals for different courses and types of students. For different courses, the power of choice could be studied for effectiveness in public speaking, reading, literary analysis, or non-English related courses such as mathematics. For different types of students, research could be done for different student ages, such as high school students, or for different types of majors within an undergraduate program. Finally, it is suggested that this study be replicated with a larger sample size and more-detailed tracking of individual students to facilitate the comparison of final course grades received with a control group where the power of choice was not applied.

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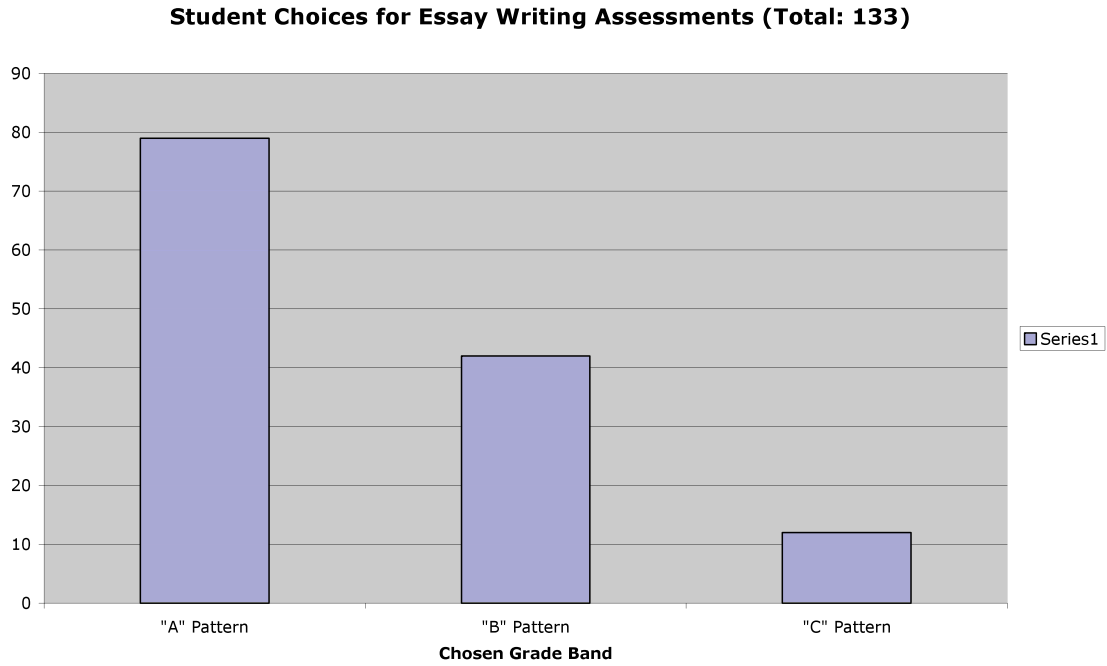


Fig. 1. Student choices.

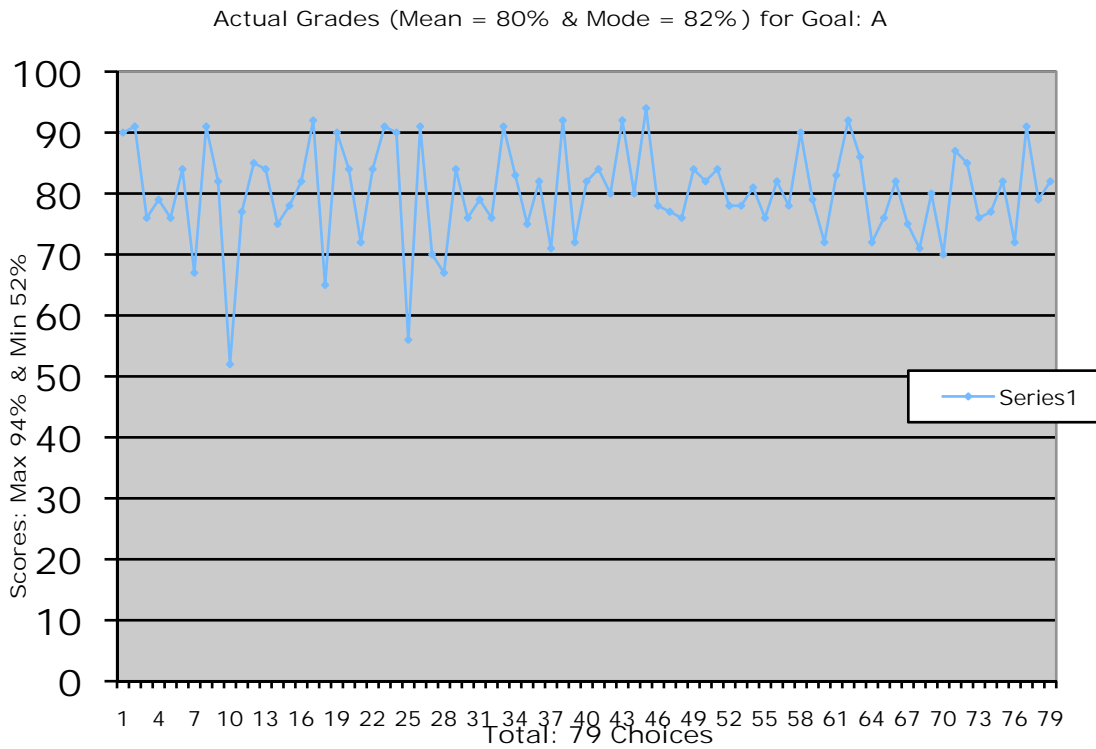


Fig. 2. Actual grades for goal "A."

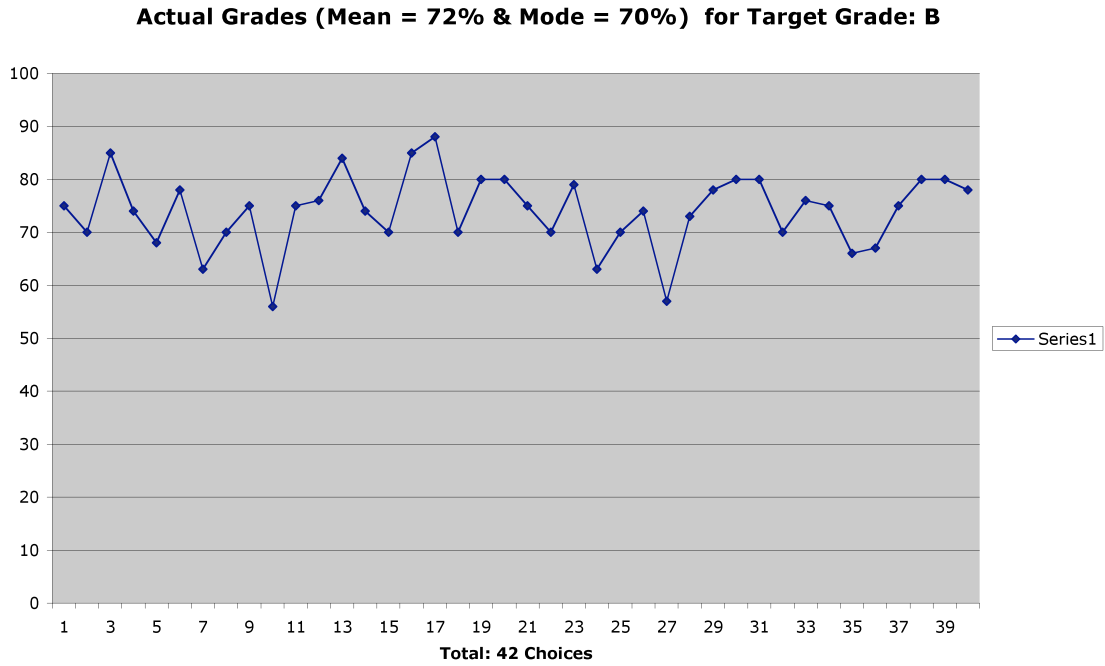


Fig. 3. Actual grades for goal "B."

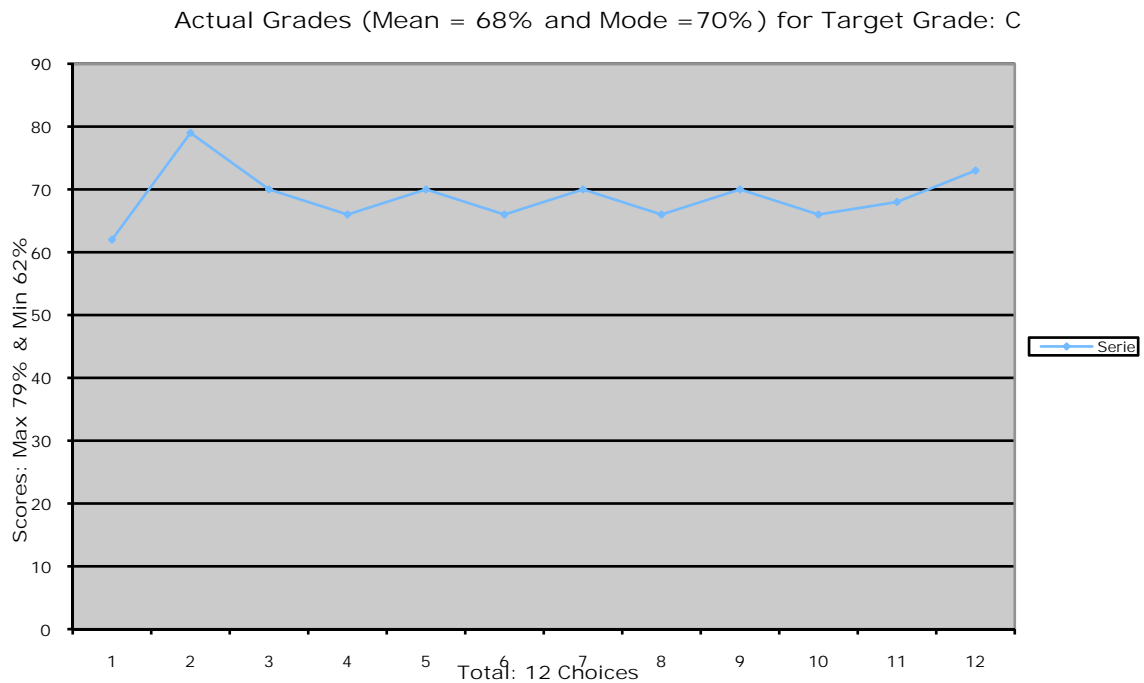


Fig. 4. Actual grades for goal "C."



## Monolingual and Bilingual English Learners in one Classroom: 'Who is at a Disadvantage?'

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### Bio Data:

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### Abstract

As Cook (2004) states learning another language *does* seem to change people's 'thinking' to some extent. This study intends to investigate how monolingual and bilingual ESL learners perform on reading comprehension tests in mixed-mono/bilingual classrooms. To this end the interaction between mono/bilinguality with gender and reading ability in respect to general English proficiency has been taken into account. As data analysis indicated, mono and bilingual students differed significantly in their reading comprehension scores and also the interaction effect between linguality and proficiency was found to be significant, indicating that reading comprehension scores were different for students with low and high proficiency in different linguality backgrounds. On the other hand, male and female students had statistically equal reading comprehension scores. Further, the interaction effect between linguality and gender is found to be non-significant. Therefore, it was concluded that monolingual students need to be provided with more consideration so that they may not lag behind their bilingual peers in reading comprehension tasks in mixed-mono/bilingual classrooms.

Key terms: Linguality, reading comprehension, language proficiency

### Introduction

Improving reading achievement for all students is one of the major goals of learning an additional language. Reading literacy is one of the most fundamental academic skills, important in its own right and essential for success in language learning. The purpose of reading is to connect the ideas on the page to what you already know. If you don't know

anything about a subject, then pouring words of text into your mind is like pouring water into your hand. You don't retain much. Similarly, if you like sports, then reading the sports page is easy. You have a framework in your mind for reading, understanding and storing information.

According to Chastain, (1988, p. 216) "Reading is a basic and complementary skill in language learning." Second language learners need to read and to read greater and greater quantities of authentic materials for communication. It involves comprehension and when readers do not comprehend, they are not reading.

Among other skills, reading is probably the most important skill learners will need to succeed in their studies. Since reading is a problem-solving activity, the idea of strategic learning of reading became the matter of investigation in recent years. Urquhart & Weir (1998, p. 95) define strategies as "ways of getting around difficulties encountered while reading". When encountering comprehension problems, accomplished readers take immediate steps by monitoring their reading process carefully. They are aware of their own cognitive and linguistic resources, and are capable of directing their attention to the appropriate clues in anticipating, organizing and retaining text information. Such readers are strategic readers and their reading behavior is referred to as "strategic reading" (Koda, 2005, p. 204).

During reading many interactive processes occur. These may vary by reader, and the fact that readers engage in different activities while reading does not necessarily mean that their comprehension of the text will be different, and vice versa. One variable in the reading process is *activation*. Researches have shown that readers' knowledge and experiences influence the realization of meaning, and if relevant schemata are activated during the reading process, then the reader may comprehend the text better.

What can be said, though, is that gender and linguality as variables in L2 reading deserves more attention. Alderson (2000) contends that readers may differ in their knowledge and experiences, and therefore the products of reading will also differ. In a discussion of stable reader characteristics, he lists the gender of the reader and sites only *one* study to support his claim that test designers need to be cautious not to bias assessment tasks toward one gender. Because of the lack of L2 reading studies that consider gender, it is difficult to provide evidence to support Alderson's suggestions.

Knowing two or more languages well gives kids so many advantages in life. Bilingual kids



have the advantage of knowing two cultures, of being able to communicate with a wider variety of people, and of possible economic advantages in their future (Rosenberg, 1996).

Parents frequently have questions about how second language learning affects reading ability, social skills, and scholastic achievement. Research suggests that children who learn a second language are more creative and better at solving complex problems than those who do not. Studies have shown that bilinguals outperform similar monolingual peers on both verbal and nonverbal tests of intelligence and tend to achieve higher scores on standardized tests. Additionally, individuals who speak more than one language have the ability to communicate with more people, read more literature, and benefit more fully from travel abroad. Knowing a second language also gives people a competitive advantage in the workforce.

According to Baker (2000), the advantages of bilingualism have been identified by research projects around the world. Bilingual children have more fluent, flexible and creative thinking. They can communicate more naturally and expressively, maintaining a finer texture of relationships with parents and grandparents, as well as with the local and wider communities in which they live. They gain the benefits of two sets of literatures, traditions, ideas, ways of thinking and behaving. They can act as a bridge between people of different colors, creeds and cultures. With two languages come a wider cultural experience, greater tolerance of differences and less racism. As barriers to movement between countries are taken down, the earning power of bilinguals rises. Further advantages include raised self-esteem, increased achievement, and greater proficiency with other languages.

As Cook (2004) states learning another language *does* seem to change people's 'thinking' to some extent. Human beings do not all think in the same way. The starting point must be to show that speakers of different languages indeed have different concepts in each language in their mind. For example speakers of Berinmo in Papua New Guinea and speakers of English have two pairs of colours *nol/wor* and *blue/green* with different boundaries between them (Davidoff, Davies & Roberson, 1999); and speakers of languages that mark gender perceive inanimate objects as having characteristics typical of their grammatical gender (Boroditsky, Schmidt & Philips, 2003, cited in Cook, 2004). Cook (2004) uses the term multicompetence to refer to the knowledge of two or more languages in one mind. This term was devised to encompass both the language systems present in the same mind – the first language (L1) and the interlanguage (Selinker, 1972). Since the first language and the other language(s) are in the same mind, the concept of multi-competence suggests that they must form a language

super-system at some level rather than completely isolated systems: bilinguals don't have two heads. Bilingual cognition research also supports the view that L2 users differ from their monolingual peers in many ways, "in particular having a different knowledge of the L1 in terms of syntax, vocabulary, phonology, pragmatics, and so on" (Cook, 2004, p.1).

Some researches found that successful bilingual readers have figured out how to utilize their knowledge and abilities developed in Spanish to enhance their English reading comprehension. They strategically implement this knowledge in a timely manner; specifically, they have well-defined strategies when confronting unknown words and/or unfamiliar expressions in English. Less proficient bilingual readers appear to view their two languages as separate and unrelated, and consequently do not take advantage of their full linguistic repertoire (Langer, et al, 1990; Jiménez, 1992; Jiménez, Garcia & Pearson, in press).

What seems to be pivotal is the interaction between linguality and reading comprehension abilities in language learning, which has not been focused more to date. In other words, the present researchers are keen to find out whether linguality has any effect on reading comprehension ability. The outcome of this research will indicate whether monolinguals and bilinguals should be treated the same or differently in reading tasks. Therefore the present study formulates the following hypotheses:

1. *Bilingual and monolingual students differ significantly in reading comprehension scores.*
2. *There will be significant interaction between linguality and proficiency in reading comprehension scores.*
3. *Male and female students differ significantly in their reading comprehension scores.*
4. *There will be significant interaction between linguality and gender in reading comprehension scores.*

## Methodology

### Subjects

The participants of the present study were male and female first year pre-university students (number=157) from private and government pre-university colleges (P.U.Cs) with Kannada as medium of instruction in the city of Mysore, India. They were of 16 to 18 years of age. These colleges were randomly selected.

Through a background questionnaire two groups of students in terms of linguality participated in this study:

*Group A* (47 male and 30 female monolinguals)

*Group B* (53 male and 27 female bilinguals)

In the present study monolinguals are those students who use just one language (except English) at home or in society fluently. Although they may understand another language, they are not able to communicate with others by using more than one language, while bilinguals use more than one language (except English) at home or in or in their communications.

In this study English has not been considered as an additional language for those subjects who were not capable of using it as a means of communication in their daily conversations whether inside or outside of their homes.

Participants, in all groups were homogenous, in terms of their age, methodology used at schools, and the number of hours devoted to the teaching of English.

#### Materials

The following instruments were used:

a) Language proficiency test (NELSON, series 400 B).

This test was composed of multiple-choice cloze passage, vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation sections. In order to have a reliable test of proficiency at the piloting stage the test was administered to 15 students. Its reliability through the K-R21 formula turned out to be .71.

b) Test of reading comprehension in English

The test of reading comprehension in English was from the reading component of the *Cambridge Preparation for the TOEFL Test* (Gear, J, 1993. pp. 416-421). The time allowed was 30 minutes as determined at the piloting stage. The reading passages used in this study contained a general content, which were of interest to the students. Readability of the reading text is an objective, but not necessarily very valid, measure of the difficulty of a text. Readability formulae look at texts only as products. As Rigg (1896, p.75) puts it, 'the basic assumption underlying any readability formula is that meaning is in the print, in the text. There is no recognition that meaning is created by each reader as the reader engages with the text'. Even leaving aside issues of social context and individual motivation, and looking at

texts as products, the criteria used by readability formulae are doubtful. Factors other than word and sentence length are not accounted for. For example, reduced clauses, which tend to shorten sentences, can create greater difficulty for the reader than longer sentences, which are easier to 'unpack'. Where this is not used, intuition may be relied on. If materials are perceived as boring or as too easy or too difficult, learners will be unmotivated to do the task (Scarcella and Oxford, 1990). A text that is too easy to comprehend furnishes few opportunities for strategy use and in this case students will probably fail to grasp the value of strategy use. On the other hand, a text that is too difficult to understand may not be comprehensible even with the employment of a variety of strategies. "Metacognitive capabilities become operative only in reading task perceived as hard but attainable. Tasks that offer minimal challenge will not be incentive enough for readers to make extra efforts to manipulate their cognitive resources" (Koda, 2005, p. 211).

To have a reliable test it was piloted on 15 students and through the K-R21 formula the reliability turned out to be .68. Then after calculating the correlation coefficient (.75) between the Nelson test of proficiency and the test of reading in English in the piloting stage for the purpose of having a valid test, this test of reading turned out to be suitable for this study.

c) Self-evaluation proficiency scale;

In order to classify the participants into monolinguals and bilinguals they were requested to rate their abilities in Kannada, English, Hindi, Tamil, Urdu and Telugu (the subjects were also asked to specify if there is any one not mentioned in the questionnaire) on 4-points in each language. To gain this aim the investigators developed a questionnaire (see table 1) included five tables; inside each table the subjects were provided with different languages and also different skills, therefore they were requested to have a self- evaluation on their level of proficiency in different languages based on Likert scale ranging from excellent (1) to very weak (4) (see appendix 3). To measure the internal consistency of the questionnaire, after piloting it with 15 students of the similar group, Cronback alpha was utilized as the most appropriate reliability index (Oxford, 1995). The questionnaire appeared to be reliable with a mean coefficient of .59, which is significant.

d) A background questionnaire:

In order to elicit information about participants, a background questionnaire was developed

by the investigators (see table 2). It covered issues such as the subjects' age, gender and linguality status. The subjects were assured that the elicited information would be accorded full confidentiality.

#### Procedure

The investigators approached the pre-university college authorities in order to get their consent for conducting the study. The conditions for testing were strictly followed as far as possible. The researchers firstly read instructions printed on the top of the questionnaires clearly and then before the start of each test, the investigators cleared doubts. The way of answering the questions was made clear to the participants and in case of any difficulty they were encouraged to ask question and were provided with help. The subjects were also informed that their performance will be kept confidential and will not have any effect on their final exam scores.

The administration of proficiency and reading comprehension tests took 60 minutes. The whole study was completed in three phases as shown below:

*Phase 1:* First, through administering the Nelson Proficiency test (Series 400B) to 157 pre-university students, two groups of High and Low language proficiency levels were identified, that is, those whose scores were below the medium were taken as Low and those whose scores were above the medium as High group, making 157 students in total. The time allowed as determined at the pilot study was 30 minutes.

*Phase 2:* Then the reading comprehension test was administered to the students to be completed in 30 minutes as determined at the pilot study in order to have an assessment of their reading ability in English.

*Phase 3:* Soon after completing the reading comprehension test the subjects were given the background questionnaire in order to elicit some information on the basis of the participants' age, gender and linguality status.

#### Results and Discussion

The two-way ANOVA was employed in order to analyze the collected data. The statistical representation of analyzed data is given in the following tables:

Table 1

Mean Reading Comprehension scores of mono and bilingual subjects with high and low proficiency in General English knowledge and Gender

Variables		Linguality				Total	
		Monolingual		Bilingual		Mean	S.D
		Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D		
Proficiency	Low	9.16	2.47	9.40	3.61	9.26	2.97
	High	11.38	3.62	14.20	3.85	13.17	3.99
	Total	9.91	3.07	12.10	4.43	11.03	3.97
Gender	Male	9.81	3.40	12.43	4.91	11.20	4.45
	Female	10.07	2.53	11.44	3.26	10.72	2.96
	Total	9.91	3.07	12.10	4.43	11.03	3.97

Table 2

Results of two-way ANOVA for mean Reading Comprehension scores of mono and bilingual subjects with high and low proficiency in General English knowledge and Gender

Parameters	Source of variation	F value	Df	P vale
Linguality/Proficiency	Between linguality (A)	7.606	1, 153	.007 (S)
	Between Proficiency (B)	40.158	1, 153	.000 (S)
	Interaction (A x B)	5.380	1, 153	.022 (S)
Linguality/Gender				
	Between Gender (B)	.329	1, 153	.567 (NS)
	Interaction (A x B)	.958	1, 153	.329 (NS)

Note: S-significant; NS-Non-significant

Figure1

Mean reading comprehension scores of mono and bilingual students with high and low proficiency

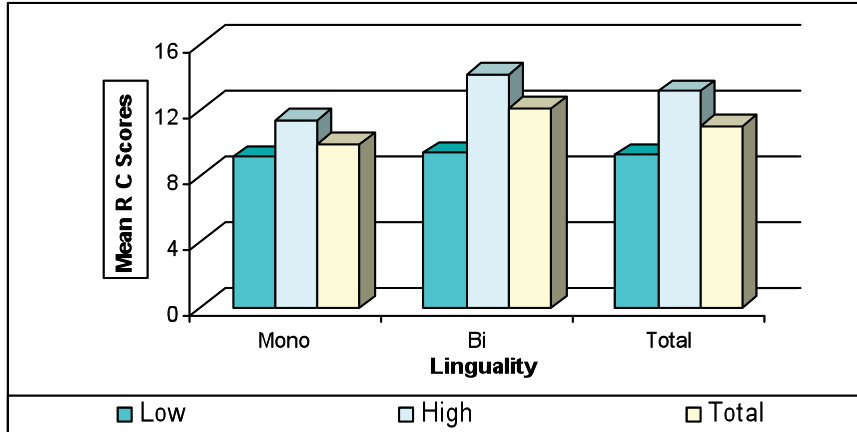
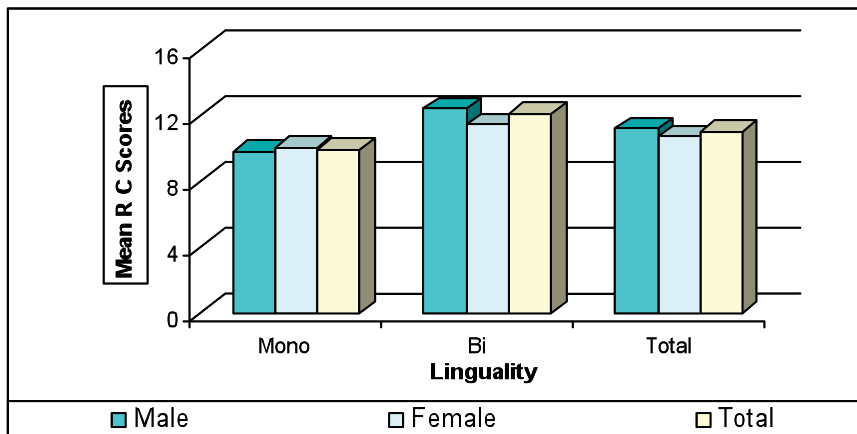


Figure2

Mean reading comprehension scores of male and female students in mono and bilingualism



Regarding the first research hypothesis (Bilingual and monolingual students differ significantly in reading comprehension scores.) as indicated in table 2, mono and bilingual students differed significantly in their reading comprehension scores as the obtained F value of 7.606 was found to be significant at .007 level. From the mean values it is clear that bilingual students had significantly higher scores than monolingual students (means 12.10 and 9.91 respectively). Further, students with high proficiency (mean 13.17) had significantly

( $F=40.158$ ;  $P<.000$ ) higher scores than students with low proficiency (mean 9.26). Therefore, Hypothesis 1 is accepted for reading comprehension scores as there was significant F value where bilinguals scored significantly higher than monolingual.

Actually, many studies prove that bilingual learners have linguistic advantages compared to their monolingual equals. For example, bilinguals have been shown to have a much higher level of linguistic awareness, and the cognitive processes connected to learning a second language are very similar to the processes connected to third language acquisition, which means that bilinguals should be better equipped for learning their third language than monolinguals for learning their second language. In addition, bilingual pupils have access to much larger amount of language material than the monolingual pupils by which their linguistic capability is enlarged and they are much more flexible with regards to code shifting and the usage of strategies.

Herinda and Jessner (2000) propose that bilingual and multilingual learners have significant advantages compared to monolingual ones both in terms of language learning, management and maintenance skills. Firstly, the multilingual learner's cognitive aspects of learning are more developed than monolingual pupils who do not know the skills for acquiring a new language. Secondly, the pupil has to choose from his or her language repertoire which language to use in a given communicative situation, which demands the act of balancing communicative requirements with one's language resources. Thirdly, the multilingual learner has to develop his or her skills in all three languages in order to process: "the acquisition of more than one language encourages the development of a metasystem which is then used in subsequent processes of language learning" (Hernida and Jessner, 2000, p. 93).

With respect to the second research hypothesis (there will be significant interaction between linguality and proficiency in reading comprehension scores) the interaction effect between linguality and proficiency is found to be significant ( $F=5.38$ ;  $P<.022$ ) indicating that the pattern reading comprehension scores are different for students with low and high proficiency in different lingual backgrounds. From the mean values it is evident that bilinguals with high proficiency had significantly higher reading comprehension scores than any other 3 groups. Therefore, Hypothesis 2 is accepted, as there was a significant interaction effect between linguality and proficiency, where students with high proficiency and bilingualism had highest scores.

As far as the third and forth research hypotheses are concerned (H3: male and female



students differ significantly in their reading comprehension scores, H4: there will be significant interaction between linguality and gender in reading comprehension scores). Male and female students had statistically equal reading comprehension scores as the obtained F value of .329 was found to be non-significant ( $P < .567$ ). Further, the interaction effect between linguality and gender is found to be non-significant ( $F = .958$ ;  $P < .329$ ) indicating that the pattern of reading comprehension scores are similar for male and female students irrespective of the lingual background they have. Therefore, the third and fourth hypotheses were rejected as there were no significant differences between gender as well as for interaction between linguality and gender.

#### Conclusion and Implications

As the data analysis indicated, mono and bilingual students differed significantly in their reading comprehension scores. This is to suggest that bilingual students had significantly higher scores than monolingual students irrespective of their proficiency levels. Further, students with high proficiency had significantly higher scores than students with low proficiency. It has also been manifested that male and female students had statistically equal reading comprehension scores. In another view the interaction effect between linguality and gender is also found to be non-significant indicating that the reading comprehension scores are similar for male and female students irrespective of the linguality background they have.

An obvious advantage of learning to read one's native language and subsequently learning to read a second language is that it offers a promising opportunity to become biliterate - a skilled reader and writer of two languages. Work by Diaz & Klinger (1991), Bialystok (1991), Hakuta (1986), suggest that bilingualism and biliteracy enhance cognitive and metalinguistic abilities and this appears to support the findings of the present study. Because of the critical role that language development has in reading, the role of bilingualism in the development of reading skills needs to be clearly delineated.

#### Main implication of this study

As Rosenberg (1996) mentioned, knowing two or more languages truly gives an advantage to bilinguals. Bilinguals have the advantage of knowing two cultures, of being able to communicate with a wider variety of people, and so on. As Cook (2004) states learning another language *does* seem to change people's 'thinking' to some extent. This study has also

manifested that bilinguals' ability was greater than their monolingual peers in reading comprehension. In other words bilinguals had an advantage over monolinguals in the reading skill. It is suggested that in the process of teaching reading abilities, enough care should be paid to the monolinguals that are at a disadvantage compared to their bilingual peers.

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Appendix 1: Measurement of linguality

The language or languages that you use (1) and with the groups 2-5. And also place one of the following numbers in each cell to indicate the competence knowledge of yours in these skills of language(s)

Excellent =1

Good =2

Weak =3

Very weak =4

Language(s) used with self

Name of language	Understand	Speak	Read	Write
Kannada				
Urdu				
Hindi				
Telugu				
Marathi				
English				
Tamil				
Others(specify):				

Language(s) used with Friends

Name of language	Understand	Speak	Read	Write
Kannada				
Urdu				
Hindi				
Telugu				
Marathi				
English				
Tamil				
Others(specify):				

Language(s) used with brothers and sisters

Name of language	Understand	Speak	Read	Write
Kannada				
Urdu				
Hindi				
Telugu				
Marathi				
English				
Tamil				
Others(specify):				

Language(s) used with Parents/ and other elder members of family

Name of language	Understand	Speak	Read	Write
Kannada				
Urdu				
Hindi				
Telugu				
Marathi				
English				
Tamil				
Others(specify):				

Language(s) used with neighbors

Name of language	Understand	Speak	Read	Write
Kannada				
Urdu				
Hindi				
Telugu				
Marathi				
English				
Tamil				
Others(specify):				

Appendix 2

Students' Proforma

1-Name of the student:.....

2-Age.....

3-Gender.....

4-Name of college.....

5- Class studying: .....

#!\$ '&)\* , ( ) / 0/d),+ "..... "



## A Descriptive Study on Turkish Teachers of English Regarding Their Professional Needs, Efforts for Development and Available Resources

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### Abstract

The purpose of this study was to provide Turkish EFL (English as a foreign language) teachers' profiles with a specific emphasis on their professional needs. In addition, it describes the major sources of reference Turkish EFL Teachers make use of, the endeavours they are engaged in for professional development, preferred teaching methods and the available sources at their disposal in schools. Data for this study were collected from 132 in-service teachers utilizing a questionnaire and two open-ended questions. This study provided important affirmation and meaningful data collection to support what many teachers have been living for their whole professional lives in Turkey. Data analysis revealed that Turkish EFL teachers associate profession-related improvement with studying textbooks on grammar. It was also found that the in-service seminars organized by the Ministry of National Education were far beyond meeting the professional needs of the teachers.

Keywords: Turkish EFL teachers; Professional needs, foreign language teaching, professional EFL resources

## Introduction

Teacher Training takes an important place in the reformation and development of educational systems of all countries nowadays. And teachers are central and a determining factor in the realization of successful teaching practices of this training, (Kayhan, 1999, p. 3). They reflect the teacher training system of the country it belongs. Thus, in order to create an effective teaching environment conducive to learning teachers' needs should be addressed and voices be heard. In the case of the foreign/second language teaching profession the situation is even more crucial and demanding as the subject matter is of a dynamic nature. Those who are engaged in language teaching profession have the burden of keeping up-to-date, not only with the language which is taught but ever changing learner needs and profiles as well, (Kayhan 1999:3). In current literature on foreign/second language teaching, subject matter knowledge is considered the most essential ingredient required for effective teaching (Morain, 1993; Schrier, 1994; Cullen, 1994; Cross, 1995; Lafayette, 1995; Wing, 1995; Brosh, 1996). According to Schrier (1994), along with subject matter knowledge, professional foreign language teachers must also have 'the ability to reflect, analyze critically, select the tools and materials of teaching, and evaluate the products and performance of the learner (p.220).'

Wing (1995) emphasized that today's language teachers are expected to have multiple roles along with target language competence:

'In structuring the foreign language environment, the teacher needs to be a manager who facilitates language acquisition; a resource developer who uses to the greatest advantage the target and native languages, materials, and technology; an analyst who observes and evaluates what is happening in the classroom (p.168).'

Cross (1995) identified several ingredients of an ideal language teacher. According to his profile, an ideal language teacher should have high level of education, subject matter competence, professional competence which involves lesson planning, textbook selection, materials and tests design, awareness of current teaching approaches, and educational theory.

According to Williams (1975), in order to teach the language effectively, a teacher needs two major competencies well as having excellent knowledge of the target language s/he is teaching, s/he should have teaching skills to apply in the classroom. According to Williams'



argument, language teacher should have a good blend of target language knowledge on the one hand and skills to present and teach the target language to the students on the other.

In a study with 200 foreign language teachers teaching English, French, Arabic, and Hebrew to 406 ninth-grade high school students, Brosh (1996) identified the perceived characteristics of effective language teachers. According to the results of this study, desirable characteristics of effective language teachers include: knowledge and command of the target language, the ability to organize, explain, and clarify, and the ability to arouse and sustain interest and motivation among students.

As mentioned earlier, foreign language teachers need to keep their subject matter knowledge up-to-date. Horwitz (1996) pointing out the nature of language learning process, asserted that the process accumulates over time and might be never completed. Hence, for foreign language teachers it is a great fallacy to believe that four or some years of college preparation is sufficient. It must be realized that subsequent professional development is a must. Regarding the same issue, Penner (1992) asserted that years of teaching experience and knowledge of teaching methods do not guarantee effective teaching. Teachers should constantly look for ways to develop themselves professionally and sharpen their teaching skills along with the subject matter.

In the article titled 'On Being and Becoming a Foreign Language Teacher' Hammadou and Bernhardt (1987) emphasize the dynamic nature of the subject matter language teachers are engaged in and assert that since the use of the target language is limited to classroom sessions, language teachers might lose their skills over time. Regarding the same point they stated that language teachers differ from other teachers in that they do not teach a 'factual product' but rather a process of communication and that they may lose the use of the process if they themselves do not use it on a regular basis (p.302). Included in many factors that directly influence the success of language teachers are also conditions such as: teaching resources, administrative support, and physical facilities in schools where teachers work (Crookes, 1997) and membership of journal as Allender (1999) stated: a membership and journal subscription is a substantial professional gift to new teachers".

In order to keep up with such a demanding profession foreign language teachers need extensive opportunities for professional development both at home and their work settings. In the light of the above findings it can be said that today's foreign language teachers should be in constantly setting goals for professional development and making plans which are

compatible with the requirements imposed by contemporary approaches.

To sum up, considering the rapid age of information especially with regard to the accessibility of knowledge, the versatility of learner and the limited retained time of knowledge, the teacher needs to be communicative and share with others in a manner that encourages an effective way of communication, establishes positive mutual working relationships with colleagues, continuously sharing information and conferring with them. Furthermore, s/he should be knowledgeable to keep her knowledge base fresh, always integrating new knowledge with prior knowledge and she should be creative in problem solving (Torrance, 1986). Teachers are supposed to have competence to develop, utilize and reach a variety of sources. Furthermore, teachers should be able to guide and help their students to utilize the instructional sources. What needs to be noted is that it is really difficult to provide a profile of an 'ideal language teacher'. However, it would not be wrong to say that the most important of all is to identify teachers' needs and provide them with opportunities to meet their needs on a regular basis.

In the rest of the paper, we present a brief description of English language teaching and ELT teacher preparation programs in Turkey.

### English Language Teaching in Turkey

In Turkey, a number of private and state institutions such as universities, private language courses, language teaching centers, British and American Culture Clubs are involved in English language teaching. However, teacher trainers and researchers are not satisfied with the level reached today regarding English language learning/teaching practices. According to researchers and teacher trainers in order to improve the quality of teaching new projects should be initiated and new steps need to be taken. (Demircan, 2006; Çelebi, 2006; Gün, 2007; Tanış, 2007; Saracaloğlu & Varol, 2007; Taş, 2002; Özbay, 2007). According to these researchers, English language teaching is handicapped with a number of acute problems in Turkey such as; constant shortage of English language teachers, crowded classrooms, lack of instructional materials. Relating to this issue, some important questions as to "Why does Turkey fail in English Language teaching? or, "What do English teachers do behind the closed-doors in classrooms?" should be asked and responses should be sought.

It still remains unanswered whether the mentioned problems result from the education offered to the students or teachers. To this end it will be wise to investigate the issue

regarding a number of variables. This study will both question the teacher-related variables in a country of which accession to the European Union is in progress and shed light on a variety of other points regarding language teaching. More specifically, the present study aims to describe Turkish EFL teachers regarding their professional needs, their efforts in professional development and available resources in their work settings.

### EFL Teacher Preparation Program

In Turkey, the training of English language teachers covers 5 years including one-year English preparatory education. Those who pass proficiency exam at the beginning of the semester are directly placed in the preservice teacher preparation program. Throughout their education, prospective English language teachers receive 2, 3 or maximum 4 credit hour courses. Courses last 45 minutes and cover three major areas of knowledge; field-specific courses, teaching and pedagogy-related courses and general culture courses. Starting from 1997-1998 academic year, training of teachers at faculties of education was standardized. That is, regardless of the faculty, all teachers receive the same courses in their particular fields. Textbooks for the courses are selected from the books published by British and American publication companies. The classes are generally crowded exceeding 40 students. Large classes are a major problem in teacher preparation programs, (Demircan, 2006; Paker , 2006; Enginarlar, 2003). Lecturing and question /answer are commonly employed teaching methods. However, parallel to the contemporary language teaching theories and methods some encouraging changes have occurred. Recently, teacher trainers have started to adapt problem-based and project-based teaching methods.

### Research Questions

The present study was guided by the following research questions:

1. Who are Turkish in-service English teachers in terms of, subscription to a professional journal, availability of English TV channels, availability of a library specifically assigned to ELT at home?
2. What are the major sources Turkish EFL teachers refer to receive knowledge?
3. What are the professional topics that Turkish EFL teachers request at future inservice seminars?
4. What are the available resources at work places?

5. What are the preferred teaching methods by Turkish EFL teachers?
6. What is the most preferred classroom seating type by Turkish EFL teachers?

The teachers were also asked two open-ended questions regarding their preservice teacher preparation program and their personal efforts for professional development

7. What do you do to improve yourself professionally?
8. Given a second chance, which courses would you like to take at a preservice teacher preparation program?

### Setting and participants

The participants of the study are 132 Turkish teachers of English who graduated from different universities across the country. Of the participants, 12 were found to be the graduates of different departments other than English language teaching. (2 participants graduated from the department of physics, 1 engineering; 1 marketing; 3 Turkish history; 19 English Language and Literature Department; 1 biology, 1 German department, 1 electric department, 1 from Faculty of Fine Arts, 1 from Math department). The rest graduated from ELT departments. Their teaching experience ranges from 1 to 25 years, and their ages rank from 21 to 46 plus. All the participants are primary and secondary school English language teachers working at public schools located in Isparta. 59.09% (78) of the participants are females and 40.91% (54) are males.

### Data collection and analysis

Demographic information including gender, age, years of teaching experience and grade level presently teaching was collected through a personal information form and the questions were determined through the questionnaire. The researchers collected qualitative data from the teachers by using questions, and surveys. The questionnaire includes 6 major questions (indicated in research questions), and two open-ended questions were addressed to participants. Expert opinion was received regarding the questionnaire and the questions. Based on the necessary modifications were made. Furthermore, in order to test the clarity of the items a pilot study was conducted. Descriptive statistics was used to analyze the data. Frequencies and percentages of the teachers' responses were presented in tables.

Findings

Table 1. Biographical Information (who are Turkish EFL teachers)

	No		Yes	
	N	%	N	%
The subscription of Turkish EFL teachers to English Language Journal	106	80	26	20
Watching English tv channels	64	48	68	52
Availability of a library specifically assigned to ELT	14	11	118	89

Table 1 indicates teachers' subscription to a professional journal. Of the 132 teachers only 20% (26) of them are current subscribers to a professional journal whereas 80% (108) are not. According to the table, half of the participating teachers (52 %) regularly watch TV which is a positive finding. 89% (118) of the teachers have a library specifically designed to English language teaching at home. This result supports the obtained findings that written documents, that is, books are a major source of knowledge.

Table 2. Major sources to receive knowledge

	No		Yes	
	N	%	N	%
A (conferred with an experienced friend)	100	76	32	24
B (in-service training courses)	121	92	11	8
C (written sources; books, journals etc...)	12	9	118	89
D (internet)	91	69	41	31

In order to receive professional knowledge, only 24% of the teachers state that they confer with experienced friends. 92% (121) of the teachers did not consider inservice seminars as a source of professional knowledge. The results indicate that 89% (118) of the teachers benefit from written sources such as books and journals to develop professionally and follow up the latest developments in the field. This indicates that most of the Turkish EFL teachers rely on books and journals to satisfy their hunger for professional knowledge. 31% (41) of teachers do not use the internet and this result indicates that after the use of book, the internet is the second most popular source Turkish EFL teachers refer to receive knowledge.

Table 3. Preferences of profession-specific topics for future in-service seminars

	No		Yes	
	N	%	N	%
a) NLP (Neuro Linguistic Programming) in ELT	107	81	25	19
b) Research skills in the classroom	112	85	20	15
c) Teaching English to young children	91	69	41	31
d) Materials development	91	69	41	31
e) Use of drama techniques in language teaching	80	61	52	39
f) Communicative approaches to language teaching & applications	94	71	38	29
g) Testing techniques	115	87	17	13
h) Professional development	68	52	64	48
j) Learner autonomy	102	77	30	23
k) Multiple intelligences and its application in the classroom	86	65	46	35
l) Teaching in multi-level classrooms	88	67	44	33

In order to identify teachers' professional needs subjects were asked to state the topics they want to learn at future in-service seminars. With respect to topic preferences interesting results came to light. The findings revealed that some popular issues in ELT such as research skills, testing techniques, learner autonomy and NLP did not receive due credit from teachers. However, 48 percent of teachers were found to be interested in the issue of 'professional development'.

Table 4. Available instructional resources at work places

	No		Yes	
	N	%	N	%
a) availability of audio-visual materials in school	15	11	117	89
b) availability of resource room in school	97	73	35	27
c) recognition of English language teaching by school administration	21	16	110	83
d) availability of language laboratory in school	109	83	23	17
a) availability of audio-visual materials in school	15	11	117	89

Table 4 showed the available instructional resources. 89% (117) of the teachers specified that they have audio-visual materials in their school settings. However, 73% (97) of them stated that there is not a resource room available specifically for English language teachers. 83% (110) of the participating teachers expressed that the school administration promotes

English language teaching, which is pleasing, but 83% (109) of them have no English laboratory in school settings.

*Table 5. Preferred Teaching Methods*

	No		Yes	
	N	%	N	%
Dividing students into small groups	105	80	27	20
Using the audio-visual materials in classroom	55	42	77	58
Having students take notes about the lecture (dictation)	98	74	34	26
Lecturing	87	66	45	34
Giving project as a take-home and induce them for research	74	56	58	44
Problem solving based language instruction	104	79	28	21

Teachers were asked to specify their preferences of teaching method. The most widely used teaching methods are use of audio-visual aids (58%) and project based-teaching (44%) and the least popular teaching methods are dividing the class into small groups (20%) and problem-solving based instruction (21%). Since most of the public schools have large classes, we should not be discouraged to see only 27 teachers employ small group techniques in classroom. 21% of the teachers only indicated that they use problem-solving based language instruction. This finding is not in line with the current educational approaches which advocate problem-solving and critical thinking skills. Regarding this issue, researchers assume that this shortcoming is associated with the teachers themselves; that is most importantly in order to promote the mentioned higher level thinking skills; teachers should first have these skills themselves. In other words, teachers who do not have these skills would not be expected to be able to adapt them to educational activities in classrooms.

A total of 58 (77%) teachers stated that they have been using audio-visual aids in their classrooms and 58% of the participants stated they prefer 'hands-on projects'. These are desirable findings. However, in a further study the teachers might be asked their understanding of 'project-based' teaching. That is, how they are integrating projects in their courses.

*Table 5. Seating Plan of Classrooms*

Seating type	N	%
U type	9	6.8
Traditional	121	91.7
semicircle	2	1.5
Total	132	100.0

Table 5 gives information regarding the seating plan in classrooms. 91.7% (121) of the teachers use traditional seating and only 1.5% (3) of them use semicircle seating styles. This result indicates that Turkish EFL teachers have traditional classroom seating which is not consistent with the requirements of communicative language teaching. However, another study might look at what is realistically possible in terms of arranging the seating in the classroom, taking into consideration the classroom conditions in school settings in Turkey.

*Table 6. Teachers' efforts for professional development*

Internet	TV	Studying for exam	KPDS	Film, cd, music	Experienced friends	Different sources
27	16	63		11	13	13

\*Since the teachers gave more than one answer to the open-ended question the total of the teacher in this table seemed 143.

In an open-ended question, the teachers were asked what they personally do to improve themselves professionally. The responses which were counted and analyzed were categorized under broad titles and the results were presented in the Table 6. The findings revealed that teachers are engaged in a variety of activities to professionally develop themselves. Some of them state that they try to develop professionally by surfing on the internet (27), by watching English TV channels (16), consulting experienced friends (13), using different sources which were identified (13). However, surprisingly 63 teachers stated that they study grammar books and try to receive high scores from a central exam called 'Foreign Language Proficiency Examination for State Employees' (KPDS) which is heavily based on grammar and vocabulary. This finding is surprising in the sense that Turkish teachers of English associate 'professional development' with studying for KPDS. As mentioned earlier, 'professional development' ranked first in the list of profession-related topics for inservice seminars in future. It appears that Turkish teachers of English definitely need to be informed about what exactly 'professional development' means.



*Table 7. Desired and Undesired Courses at Preservice Teacher Preparation Program*

Desired courses	N	Undesired courses	N
Translation	6	English and American Literature	20
Grammar	14	Semantics	5
Four skills	37	Syntax	4
Pedagogical courses	13	Linguistics	6
Materials development	4	English history	2
Methods	35	Structure	4
Novel and poem	2	Research skills	3
Linguistics	5	History of English Language	2

A second open-ended question asked to the teachers was 'given a second chance, which courses would you like to take again at a preservice education program?'. In responding to this question, the teachers also stated some of the courses they would not like to take.

The table above indicates that most of the teachers want to take methods and four integrated skills courses, 35 and 37 respectively. However, English & American literature courses are not preferred by teachers.

## Results

The most striking result is that Turkish EFL Teachers do not consider inservice seminars organized by Ministry of National Education as an effective source of knowledge. Of a total of 132 EFL teachers only 8 % consider inservice seminars as a source of knowledge. From this point we can simply claim that the current inservice seminars are far beyond meeting teachers' expectations professionally. To Becker (2007), the improvement of teaching practices has traditionally been left to individual teachers working in isolation; leaving such important practices to individual may creates problem. As it is seen in this study teachers do not know how to improve themselves. There is no feedback after seminars and workshops in Turkey. According to Fullan (1991), "The absence of follow-up after workshops is the greatest single problem in contemporary professional development", (cited Becker). One of the reasons of this failure is thought to be not to follow-up the inservice training seminars, conferences and workshops etc. And therefore the teacher did not find seminars and training courses to be effective.

Of 132 teachers only 26 (20 %) of them are current subscribers to a professional journal. The most preferred journals are Time, Newsweek, and People. In the age of information and technology, the teachers should have benefited from the latest research and at least subscribe to a language teaching journal. But this may be emanated from the low socio-economic and cultural situations of teachers. Educational reform in Turkey requires teacher to update themselves in a variety areas. Such as following language journal, using Internet resources etc. According to Enginarlar (2003) one major problem with Turkish EFL teachers is that they do not watch original movies and do not read newspaper or journal.

A total of 68 EFL teachers have access to English TV channels and 118 stated that they have a library including resources on English language teaching. However, the titles of the books are of importance as the participating teachers associate 'professional development' with studying grammar textbooks, that is, they are likely to have books on grammar in their bookcases instead of resource books. In a study conducted by Paker (2006), it was found that 90 % of Turkish EFL teachers teaching in an Aegean city focus on grammar.

The majority of the participating of EFL teachers (89%) receive knowledge by referring to written resources; books, journals and the like. In the present study, it appears that teachers do not confer with an experienced friend with only 24% opting to do this but generally they prefer books or journals to receive professional knowledge. In order to realize a new vision of teaching, the profession must convene the partners and resource providers, (it is a responsibility of profession), ([www.neafoundation.org](http://www.neafoundation.org)...). According to Gün, (2007) along with field and general culture knowledge, for teachers, cooperation and interaction with colleagues is very important. Gün, asserts that setting and maintaining good relationships with colleagues should be considered as a competency required for teachers. (With respect to the same issue, another researcher Kayhan (1999) states that the purpose of inservice seminars is to contribute to the relationship among colleagues and departments.

As far as the topic preferences for future inservice seminars are concerned, the participating teachers want to learn most about professional development (48%), use of drama techniques (39%), and multiple intelligences (35%). Surprisingly enough, most of the subjects are not that willing to have inservice seminars on the following topics such as; testing techniques, research skills, NLP, learner autonomy, materials development, communicative approaches to language teaching and their applications, and teaching in multi-level classrooms. Based on this finding, the researchers assume that the participating teachers are either fully

'knowledgable' about these subjects so they do not need any seminar on these issues, or they have not heard about these topics at all.

In Turkey, a typical classroom in state schools is very crowded and filled with students who have different language levels as they are placed in classrooms regardless of their language learning background. Therefore, teaching in multi-level classrooms should be an important issue for every language teacher. The rationale for learner autonomy is to enable learners to study independently for himself / herself. That is, in language lessons of 45 minutes teachers cannot teach everything. Therefore, learners should be guided to take responsibility of their own learning outside the classroom thereby completing the missing parts in the learning process. Such an important topic was not a priority of the participating EFL teachers (only 23 % of them want seminar on this issue).

Another important finding is that, in Turkey, language exams are typically designed either in multiple-choice format or in other traditional ways (fill in the blanks, close-test and the like). However, the current approaches advocate alternative assessment methods in language teaching. Today, pencil and paper one time exams have been replaced with ongoing projects, portfolios, role-play activities. These tests tap into advanced skills such as; problem solving and critical thinking skills along with language. That is exams are integrated in true-to-life experiences. In doing so, learners are encouraged to learn the language in a way that they meet their needs in real life. However, the participating teachers in the present study do not want to learn about testing techniques (87% of them do not want to have an inservice seminar on this topic).

Action research is another important issue in ELT. As far back as 1200 BC Plato stated that philosophers should be rulers in countries. The underlying rationale is that the rulers have to be knowledgeable and open to learn. If we want to provide quality education to learners first and foremost teachers should not be only consumers of knowledge. Instead, they themselves should produce knowledge and practice in their classrooms settings. Action research arms teachers with skills to identify a problem and conduct classroom research. Unfortunately, though, for the participating teachers, research skills are not of significant value (85% of them do not want a seminar on this subject).

The findings revealed that the school administrators have a positive tendency toward English language teaching. However, 109 (83%) teachers stated that they have no English laboratories. However, it cannot be denied that language labs or better self-access centers are

capstones of language learning, (İnal, 2006; Demirel & Seferoğlu, 2004). This result is in contradiction to contemporary technology-based-education and far from meeting the aim of Turkish national education which is to keep abreast of recent advances in both technological and intellectual arena. The participating teachers prefer to use audio-visual materials (58%) while teaching, and give projects which induce students to do research (44%).

As it is stated above 13 of 132 teachers did not graduate from English language departments and 23 of them graduated from faculties of science and letters where teaching methods and techniques are not taught and most of its curriculum is based on English literature. Even the rest of the participants who graduated from English language teaching departments stated that they urgently needed to be trained in skills instruction; teaching methods and techniques. According to Paker (2006), non-ELT major teachers in the work places influence effective language teaching practices.

121 teachers prefer traditional classroom seating plan in their classes and the least popular class arrangement is the semicircle. However, the studies refer that different teaching-learning methods require different activities which in turn require different seating plans. Research has shown the importance of easily changeable seating types and their effects on learning. Studies proved that physical characteristics of classroom, such as lighting, aeration, sound, sitting type and coloring have great impact on learning, (Özden, 2002, s. 49, cited in Ersoy, 2005). In his study, Paker (2006) found out that in many classrooms in public schools students are seated in traditional way and this prevents effective interaction in language classrooms.

For the majority of teachers 'professional development' is nothing more than studying grammar. When the teachers were asked what they do to improve themselves professionally in one open-ended question most of them answered they were preparing for the Foreign Language Proficiency Examination for State Employees (KPDS), a centralized exam offered to anybody who wants to certify his/her language proficiency. On the one hand, this exam encourages people to learn a foreign language by offering a small amount of extra money to salaries based on the score you get (A, B and C grades only) which is a good incentive, on the other hand, this exam is a great obstacle regarding language learning as it limits language learning to a number of grammatical structures and vocabulary.

Recommendations for Further Studies

Today, the retained time of information is very short, keeping this in mind, it will be beneficial to update teachers' professional development and preservice training programs.

Apart from the variables examined in this study, affective characteristics such as teachers' job satisfaction, and motivation, their attitudes toward profession, anxiety, academic self-concept, self-efficacy and other predictors of profession should be investigated. Based on the findings of the present study, teachers benefit widely from written sources such as; books, therefore, the content of books should be reconsidered and enriched.

Most of the participants do not understand the necessity and efficacy of inservice training and this indicates that the given inservice training courses have not met their expectations and needs so far. In order for these seminars to meet the needs of target population they should periodically be designed according to the contemporary needs of teachers. With regard to teachers' preferences of topics for future inservice seminars, interesting findings were obtained. A variety of contemporary topics such as; classroom research, testing techniques, learner autonomy, NLP in ELT, teaching in multi-level classrooms were found to be overlooked by teachers. Whatever the case, a further study might look at professional needs of English language teachers. Related to this point, a needs analysis might be conducted on practicing ELT teachers across country.

Of the participants 44% of the teachers stated that they encourage students to do research through projects. In a further study, it would be wise to look at teachers' understanding of 'project-based' teaching. The problem solving strategy is one of the least used teaching methods employed in classrooms. The main purpose of higher education is to have students gain high order thinking skills such as; synthesis, analysis, critical thinking, and problem solving. However, in the present study these issues were found to be neglected areas. First the teachers themselves should gain these skills and then should be encouraged to transfer them to their classroom settings. It should be noted that 'we *do* employ what we have seen'. To this end, a research might be designed on teacher trainers working in ELT departments. In such a research, teacher trainers' way of teaching might be investigated in detail. Considering the results of the present research a further study might investigate the contents of courses and 'teaching methods' utilized by teaching staff in teacher preparation programs. Regarding this issue, the syllabus of research skills course offered in ELT teacher preparation programs as a required course should be designed in a way that the prospective teachers should learn how to conduct action research in their classrooms.

Another striking result of the study is that teachers try to develop professionally by studying grammar books. This worrying finding needs to be investigated in further studies with large samples across the country. If this is the case for ELT teachers, it needs to be dealt with; otherwise we cannot talk about quality education. In order to provide effective language teaching, first our teachers should accept that 'professional development' is far beyond studying grammar. Limiting the concept of professional development to grammar is a great fallacy. Therefore, it would be wise to teach teachers the difference between 'teacher training' and 'teacher development' before they are appointed as 'English language teachers'. This can be done by integrating a required course on professional development into teacher preparation programs. As Chinese proverb states 'if we want to help someone to survive we should not feed him on fish instead we should teach him how to catch fish'. Both improvement and success of all students are mostly dependent on teacher's performance (<http://www.ncrel...>) and this is heavily dependent on teacher's qualities and vision. If teachers only rely on four-year preservice education and do not look for ways to keep up with recent advances in profession, then the quality of education they provide needs to be questioned. As the findings of the present study cannot be generalized far beyond the participants, a large-scale study needs to be conducted on prevailing understanding of professional development among Turkish teachers of English. What needs to be noted is that, the teachers who participated in the present study stated that they want to learn about 'professional development' when they were asked their preferences of topics for inservice seminars. As can be inferred, Turkish EFL teachers dramatically need to be informed about the concept of 'professional development'. Another important step to take regarding this issue is to set high and competitive standards required to maintain the status of 'teacher'. As long as the mentality 'once a teacher always a teacher' dominates in Turkey, teachers are likely to continue their teaching position without furthering their competencies. That is, the current system does not require teachers to engage in professional development activities. Once they become a teacher they maintain their status until they get retired. As far as high quality standards are concerned the practicing teachers might be asked to prepare 'professional development portfolios'. However, within a recent project initiated by the Ministry of National Education, teachers who receive Master's degrees are promoted to 'master teacher' status. This implementation should continue and more and more teachers should be encouraged to pursue graduate degrees related to their subject matters.

The present study revealed that there are teachers who work as English language teachers but graduated from departments other than ELT. The existence of these teachers in workforce at the expense of low-quality teaching is a known fact. However, there is a dearth of study on this important issue. Researchers think that this is a pathetic reality in Turkey which handicaps English language teaching. Therefore, these teachers should be investigated in all respects. Such an empirical study on such an important but neglected issue might recommend a proposal as to how to accommodate these teachers into mainstream English language teachers.

The establishment of professional development centers in Turkey is required. The centers should find ways to reach every teacher and build bridges between what teachers need and requirements of contemporary education.

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#### Book Review

Kirkpatrick, Andy. *World Englishes: Implications for International Communication and English Language Teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007. Pp. x + 257.

Reviewed by Deepti Gupta

Panjab University

Chandigarh, India

As stated in the introduction of *World Englishes*, "this book differs [from other texts] . . . in that it aims to describe selected varieties of world Englishes and [discuss] the implications [of] learning and teaching [them] in specific contexts" (p.1).

The text is divided into three sections, Framework (Part A), Variations and Varieties (Part B), and Implications (Part C). The first chapter of part A examines the native/non-native debate, the functions of language, the identity-communication continuum, pidgins, creoles and varieties of English, and the construct of linguistic prejudice. Chapter 2 details the key linguistic terms used in the book. The third chapter describes the different ways English is used in various countries and spans most of the literature available to date through three levels--models, developmental cycles, and the conflict between English as an international language and world Englishes, concluding that there is a lot of variation and variety; hence global English has to be studied along with specific contexts.

Part B describes the linguistic features of selected English varieties (British, American, Australian, Indian, African, East Asian, and South East Asian English), and gives adequate examples of phonology, lexis, syntax, discourse and pragmatic norms for each. Chapter 4, the first in part B gives "a brief summary of the historical development of English in England and focus[es] on demonstrating and exemplifying its variation" (p. 39). The second, chapter

5, describes the development of American English while clearly accepting that language variation is something natural and expected. Chapter 6 looks at Standard Australian English and Australian Aboriginal English. The next chapter examines the different varieties of South Asian English with a view to demonstrate their extraordinary range, varieties, and functions. Indian English literature gets extra attention because of its rich output and the evidence it provides of the fact that "English has become a South Asian language" (p. 98). Chapter 8 focuses on Nigerian and South African English although examples are provided from other African Englishes. The chapter also examines the role of English in the 54 African nation states, especially in the sphere of education and its ambivalent status with regard to the projection of African culture while working as a lingua franca. Chapters 9 and 11 deal with the countries of South-East Asia. While the former covers the countries of the outer circle (Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei and the Philippines), the latter examines the Englishes of the countries in the expanding circle (the remaining 6 ASEAN countries of Myanmar, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Thailand and Vietnam). Chapter 10 examines the role English has played, is playing, and will play in China and Hong Kong. The author reaches the conclusion that in terms of the number of speakers of Chinese English, this variety will soon become the one most commonly spoken in Asia. An added feature of this book for this section are the samples provided from the spoken and written forms (with an accompanying audio CD and transcripts in the appendix), and, where appropriate, excerpts from the literature written in that variety.

Part C examines the implications of world Englishes. It summarizes key themes, prepares the ground for the debate ahead, and reviews the corpus of literature to assess the status of English in various societies. Chapter 12 addresses the factors that make English a lingua franca and the need for varieties. Chapter 13 discusses areas to be taken into account when choosing a particular variety of English for classroom use, three models (the exonormative native speaker model, the endonormative nativised model, and lingua franca), and the advantages and disadvantages of each. The chapter then moves on with recommendations for teacher education, recruitment, and training in the outer and expanding circle countries.

Readers new to the area will find *World Englishes* to be a good, short, introduction to the field and a welcome addition to the thin, yet growing area of literature in this area. More experienced readers, however, may feel that, while the book's exploration is certainly more exhaustive than other books on the subject, a more detailed discussion of certain topics (e.g.

the exploration of varieties in the last section) is necessary.



#### Book Review

*Introducing Second Language Acquisition*. Muriel Saville-Troike. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006, Pp. vii + 206.

Reviewed by Ulugbek Nurmukhamedov  
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign  
Illinois, U.S.A.

Saville-Troike's *Introducing Second Language Acquisition* provides students in the fields of linguistics, general education, and TESL with the background knowledge they need to understand the field of second language acquisition. To do this, the author, Saville-Troike, addresses three basic questions throughout the seven chapters of the book: "What exactly does the L2 learner come to know?"; "How does the learner acquire this knowledge?"; and "Why are some learners more successful than others?" In order to answer these questions, Saville-Troike comprehensively reviews some of the major SLA literature and gives practical suggestions to language learners and teachers.

In Chapter 1, the author defines SLA from linguistic, applied linguistic, psycholinguistic, sociolinguistic, and social psychological perspectives and states that the complex phenomenon of SLA should be presented from three main perspectives: linguistic, psychological and social. The next chapter describes the foundations of SLA with regard to the issues of natural ability, innate capacity, and the role of social experience in language acquisition. In particular, she talks about L1/L2 transfer in the learner's initial, intermediate, and final states of L2 acquisition. Chapter 3 divides linguistic approaches to SLA into two parts, functionalist and structuralist, and examines the influence of linguistics on SLA in a detailed order. Chapter 4 addresses the contributions of psychology to SLA and neurolinguistics. The chapter describes the function of the language faculty in the brain and

explicitly focuses on the second language learner differences and their learning strategies from psychological perspectives. Chapter 5 discusses what role communication strategies play in communication and how social and cultural knowledge are essential to use language appropriately. To do this, the author talks about microsocial factors (i.e. potential effects of different surrounding circumstances on language behavior) and macrosocial factors (i.e. SLA and its relation to broader cultural, political, and educational environments) and concludes that looking at SLA from a social perspective gives us a better and holistic understanding of second language learning. Chapter 6 contains information about how communicative, linguistic, and pragmatic competences are important for L2 acquisition. The author concludes the book with chapter 7 where she talks about interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary perspectives of SLA and explains its full spectrum by stating that linguistic perspectives address issues of what is learned, psychological perspectives focus on how knowledge is learned, and social perspectives deal with questions of why some learners are more successful than others. She also includes a brief set of implications of SLA for L2 learning and teaching.

It is important to note that *Introducing Second Language Acquisition* is intended as a broad introduction to the field of second language acquisition. Because of this, the book runs the risk of covering many topics in a way that some may consider lacks depth, yet this should be expected from a book that is meant to be an introduction to the field. Thus the book should indeed be seen as a useful resource for both undergraduate and graduate students who would like to know more about the learning process and language acquisition and the teachers who need to explain these to them.



## Book Review

*Keys for Writers, 5th ed.* Ann Raimes. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2006. Pp. xvii + 596.

Reviewed by Brendan Moloney  
The University of Melbourne  
Victoria, Australia

While many teachers and students spend considerable time searching the Internet to find answers to writing questions, they may overlook a gem of a student writing handbook: Ann Raimes' *Keys for Writers* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). Full of relevant and interesting material, packaged in a user-friendly and visually pleasing way, and divided into two main sections, The Writing Process and Working with Sources and Sentence Level Issues, the handbook is highly attractive for university students, especially ESL learners, and writing teachers.

The first section of the handbook has ten separate parts. The first five--The Writing Process; Doing Research/Evaluating Sources; MLA Documentation; APA, CSE and Chicago; Documentation; Design, Media, and Presentation--deal with the writing process and writing with sources to assist students to master the initial steps of writing, choose a reference style, and learn how to present an academic paper. The next five--Style; Common Sentence Problems; Punctuation, Mechanics and Spelling; Language; Englishes and ESL; Glossaries and Index--cover sentence level issues by providing tips on writing well, how to avoid basic syntax mistakes, and write in English as a second language.

Despite the text's comprehensive coverage, there is one minor criticism. Although it is understandably difficult for authors to keep pace with the times, especially as students increasingly use reference material from the Internet, the section Design, Media and Presentation is nevertheless problematic. While Raimes' decision to explore Internet sources, online writing, and the like in this chapter is understandable, the section sits uncomfortably in the work as a whole. Even though it is helpful for some students, it is quite possible that university students (whom the book seems mainly to be geared towards) are a few steps

ahead of the information presented. Despite this criticism, the book has many positive points. One positive feature is its presentation: Color-coded and ring-bound, the easy-to-carry paperback fits neatly into a satchel and a flip tab section separates each section from the next. Another is its attractively laid out illustrations and visuals. Readers will also appreciate the tip sections which appear throughout book (e.g. helpful guides such as Getting Started, Cultural Differences in Writing, and Ways to Approach Report Writing) and the links to additional online sources that teachers can use to promote independent learning.

Because of its comprehensive coverage and many positive points, *Keys for Writers* is certainly a certainly a worthwhile resource valuable addition to any personal or school resource library.



## Book Review

*Focus on grammar: An integrated skills approach series, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed.* New York: Longman, 2006.

Reviewed by Safary Wa-Mbaleka and Vanessa Austin

Universidad Adventista de las Antillas

Mayaguez, Puerto Rico

While learning a second language requires a special focus on various language skills, both second and foreign language learners frequently place a special interest on the mastery and accurate use of the grammar of the target language. As a result, English as a second language (ESL) and English as a foreign language (EFL) curriculum specialists, teachers, and learners are constantly in search of effective and efficient approaches for teaching or learning English grammar to help them. Presented for adult and young adult ESL/EFL learners, the *Focus on Grammar* series (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.) meets this need.

Arranged in five consecutive language proficiency levels from beginning to advanced to move the learner from the basic knowledge of the use of the verb "be" and the simple present tense at the beginning level to the use of clauses, gerunds, infinitives, and adverbs at the advanced level, each level presents English grammar instruction in a way which builds confidence through a unique four-step approach (grammar in context, grammar presentation, focused practice, and communication practice), repeated exposures to newly introduced structures, a complete reference guide, and ongoing assessment.

Presented as a complete package, each level comes with four types of materials: a student's text, workbook, teacher's manual, and assessment pack. The student's text, which is well illustrated and comes with an audio CD-ROM for each level, is divided into eight or more sections according to proficiency level, and the workbook provides additional self-study and self-assessment activities for each unit. The teacher's manual, which comes with a CD-ROM for instructional PowerPoint presentations, includes instructional approaches and



supplementary learning activities to help the teacher guide students in the learning process. The assessment package, a new component that makes an important difference between this edition and the previous ones, provides four important components for learning English grammar: placement, diagnostic, and achievement tests; four proficiency tests; an audio CD-ROM that accompanies the previous two components; and a test-generating software package.

In a word, practicality best describes the four-step approach and materials presented in the series *Focus on Grammar*. However, no materials are without criticism, and this series, due to today's electracy, increase in technology literacy, is no exception: In a market where supplementary online multi-media materials are becoming the standard, the texts in the series seem to be missing the online support media which are often available in other instructional packages. Nevertheless, despite this shortcoming, each text's easy to follow presentation of contents, the integrated-skill approach, and the user friendly aspect with graphic illustrations; the workbooks' additional opportunities for self study and assessment; the student and teacher CD-ROMs; and the teacher support materials make *Focus on Grammar* an attractive tool for anyone teaching grammar to EFL/ESL learners.



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## Guidelines for Submissions

### Submissions for the Quarterly Issue Submissions guidelines

The Asian EFL Journal Quarterly is a fully peer-reviewed section of the journal, reviewed by a team of experts in EFL from all over the world. The Asian EFL Journal welcomes submissions written in different varieties of world Englishes. The reviewers and Associate Editors come from a wide variety of cultural and academic backgrounds and no distinction is made between native and non-native authors. As a basic principle, the Asian EFL Journal does not define competence in terms of native ability, but we are a strictly reviewed journal and all our reviewers expect a high level of academic and written competence in whatever variety of English is used by the author. Every effort will be made to accept different rhetorical styles of writing. The Asian EFL Journal also makes every effort to support authors who are submitting to an international journal for the first time. While major revisions may be requested, every effort is made to explain to authors how to make the necessary revisions.

Each submission is initially screened by the Senior Associate Editor, before being sent to an Associate Editor who supervises the review. There is no word minimum or maximum.

There are two basic categories of paper:

- \* Full research papers, which report interesting and relevant research. Try to ensure that you point out in your discussion section how your findings have broad relevance internationally and contribute something new to our knowledge of EFL.

- \* Non-research papers, providing detailed, contextualized reports of aspects of EFL such as curriculum planning. Very well documented discussions that make an original contribution to the profession will also be accepted for review. We cannot accept literature reviews as papers, unless these are "state of the art" papers that are both comprehensive and expertly drafted by an experienced specialist.

When submitting please specify if your paper is a full research paper or a non-research paper. In the latter case, please write a paragraph explaining the relevance of your paper to our Asian EFL Journal readership.

Authors are encouraged to conform with international standards of drafting, but every effort will be made to respect original personal and cultural voices and different rhetorical styles. Papers should still be fully-referenced and should use the APA (5th edition) format. Do not include references that are not referred to in the manuscript. Some pieces submitted to the quarterly issue may be reclassified during the initial screening process. Authors who wish to

submit directly to the Teaching Articles section should read the separate guidelines and make this clear in the submission e-mail.

Referencing:

Please refer to the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (5th ed.) – Contributors are also invited to view the sample PDF guide available on our website and to refer to referencing samples from articles published from 2006. Due to the increasing number of submissions to the Asian EFL Journal, authors not conforming to APA system will have their manuscripts sent back immediately for revision. This delays publication and taxes our editorial process.

Format for all submissions (Please read this before submitting your work)

All submissions should be submitted to: [asian\\_efl\\_journal@yahoo.com](mailto:asian_efl_journal@yahoo.com)

- i) The document must be in MS Word format.
- ii) Font must be Times New Roman size 12. Section Headings: Times New Roman (Size 12, bold font). Spacing: 1.5 between lines.
- iii) 'Smart tags' should be removed.
- iv) Footnotes must not 'pop up' in the document. They must appear at the end of the article. Use the superscript font option when inserting a note rather than the automatic footnote or endnote option.
- iv) Citations - APA style. (See our website PDF guide)

Use the APA format as found in the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (APA), 5th Edition, for headings, citations, reference lists and in text referencing. Extra care should be taken for citing the Internet and must include the date the site was accessed.

About APA Style/format: <http://www.apastyle.org/aboutstyle.html>

APA Citation Style: <http://www.liu.edu/cwis/CWP/library/workshop/citapa.htm>

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v) Keywords: All articles must include Keywords at the beginning of the article. List 4-6 keywords to facilitate locating the article through keyword searches in the future.

vi) Graphs and Charts - either in the body of the document or at the end. In certain cases, a graphic may not appear in the text of the web version of the Asian EFL Journal but a link to the graphic will be provided.

vii) Paragraphs. Double space between paragraphs. Indent the beginning of each paragraph with three strikes of the space bar except those immediately following a heading, quotation, example, figure, chart or table. Do not use the tab key.

viii) Keep text formatting (e.g., italics, bold, etc.) to the absolute minimum necessary. Use full justification. All lines to be against Left Hand Side Margin (except quotes - to be indented per APA style).

ix) Abstract

The abstract should contain an informative summary of the main points of the article, including, where relevant, the article's purpose, theoretical framework, methodology, types

of data analysed, subject information, main findings, and conclusions. The abstract should reflect the focus of the article.

x) Graphs – to fit within A4 size margins (not wider)

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Please include the following with your submission:

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Brief Bio Data noting history of professional expertise

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Abstract

Any questions regarding submission guidelines, or more detailed inquiries about less common citation styles, may be addressed to the Editorial Board or our Journal Production Editor (Darren Lingley) at: [lingley@cc.kochi-u.ac.jp](mailto:lingley@cc.kochi-u.ac.jp)

Book Reviews:

The Asian EFL Journal currently encourages two kinds of submissions, unsolicited and solicited. Unsolicited reviewers select their own materials to review. Both teachers and graduate students are encouraged to submit reviews. Solicited reviewers are contacted and asked to review materials from its current list of availability. If you would like to be considered as a solicited reviewer, please forward your CV with a list of publications to the Book Review Editor at:

[asianefljournalbookreviews@yahoo.com](mailto:asianefljournalbookreviews@yahoo.com).

All reviewers, unsolicited and solicited, are encouraged to provide submissions about materials that they would like to suggest to colleagues in the field by choosing materials that they feel have more positive features than negative ones.

Length and Format:

1. Reviews should be prepared using MS Word and the format should conform to 12 pica New Times Roman font, 1.5 spacing between lines, and 1 inch margins.

2. The reviewer(s)' full names including middle initial(s), title, school affiliation, school address, phone number, and e-mail address should be included at the top of the first page.

3. The complete title of the text, edition number, complete name(s) of author(s), publisher, publisher's address (city & state), and date of publication should be included after the reviewer(s)' identifying information.

4. Reviews should be between 500-700 words.

5. A brief biography of the author(s) should be included after the review.

6. A statement that the submission has not been previously published or is not being considered for publication elsewhere should be included at the bottom of the page.

Organization:



Reviewers are encouraged to peruse reviews recently published in the quarterly PDF version of the Journal for content and style before writing their own. While creativity and a variety of writing styles are encouraged, reviews, like other types of articles, should be concisely written and contain certain information that follows a predictable order: a statement about the work's intended audience, a non-evaluative description of the material's contents, an academically worded evaluative summary which includes a discussion of its positive features and one or two shortcomings if applicable (no materials are perfect), and a comment about the material's significance to the field.

Style:

1. All reviews should conform to the Journal's APA guideline requirements and references should be used sparingly.

2. Authors should use plural nouns rather than gendered pronouns such as he/she, his/her him/her and adhere to the APA's Guidelines for Non-Sexist Use of Language, which can be found at:

<http://www.apa.udel.edu/apa/publications/texts/nonsexist.html>.