

In the Name of God



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# **Journal of Language Horizons**

According to the Ministry of Science, Research and Technology proclamation dated 1397/12/06 and numbered /3/18/311330, the *Journal of Language Horizons* was granted full Academic-Research status by the ministry's publication committee in their meeting of Jan. 30, 2019. This status has been applied from Volume 1, Issue 1, Spring/Summer 2017.

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Considering the National Master Plan for Science and Education in the country and the necessity of *localizing* the humanities, this journal welcomes English articles contributing to this aim.

Aims of this journal include but are not limited to:

- Promoting scientific and professional knowledge of researchers in the below mentioned areas.
- Sharing the findings of researchers in the mentioned fields.
- Promoting general and professional knowledge necessary for learning English as an international language among Iranians and international interaction in the future.
- Promoting Iranian culture along with the English.

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All in-text citations must be listed in full in the reference list at the end of each article following the specifications of the *APA* manual and all references listed must be cited somewhere in the text. Begin the reference list on a separate page entitled "References" and double-space it throughout. Each entry must include the author's name, co-authors (if any), publication date, and title of work. For a journal article, also provide the name of the journal, volume and issue numbers, and page numbers for the article. For an article in an edited volume, list the editor's name, title of the collection, and page numbers of the article. For a book or monograph, list the edition, volume number, series, and name of publisher. For all online works, the DOI should be provided as well. If not available, the URL can be provided instead. Punctuate and capitalize as in the following examples:

### Book

Brown, G., & Yule, G. (1989). *Discourse analysis*. Cambridge University Press.

### Journal article

Bacon, S. M., & Finnemann, M. D. (1990). A study of the attitude, motives, and strategies of university foreign language students and their disposition to authentic oral and written input. *The Modern Language Journal*, 74, 459-473.

### Journal article with volume number

Lee, M-B. (2002). A closer look at language learning strategies and EFL performance. *Foreign Languages Education*, 10(1), 115-132.

### Article in a book

Dechert, H. (1983). How a story is done in a second language. In C. Faerch & G. Kasper (Eds.), *Strategies in inter-language communication* (pp. 175-195). Longman.

### Journal Article with DOI

Paivio, A. (1975). Perceptual comparisons through the mind's eye. *Memory & Cognition*, 3, 635-647. <http://doi.org//10.1037/0278-6133.24.2.225>

### Journal Article without DOI (when DOI is not available)

Hamfi, A. G. (1981). The funny nature of dogs. *E-journal of Applied Psychology*, 2(2), 38-48. <http://www.ojs.lib.swin.edu.au/index.php/fdo>

### Encyclopedia Articles

Brislin, R. W. (1984). Cross-cultural psychology. In R. J. Corsini (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of psychology* (Vol. 1, pp. 319-327). Wiley.

Developmental genetics. (2005). In *Cambridge encyclopedia of child development*.

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## Reference citation in text

### Direct citation 1

She states, "the 'placebo effect' ... disappeared when behaviors were studied in this manner" (Miele, 1993, p. 276), but she did not clarify which behaviors were studied.

### Direct citation 2: Fewer than forty words

Lee (1999) found that "The EAP writing curriculum incorporate reading and analysis of major academic journal articles in the specific field to identify macro-level organization an obligatory 'moves' in conjunction with writing practice." (p. 21)

### Direct citation 3: More than forty words

Miele (1993) found the following:

The "placebo effect," which had been verified in previous studies, disappeared when behaviors were studied in this manner. Furthermore, the behaviors were never exhibited again, even when reed rings were administered. Earlier studies were clearly premature in attributing the results to a placebo effect. (p. 276)

### One work by two authors

- Smith and Takamoto (1997) argued that. ...
- In recent study of SLA (Smith & Takamoto, 1997) ...

### One work by multiple authors: Use et al.

- First citation: Jones et al. (1997) found that...
- in a recent study of second language acquisition (Jones et al, 1997)....
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### One work by multiple authors, more than 6

- First citation: Dresler et al. (1992) showed that...
- In a recent study of second language acquisition (Dresler et al., 1992)...

### Multiple works: Arrange in alphabetical order

Previous research (Lass, 1992; Meyer & Sage, 1978, 1980; Nichols, 1987a, 1987b; Oats et al., 1973)...

For works not included in the above examples refer to *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (7th ed.).

## Review Policy

Since the Journal uses a double-blind review system, it is essential that all author identifying information be removed from the paper and that author(s) information should only be provided in the title page. In case the author's/authors' work is mentioned in the manuscript, replace the name(s) with *Author(s)* in the text. In other words, there should be no trace of the author in the text.

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# A Socio-Cognitive Approach Toward Source-Based Writing Instruction: Professors' Perceptions and Current Constraints

Research Article  
pp. 7-30

Katayoun Rezaei<sup>1</sup>  
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## Abstract

This article proposes a socio-cognitive approach toward the instruction of source-based writing, a common practice that students are required to perform in the academic milieu at higher education. Writing from sources entails cognitive processes of critically selecting the reliable sources of input, connecting their content to one's own ideas, and integrating them into one's written text to construct meaning. It also requires knowledge of socio-contextual dimensions of academic writing literacy, including ethics of acknowledging the authorship of sources and writers' awareness of their disciplinary genre (Dovey, 2010). The purpose of this interpretive qualitative research, accordingly, is to inquire into the status quo of the approaches implemented in the Iranian academic writing courses of English majors, i.e. English Literature, English Translation, and Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL), to practice source-based writing. To this end, seven university professors who had the experience of teaching academic writing courses in the context of interest were selected based on purposeful sampling to take part in in-depth semi-structured interviews. The results revealed that the academic writing courses fail to effectively value the cognitive processes of meaning-making involved in writing from sources; these are overshadowed by the existing dominant product-based pedagogy and a number of constraints underlined by the interviewees, including learners' limitations, time restraint, and technological facility impediments. The implications of the study for the curriculum developers and academic writing instructors will be discussed.

**Keywords:** source-based writing, socio-cognitive approach, writing pedagogy, integrative writing, academic writing literacy

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## **Introduction**

Academic writing literacy is among the most significant skills a student needs to acquire in order to be able to survive in their years of studies at higher education. Writing practices in the academic setting are, to a great extent, composed in response to source materials and students are required to incorporate a number of sources in their writing while creating meaning (Weigle, 2004). Thus, the construct of academic writing literacy can no longer be simply defined as the ability of learners to conform to the formal structures of a written text, explore ideas, and convey their messages through processes of brainstorming, planning, drafting, and revising (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2014). The ubiquitous online sources available to students (Thompson et al., 2013) have provided a valuable repository for learners to compose their writings based upon and become the main source of input for students while composing their writing tasks. To complete their source-based writing texts, students also need to go through the processes of source selection, synthesis, and acknowledgement (Plakans, 2009; Wette, 2019). Nevertheless, a considerable number of students seem to have difficulties writing their source-based texts within the realms of the academic context, and their written products, by and large, tend to be disappointing.

Research has shown that students experience certain challenges when composing their source-based writing tasks. They do not always assess the credibility of the resources they incorporate into their writings precisely or select the information sources critically (Godwin-Jones, 2010). Writing from sources can also be cognitively demanding, especially when learners face multiple sources of information to write from (Wette, 2019). Moreover, research results have pinpointed that synthesizing is a truly perplexing task for students to accomplish while integrating sources into their written text (Rosenblatt, 2010; Thompson et al., 2013). These are among the reasons why the written performance of learners includes instances of plagiarism and inappropriate textual borrowing patterns (Grabe & Zhang, 2013; Shi, 2004).

It seems that approaches toward academic writing which mainly focus on the linguistic features of the text and the final product of writing will no longer suit the needs of learners, in the information age, when completing source-based writing tasks. The new generation of non-English higher education students who seek to publish their work in international journals, contribute to their field of study, and socialize in their disciplinary discourse communities are increasing in number along with the diversity of their audience and their online mediums of interaction. In order to teach them the right path through finding their authorial voice, we should acknowledge a shift toward an approach to teaching writing which moves beyond the practices of independent writing tasks and fixed linguistic elements of language embedded in the construct of the writing skill (Paltridge & Woodrow, 2012; Pennycook, 2001) and incorporates the instruction of processes and strategies specific to integrated writing from source materials (Machili et al., 2020).



## **Literature Review**

### ***Source-Based Writing in the Academic Context***

Knowledge of source-based writing is among one of the vital literacy skills learners need to acquire in academia these days (Ladbrook & Probert, 2011). Integrated writing based on available sources of information is an important practice in the academic context. In the academic milieu, rather than writing an independent essay, the writer draws on the information sources to construct their own written text and develop/validate their arguments (Tardy, 2010; Weigle, 2004). Source-based writing encompasses learners' reading ability (Plakans, 2009), critical thinking skills (Chang et al., 2011; Greene et al., 2014; Parsazadeh et al., 2018), synthesizing sources of information (Grabe & Zhang, 2013; Kong, 2014), and acknowledging the ethics of incorporating sources into one's writing (Shi, 2004). In fact, integrated writing from sources has an inter-related underlying construct, comprising the literacy skills of reading as well as writing (Grabe & Zhang, 2013). The discourse synthesis strategies are proven to play an essential role in the integrated performance of learners as well (Plakans, 2009; Zhu et al., 2020). While composing an integrated writing task, the contribution of source materials to the learners' written text is not only restricted to purveying content and sources of ideas/information for learners, but they also provide language support for writers as they try to reconstruct the meaning embedded in the sources through paraphrasing/summarizing (Golparvar & Khafi, 2021). Thus, due to its complex construct, source-based writing has always been a challenging task for foreign language writers and requires a considerable amount of practice (Grabe & Zhang, 2013; Machili et al., 2020).

### ***Socio-Cognitive Approach in Writing Instruction***

In the earliest approaches to teaching second/foreign language writing, the focus was primarily on the written products, and students were encouraged to practice language structures, lexical terms, and the role of cohesive devices in constructing the building blocks of paragraphs within a text (Hyland, 2003; Raimes, 1991). As Reichelt et al. (2012) state, the foreign language writers' exposure to the target language is inadequate compared to native speakers, and the resources available to them are for the most part restricted to classroom practices; hence, learning the linguistic forms of a foreign language is definitely beneficial to learners' writing skill. Nonetheless, this approach has been discredited by the researchers who view writing as a multidimensional construct entailing learners' cognitive process as well as socio-cultural related factors (Allen, 2018; Kern, 2000). According to Hyland (2011), in addition to linguistic knowledge, foreign language writers need to foster (1) content-based knowledge, to be able to develop their ideas within the realms of the topics/subjects in their disciplines; (2) contextual awareness, to fulfill their audience expectations and cultural preferences; (3) genre awareness, to observe the communicative purposes of the specific written text; and (4) knowledge of writing process, to be able to understand the recursive nature of writing and follow the stages of composing a text from the early step of brainstorming to revising and editing. In fact, proponents of the socio-cognitive approach in writing instruction believe that the writer's thinking process and

the social context of writing are not independent of one another, i.e., the writer's cognition is formed by the socio-cultural context in which they interact with their readers (Chandrasegaran, 2013). In the same vein, Dovey (2010) proposes a socio-cognitive approach to source-based writing instruction as well.

It is wise to first discuss the literature relevant to the cognitive and social writing practices of source-based writing separately and then move toward the studies which emphasize the integration of both practices. Considering the social dimensions of source-based writing construct, one of the key activities prevailing in source-based writing instruction revolves around raising students' genre awareness (Dovey, 2010). In a genre-based approach, learners explore and deconstruct the linguistic as well as rhetorical features of exemplar model texts in a particular written genre and try to learn from, transform, and even imitate them while composing their own disciplinary-specific writings to communicate with their audience (Hyland, 2004; Tardy, 2010). This helps learners to better interpret the ideas of the reading source materials, understand the organization of the sources, and integrate them in their writings (Plakans, 2009; Wette, 2017). This practice further assists learners to acknowledge the inter-relationship between the writing and reading skills (Allen & Paesani, 2020). Thus, Grabe and Zhang (2013) propose the inclusion of text models and reading comprehension activities in the practices of source-based writing. Allen and Goodspeed (2018), likewise, looked into the inter-relation between readers and writers in a genre-based writing instruction where the students used model text sources to complete their writings. Their results indicate that despite the learners' borrowing of rhetorical styles of the sources, they avoided borrowing the exact words and expressions from the source texts. They further insist that their participants "combined intertextuality or weaving in model text conventions and resources with individual expression, as learners infused their texts with creative perspectives, ideas, and expression" (p.102).

Moving to cognitive processes involved in meaning construction while completing a source-based written task, paraphrasing, summarizing, and synthesizing seem to be among the common teaching activities identified with the cognitive processes enabling writing from sources. Plakans and Gebril's (2013) findings showed that the features of source text use accounted for a large amount of the variance in the integrated writing scores of learners. While the low-performance learners directly copied phrases from the sources in their writings, the high-performance ones were careful to synthesize the source texts in their writings. This indicates that providing instruction on synthesizing strategies including organizing, selecting, and connecting when integrating multiple sources into one's own writing can improve the written performance of learners (Cheong et al., 2019). In her research, Zhang (2013) also applied an explicit instruction of synthesis writing in an experimental study and discovered that the experiment had a significant impact on the writing performance of learners. Consistent with this approach, Storch (2012) developed a writing course in which the source integration process was completely taught and learners had tasks to practice synthesizing, summarizing, and paraphrasing. She claims that while the instances of textual

borrowing patterns in the students' writing decreased after the instruction, there existed some misinterpretations of the information provided in the source materials or inaccuracies in the process of source integration.

Although learners can highly benefit from the exclusive instruction of social and cognitive dimensions of source-based writing, their writings cannot be sufficiently improved if the two practices are not simultaneously integrated into the teaching approaches toward writing from sources. On the bases of Dovey's (2010) results, analysis of reliable model texts alone proves not to be able to enhance integrated written products of learners, leading to their writings suffering from lack of coherence and instances of patch-writing. That is why she insists that it is not acceptable to neglect the importance of the process of meaning construction and assume that foreign language learners are able to conveniently create meaning and express ideas when familiarized with the existing contextual features. Furthermore, as she declares, writing process practices should neither "be individualistic and a-cultural, but [should] recognize the ways in which reading and writing are socio-cognitive culture-specific processes" (p. 59). As a result of these drawbacks, some studies have been further conducted which conformed with the theories behind the integrated socio-cognitive approach toward source-based writing instruction and their results were convincing. Tardy (2010) provided a real-life project for her learners to ameliorate their academic writing literacy. The participants were assigned a project to write a Wikipedia entry. In the meantime, they learned how to analyze wikis, search for information sources, evaluate the credibility of the sources, synthesize the selected sources, and compose their written text based on them. The results reveal that learners improved in searching multiple sources to synthesize information and the ethics of academic writing. In a more comprehensive study, Dovey (2010) implemented an integrative writing pedagogy in which the principles of a process-based approach, as well as genre awareness in completing source-based writing tasks, were observed. Based on her findings, following the instruction, learners' patch-writing attitude declined and their writings turned into more organized and coherent works.

### ***Purpose and Context of the Study***

Looking at the academic foreign language writing courses held in Iran in higher education, we will notice that the students' needs are not always thoroughly accommodated and many of them suffer while composing their writings and seeking to integrate within their disciplinary community (Fathkouhi, 2018; Neissi, 2017). In interviews Fathkouhi (2018) conducted with a number of EFL university professors, they reflected their discontent with the existing curriculum, naming the traditional approach toward writing, focus on quantity rather than quality, and absence of effective evaluation as some of its shortcomings. As Neissi (2017) claims, it appears that writing in some Iranian academic courses is mainly language-oriented and underpinned by the instruction of grammar and syntactic structures. On the other hand, practices of various genres in the academic Iranian writing courses should be equally emphasized to help learners compose their writings to achieve different educational purposes (Fatahipour et al., 2020), and the construct of integrated

writing from sources must neither be overlooked in the courses taught nor insufficiently covered. As research indicates, a noteworthy number of Iranian students inadvertently get involved in the act of plagiarism. The results of Jalilifar et al. (2018) reveal that Iranian students' publications in various applied linguistics journals have instances of inappropriately borrowed patterns. In support of this finding, Soleimani and Mahdavi-pour (2014) found that English major students' text-based integrated writing tasks included a considerable amount of inappropriate copied sentences which were not cited. Although this was more common among low language proficient students, they related it to the students' lack of practice in source-based writing in the writing courses held in higher education.

To examine the current status quo of the writing approaches implemented to teach source-based writing in Iranian universities, this study discusses the experience of a number of professors who teach English academic writing courses in the context of interest. The first purpose of this research is to extract the approaches and instructional activities they use to teach the cognitive processes and social dimensions of source-based writing in their classes. It also seeks to explain the constraints the professors face in their teaching, leading them to overlook some aspects of source-based writing practices. To pursue these objectives, the following questions are constructed:

**RQ1:** How do the professors define and practice the cognitive processes embedded in source-based writing construct in their academic writing courses?

**RQ2:** How do the professors define and practice the social dimensions/aspects of the source-based writing construct in their academic writing courses?

**RQ3:** How do the professors frame the constraints they face in teaching the subskills of social and cognitive dimensions of source-based writing?

## **Methodology**

### ***Participants***

The participants of this research comprised seven university professors in the field of teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL) and were selected based on purposive sampling. Due to the nature of the qualitative studies as well as the depth and realm of the data analyzed in them, the purposive samples are small in number and sampling typically comes to an end when new information is not added to the data already gathered (Ary et al., 2019). Thus, data saturation, along with the availability of participants, was the primary criterion used in selecting our sample. The next criterion in the selection of our participants was teaching experience in English academic writing courses at higher level education. The participants had 4 to 25 years of teaching experience ( $M = 12.7$ ,  $Sd = 9.58$ ). Further, to meet the objectives of the research and have a thorough understanding of the status of source-based academic writing literacy pedagogy in the context under investigation in the age of technology, we tried to interview a diverse number of professors in terms of their teaching experience and the consideration of the need and importance of integration of information technology in their writing courses.

Hence, four of the participants had held online or blended writing courses during their professional work experience; whereas, the other three, claimed not to have employed technological facilities in their courses. Two of the participants had the experience of teaching writing courses to disciplines other than TEFL. Five of them had held writing courses at both BA and MA levels; one had taught only writing courses to BA students and the last one had only taught MA academic writing courses. The participants included both females and males and ranged in age from 35 to 55. The demographics of the participants are shown in Table 1. Their identity is protected throughout this research with the use of pseudonyms.

**Table 1**  
*Demographics of the Participants*

Participants	Gender	Age	Degree	Educational status	Experience incorporating technology in writing courses	Higher education courses taught
Dr. Dabiri	Female	35-40	Ph.D. in TEFL	Assistant Prof.	Yes	MA
Dr. Fatahi	Female	35-40	Ph.D. in TEFL	Assistant Prof.	Yes	BA and MA
Dr. Rostami	Male	35-40	Ph.D. in TEFL	Assistant Prof.	Yes	BA
Dr. Rahmani	Female	40-45	Ph.D. in TEFL	Assistant Prof.	No	BA and MA
Dr. Safaie	Female	45-50	Ph.D. in TEFL	Associate Prof.	Yes	BA and MA
Dr. Forouzesh	Male	50-55	Ph.D. in TEFL	Associate Prof.	No	BA and MA
Dr. Aryayi	Female	50-55	Ph.D. in TEFL	Assistant Prof.	No	BA and MA

### ***Instrumentation***

As part of a larger research, this study seeks to evaluate the status quo of the approaches implemented to practice source-based academic writing at the tertiary level of education in English major courses, i.e. English Literature, English Translation, Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL), in three universities in the capital city of Iran and probe into the activities and materials employed in the courses to practice this writing skill. In so doing, semi-structured interviews were conducted with a number of university professors teaching academic writing courses in the context of interest. We decided to conduct semi-structured interviews, due to the exploratory nature of the study. These in-depth interviews are flexible enough to allow the interviewees to reflect on their own experiences and viewpoints and put forward novel topics during the interview not pre-determined in the protocol of the interview by the researchers (Heigham & Croker, 2009). The main themes of the questions

targeted the objectives of academic writing courses in higher education in the context of the study; the source-based writing activities, practices, and assignments implemented in the classes; the teaching materials used in the classes; the role of technology in source-based writing practices; and the constraints faced by the stakeholders in the academic writing courses (See Appendix). Furthermore, the course syllabi of five of the participants were also evaluated to have a better understanding of their teaching approaches toward source-based writing, their teaching materials, their class activities, and other relevant information. These relevant documents were triangulated with the interview data to enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the results achieved.

### ***Procedure and Data Collection***

In this basic interpretive research (Ary et al., 2019), interviewing was the main research method used through which the required qualitative data was gathered. The interview questions were composed by the first researcher, and their content, as well as face validity, were evaluated by a professor in the field of TEFL with nearly 19 years of teaching experience who had taught academic writing courses at university. Based on the feedback received, the questions were revised and double-checked by the aforementioned expert. Thereupon, a pilot interview was held with a lecturer, representative of the participants of the study, who had taught academic writing courses at the BA level. This was done to make the final revisions, find the possible drawbacks, and decide on the potential time of the interview. The participants were interviewed individually in their offices at a pre-arranged time based on mutual consent. The interviews were conducted in Persian or English, based on their own choice. As mentioned, the semi-structured interviews provide for follow-up questions and probe to gather further data in response to the interviewees' reflections/statements when required (Norton, 2009). The average time of the interviews was 45 minutes. All the interviews were recorded with the interviewees' approval.

### ***Data Analysis***

In order to analyze the research data, the interview files were transcribed verbatim and translated into English by the first researcher. She then carried out inductive theme-analysis on the transcribed data to extract the themes while focusing on the data itself and neglecting the existing literature. As suggested in Ary et al. (2019), initially she reflected on the transcribed text and provided reflection logs for further analyses. Later, the patterns of meaning across the sentences or paragraphs were broken down into segments in the open coding process. This coding process was conducted twice; once merely considering the available data, and the second time, which was done within a week interval, it was repeated based on the objectives of the study, and the themes related to the research questions were noted. Afterwards, the relationship across the segmented units was interpreted through axial coding and they were put into tentative meaningful categories where the potential themes were further created after the second period of observation. Meanwhile, the relevant document, i.e. the course syllabi, were examined and

added to the interview data. In addition to source data triangulation, to improve the dependability and trustworthiness of the analyses, the researcher ran the theme analysis of data for the second time after nearly a month and a high intra-coder agreement was achieved; hence, only a few umbrella terms were selected for the themes or the integration of few main categories altered. Peer debriefing was also employed at the levels of coding of three randomly selected interviews to enhance the credibility of the results.

### Results and Discussion

The results mentioned in this section present the themes extracted from the interviews conducted with the academic writing professors at the tertiary level. A total of 304 codes were extracted (see table 2). Following the research questions of this study, the first main theme delves into the cognitive processes which are prioritized and practiced in source-based writing instruction. The second theme discusses the way the socio-cultural dimension of source-based writing is defined in practice. Finally, the last theme addresses the difficulties and constraints the professors experience while teaching, which may alter their instructional decisions.

**Table 2**  
*Extracted Themes*

Main themes	Underlying categories	Frequency of the extracted codes	Percentage of codes in each theme
1.Cognitive processes engaged in source-based writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Critical analysis of the reliability of sources</li> <li>• Synthesizing sources into one's arguments</li> <li>• Paraphrasing/summarizing the selected information /ideas</li> </ul>	1. 86	28.28
		• 49	
		• 14	
		• 23	
2. Source-based writing and social practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Raising Learners' awareness of their disciplinary genre</li> <li>• Modeling practices</li> <li>• Ethics of acknowledging sources</li> </ul>	2. 124	40.78
		• 46	
		• 36	
		• 42	
3. The constraints facing the instructional decisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learners' impact on instructional decisions</li> <li>• Impact of teaching time on instructional decisions</li> <li>• Impact of technological facilities on instructional decisions</li> </ul>	3. 94	30.92
		• 42	
		• 21	
		• 31	
Total codes		304	100

### ***Cognitive Processes Engaged in Source-Based Writing***

**Critical Analysis of the Reliability of Sources.** Source-based writing is one of the common practices the students are engaged with while writing in their academic courses, completing an assignment, or composing their research papers. As Dr. Fatahi stated, “the objectives of the academic writing courses in Iran are gradually shifting toward practicing writing academic journals, critiques, proposals, and different chapters of a thesis which are based on writing from other resources.” She added that the policies of the department she is teaching at require her to train the MA students to be prepared to engage in the process of writing their proposals and thesis chapters. Supporting Dr. Fatahi’s explanation, other professors also insisted that writing from sources has to be among the common practices in the Iranian academic milieu. They believed written sources, if reliable, can improve learners’ linguistic competence, subject-matter knowledge, and knowledge about their disciplinary community.

Some of them even emphasized the growth of new information technologies and insisted on the fact that due to the immediate access of learners to the internet, which contains pervasive sources of information (Thompson et al., 2013), it seems inevitable for the syllabus of academic writing literacy to cover the processes embedded in the construct of source-based writing. The following extracts from Dr. Rahmani and Dr. Safaie put forth this fact clearly.

Dr. Rahmani: *Students, whether we teach them or not, are going to use the online sources when it is simply available. ... They are going to get the ideas they want from the sources, regardless of the professor teaching them how to do so in the writing class. So, ... it seems logical to teach the students how to benefit from the sources instead of leaving them alone.*

Dr. Safaie: *The idea is that in their real-life situation, if they want to write something, they will probably first refer to online sources, so they should do... I mean... act similarly in their writing course. You know, since I want to increase their digital literacy.*

Dr. Safaie’s words on digital literacy lead our discussion to one of the first higher-order thinking processes involved in source-based writing, i.e., critical analysis of the information sources for their credibility (Guo et al., 2015). This process is one of the main components of cognitive dimensions of digital literacy (Ng, 2012, as cited in Ng, 2012) which students require throughout their academic writing experiences. According to Dr. Rahmani, “one of the major concerns when writing in an academic context in the age of information is for learners to be critical thinkers”. This helps them to evaluate the reliability of the sources they select with the goal of theme-based learning and genre-awareness, or incorporating them in their own writing as information/opinion resources in line with their power of persuasive arguments. Hence, the interviewees demanded learners learn to examine the trustworthiness of the sources they found online before using them. They insisted that learners need instruction to be able to discern reliable sources. As Dr. Rostami stated, “provided that this skill [critical thinking] is included in



class activities, the students' critical literacy helps them cross-check the sources they select, use triangulation, and write better arguments in their writing". In accord with this view, Thompson et al. (2013) also reinforce the importance of instruction given to first-year university students to select reliable sources while writing from online information. They found that by the end of the course they observed, the students were able to choose the sources critically based on their authoritativeness, reliability, relativeness, and ease of understanding. Our participants' view also substantiated Parsazadeh et al. (2018) work in which they believe literature has indicated learners' lack of competence in critically evaluating the online sources they use; thus, they recommend teaching students the evaluation criteria involved in critically analyzing the sources they select. Additionally, the interviewees of our study warned against the consequences of writing from sources if critical analysis of source materials is not practiced in class. They claimed that the sources may turn into unreliable written model texts for students to learn the conventions of their disciplinary genre from or they can appear as unreliable sources of ideas when incorporated into the learners' written texts. This led some professors to introduce academic electronic-based resources of their discipline to the students where they can search for reliable source materials and use them in their writings. The following extracts indicate the interviewees' concern for students' critical analysis of sources.

*Dr. Rostami: I have seen our students, even graduate students, use unreliable sources like Wikipedia in their works not considering whether the information given there is trustworthy or not. .... And this is intolerable. So, it is very important to include critical thinking practices in the writing syllabi. Our students should precisely learn which sources to select and include in their academic works. ... They should learn how to be critical thinkers. ... Learn the fact that everything they read is not true, reliable, or academic. They should know how to evaluate them. We should teach them.*

*Dr. Safaie: Learners have access to the websites, ... but what they don't realize is that some of the material are outdated, that they are untrustworthy, that there are lies.... So recognizing comes with practice. And ... So they naturally have to use those in class and know how to use the sources online. This is one of the things that we do in class. ... I mean, I make sure that they know how to check to see that the sources are credible, whether they are up to date, whether they are true, not biased, and actually, that is part of their education in my classes.*

*Dr. Rahmani: If they [students] want to be inspired by a piece of written source, they have to be critical enough, so that the source they choose is trustworthy.... Anyway, if it is published on an unreliable platform, then maybe the pattern or structure of that written text which becomes accessible to the students isn't academic and they learn wrong structures, wrong grammar,*

*wrong moves. ... That is why I always tell my master's to search their sources in Scopus or Thompson Reuters, where at least the articles have face validity.*

**Synthesizing Sources into One's Arguments.** Synthesizing, as another process involved in composing a written text from sources, was rarely mentioned in the interviews by the professors. Only two professors emphasized its importance and gave a clear example of the practices they applied in their class to integrate this writing process in their syllabus. The relevant tasks which seem to be practiced in this regard include writing sections of literature reviews, completing summarizing tasks, and connecting/organizing the content of a number of articles in their field which present similar or opposing points of view.

Synthesizing is considered one of the challenging processes for learners while writing, as it requires elaborated cognitive processes of selecting, organizing, and connecting relevant sources of input to construct meaning (Guo, 2011). Not practicing this complicated process in class activities can easily give rise to the problems students have integrating others' viewpoints into their own. Plakans (2009) considers this process as the inseparable component of the construct of source-based writing and claims that synthesizing can help most students to make inferences from selected content of the sources, connect them, and construct meaning based on them. Therefore, as Dr. Aryayi insisted "lack of practice in synthesizing process may leave learners clueless in how to connect and organize the ideas of multiple sources in their written text".

Taking no notice of this process may be due to its being complicated; the professors may find it difficult to design tasks or activities to practice in class or they may simply prefer to teach it implicitly by providing feedback on the students' written products. Tardy (2006) supports this view stating that in-class activities usually concentrate on easily taught practices of the formal knowledge of writing moves or structures and that explicit instruction of procedural knowledge may be overlooked due to its difficulties. For instance, Dr. Safaie clarified that she "preferred not to teach synthesizing directly to the students, but through correcting their written products and providing useful feedback to them". The following statement reveals Dr. Fatahi's persistent concern regarding including the synthesizing process in her class activities.

*Dr. Fatahi: When I write down my syllabus, usually one of the materials I prepare for the class is scientific articles relevant to their field. And I try to choose them based on a theme.... For example, I decide to take articles to the class which address inquiry-based teaching or CALL. I have a purpose in picking articles in this way... . Because I want to work on synthesizing and summarizing with my students. So these articles are thematically the same and we learn how students have to synthesize their concepts together, ... just like what we do in a literature review. So we practice connecting ideas or summarizing and other tasks.*

### **Paraphrasing/Summarizing the Selected Information/Ideas.**

Paraphrasing was among the meaning-making processes emphasized by the professors in our study. The interviewees stated their belief that their students are not skillful enough in the process of summarizing and paraphrasing. Nevertheless, our findings show that sufficient time was not assigned to practice these processes in the class by all the interviewees. While in some classes explicit instruction and direct exercises were applied to practice paraphrasing, other professors were inclined to teach them implicitly and embed the learning within a real-life task, such as writing an article or literature review. A few interviewees held that composing abstracts for already written academic articles can be a valuable task for learners to practice and detect their problems in paraphrasing or summarizing. They introduced another common task practiced in classes in which students need to read an article within their field of interest and then compose their summary of the article and include their own response to it while getting help from the pertinent literature. The quote that follows illustrates one of the interviewees' opinions on paraphrasing and summarizing processes.

Dr. Forouzes: *My students have serious problems paraphrasing. ... Most of the structures they create when integrating a source is a complete patch-writing... We think they know how to summarize, think they have done it for years, but they really don't know. That's why I teach them how to paraphrase, to summarize. For example, I teach paraphrasing/summarizing when writing an abstract for an article. These are really challenging tasks for the students. We need to teach them which moves to use when summarizing or synthesizing. ... Show them how to change the grammatical structure of a sentence... use acceptable synonyms to paraphrase appropriately. These are important in academic writing.*

### **Source-Based Writing and Social Practice**

**Raising Learners' Awareness of Their Disciplinary Genre.** The interviewees were of the opinion that what some of the syllabi of writing courses are trying to cover, mainly centers around the language proficiency level of learners in English and the process of composing a paragraph/essay while failing to notice other dimensions of academic writing at higher education. They also emphasized the need to practice writing reports, proposals, and research papers in their writing classes; however, mainly in their graduate courses. These types of source-based writing practices depend upon social and contextual standards of the academic writing milieu and one's disciplinary genre. As Dr. Rostami insisted, tertiary level students yearn to enter the academic world and communicate with other scholars or publish their works to contribute to their field of study and relate to the professional audience; hence, they need to be a part of their social community.

Dr. Dabiri: *It [writing] is not just putting words together and making sentences, but logically presenting the idea in a particular discipline to make the text acceptable for the*

*professional audience. ... This knowledge generally is the knowledge of academic writing. For example, in addition to the punctuation and styles of referencing and the moves, ... I believe, the knowledge of conducting... writing research is important, I mean .... usually the students here don't have that background... they cannot write academically. Can't write using sources or others' ideas.*

In line with these statements Paltridge and Woodrow (2012) also maintained that knowing how to write in an academic setting is not just confined to the language proficiency level of the writer; disciplinary representation of oneself goes beyond the knowledge of linguistic resources and entails the social dimensions of writing, as well. Thus, almost all the interviewees claimed to be practicing the bases of the learners' disciplinary genre in their writing courses. In fact, raising the students' genre awareness appeared to be one of the instructional approaches employed by the participants of this study. This has been pursued through multiple routes. Some of the professors made an attempt to highlight "the academic wordlists" or frequent "subject-related lexica" of the students' discipline found in the authentic models in their class activities. Moreover, almost all of them provided their students with practices on useful moves in their disciplinary genre.

**Modeling Practices.** The most common activity drawn on by the interviewees to raise the students' genre awareness while writing from sources was modeling. The professors benefited from authentic teaching materials, i.e. published articles or theses in their discipline, and provided the learners with authentic materials to study, analyze, and critically comment on. The interviewees were of the opinion that these authentic samples allow for various self-practice and class activities to improve learners' genre-based writing in their academic discipline. These authentic sources were also used as a valuable resource for some academic structures or moves which the students can imitate in their writings. The following extracts explain the use of authentic articles as a model in the professors' writing courses to improve learners' awareness of their disciplinary genre.

*Dr. Forouzesh: I think modeling is very important in genre awareness raising or socializing. ... It is very important to me, so I take a lot of writing models to my class. ... I tell the students which one is written by a native, which one by a non-native, and we compare them.... It really helps when trying to paraphrase or imitate their writing style.*

*Dr. Rahmani: I remember that I myself always, when working on my Ph.D. dissertation, created a file for myself, and whenever I read an article or thesis, I highlighted the expressions I found useful and thought I could use later in my writing.... So I saved them in the file. For the abstract, or literature review, I saved the helpful expressions and moves for myself in it. I ask the students to do the same thing. ... So at the end of the class, they have a great resource. I think that if they read published works carefully, it will really help them a lot.*

Modeling can also be regarded as a valuable practice for students to become familiar with the form and structure of credible sources they wish to refer to; hence, it helps them in examining the reliability of the sources they use. It can further help learners to practice the connection between reading and writing when writing from sources (Grabe & Zhang, 2013). As Allen and Goodspeed (2018) mention, “writers rely on prior knowledge of language use in texts to create new ones” (p. 90). This highlights the notion of intertextuality since the learners move back and forth between their own written text and the content of the resources available. Our participants also unanimously insisted on the interrelationship between reading and writing. They believed the more the learners are familiar with authentic models the more successful they will be in creating meaning from them and integrating them in their writings. On the other hand, the interviewees were simultaneously skeptical about using authentic academic writing sources as models. They believed that it can decrease the creativity of learners; a few were even concerned about it leading them to copy or inappropriately borrow patterns from the source texts in their writings, if not properly taught.

*Dr. Dabiri: Academic writing can't be enhanced without reading. For me, reading and writing are intertwined and related. So one of the activities we have in our classes is that I share some articles, ... students have time to go over the articles and try to find clear samples of the writing subskill...moves...structures... what we talked about throughout the session, in that article or try to find some problems in it, if there are any... and then we talk about those problems. It helps them to understand and use the sources more easily when they get familiar with their structures.*

**Ethics of Acknowledging Sources.** The other common social aspect of source-based writing the professors pointed out in their interviews was observing the ethics of writing. These days, a considerable number of students, including Iranians, inadvertently plagiarize while incorporating ideas from other sources in their writings. The results of Jalilifar et al. (2018) which investigated the frequency of inappropriately borrowed patterns in the writings of Iranian applied linguists published in various journals exhibit that more than 30 percent of the corpora examined in their study had instances of plagiarism. According to the interviewees of our study, this can be due to the fact that “there has not been a clear instruction of ethics of writing in the courses the students take at schools”. Some of the professors added the “low language proficiency level of students” to the reasons leading to the act of plagiarism. As Chandrasoma et al. (2004) also insist, inappropriate textual borrowing behavior develops in the process of identity construction and can be attributed to social and cultural factors as well as learners’ language levels. This is why, as our participants mentioned, the students may believe what they are borrowing and including in their writing through patch-writing or modified copy patterns are acceptable ways of source integration and do not observe the conventions of their disciplinary academic register. Thus, the professors

claimed they allot a session or two to discuss the issues of plagiarism in class. Unfortunately, as stated in the interviews, the lion's share of explicit instruction provided in the interviewees' classes concentrates on the mechanics of writing, consisting of the documentation style of their major, i.e. APA or MLA styles, rather than the process of meaning-making involved while trying to observe the conventions and ethics of writing in composing form sources. This type of instruction mentioned by the interviewees is informed by the genre-based approach toward writing which does not prioritize the processes embedded in writing (Dovey, 2010). As explained in the previous theme, explicit instruction of the processes of synthesizing and paraphrasing was usually dismissed by the interviewees in the class. Hence, it appears that sufficient time is not assigned to observing the writing process of learners and practicing the sequential sub-processes of source integration, i.e. paraphrasing and synthesizing, which enable meaning transformation (Dovey, 2010) and mitigate the amount of copying. This finding aligns with Allen (2018) and Dovey (2010), who also criticize the mere emphasis on writing products rather than practicing the processes involved in the integration of sources.

### ***Constraints Facing the Instructional Decisions***

**Learners' Impact on Instructional Decisions.** One of the issues which was the shared concern of all of the interviewees is the weak performance of learners. The interviewees believed a considerable number of their students possess low-level writing skills. This poor performance of learners' writing skill is not merely restricted to their disciplinary conventions and standards of the academic context but is particularly represented in the linguistics resources of the learners. According to the professors, this was one of the forces which led them to allot excessive time to enhancing the grammatical knowledge and lexical repertoire of the learners, overshadowing other essential sub-skills of source-based writing, such as paraphrasing, synthesizing, etc. The following extract indicates the aforementioned concern.

*Dr. Rahmani: You need to teach grammar to the students, even in master's courses. Their writing skill is not good in general. Their grammar knowledge is poor. I mean, you have to omit some writing sub-skills you wish to teach to just work on the basic elements of their writing. So that, at least their works look acceptable.*

Other interviewees reinforced this opinion, claiming students' source-based written texts often "contain plagiarism and the arguments taken from sources to support their own ideas are usually weak". Perhaps one of the salient reasons behind the weak performance of the learners can be traced to their attitude toward writing courses in general. According to Dr. Fatahi, "the students often don't like writing and cannot connect themselves to this skill. They do their class assignments just because they are obliged to". Source-based writing within one's disciplinary genre requires a lot of practice and experience. The acknowledged researchers or writing instructors/supervisors in our academic milieu have all been through a long period of "scholarly apprenticeship" to acquire the appropriate linguistic resources, structural

design, and rhetorical knowledge of their own discipline (Paré, 2011). This hardship of the route toward practicing one's authorship has been emphasized by our interviewees, as well.

Dr, Dabiri: *Any type of writing requires practice. My students will be able to get feedback from me and write three or five chunks or pieces of writing. That's an ideal situation...But they must be eager enough to continue the same procedure and the same strategy, because ... writing is a matter of experience... you cannot receive everything from the instructor. The more you read... the more you practice... the more you learn how to write.*

Learners' motivation to participate in writing activities, engage in the long process of multiple revisions, and pursue the road toward their authorship, will not be promoted unless the objectives of the course are accurately defined and explained to the learners. This is where the social interactional needs of the learners gain importance. As Dr. Darabi well stated, the students have to feel "writing is not limited to the class work alone and that their writing skill is going to help them join the social disciplinary communities", "publish their research", and "to communicate with others in their field around the world". Nevertheless, as mentioned before, it seems that our students are not really eager to write in their classes. As one of the professors points out, it seems that only instrumental motivation is what triggers the students to write.

Dr. Rostami: *In our academic context, unfortunately, students are mostly driven by their instrumental motivation. Students must find a job as soon as possible, so they want to finish their studies soon. They don't want to pay tuition for a long time. You know, they are looking more for shortcuts... When we don't establish commitment in students, ... students don't have institutional commitment, or educational commitment, ... so they will be directed to another path...*

Other researchers have expressed similar concerns. East (2019) believes that the written performance of learners is connected to how motivated they are. On the potential factors contributing to Iranian university EFL learners' writing performance, Neissi (2017) maintains that among other affective variables, motivation is predictive of the learners' writing skill. Reichelt et al. (2012) also hold that when writing activities are restricted to in-class assignments and social dimensions of writing are neglected, their integrative motivation will not grow among the students and it will affect the time they wish to spend on practicing writing. Thus, not only do the learners enter the writing courses possessing poor writing skills, but also they are not motivated enough to compensate for their lack of knowledge later in their course; this will only lead to unconstructive writing courses, regardless of what sub-skills of writing are taught, which they typically devalue.

**Impact of Teaching time on Instructional Decisions.** Considering the immense realm of academic writing, the interviewees believed that the currently established curricula for the academic writing courses of English majors at graduate as well as undergraduate levels do not provide sufficient time for them to cover different dimensions of academic writing. The

interviewees found themselves forced to skip some of the major dimensions of academic writing relevant to writing from sources. Thus, the teaching time of the class “is mainly restricted to the linguistic features of writing, independent writing paragraphs/essays, and product-based instructions”, excluding the processes involved in writing from sources. In fact, as Dr. Aryayi indicated, “paragraph development and practices of essay [independent] writing tasks take a considerable time of the class, leaving the processes they [learners] need to practice in writing from sources unnoticed”. This may be associated with the recursive nature of the underlying meaning-making writing processes and the multiple revisions engaged in composing texts which take a lot of time (Williams, 2005). Moreover, a one and half-hours class time which lasts for fourteen sessions will not provide enough time for the instructors to cover some writing sub-skills comprehensively. Similarly, Birjandi and Hadidi Tamjid (2012) and Naghdipour and Koç (2014) indicate that the Iranian undergraduate academic writing curriculum is mostly form-focused and product-based, practicing grammar and paragraph or essay writing for the most part. Our interviewees believed that adequate time also has to be devoted to the other important dimensions of the writing skill such as ethics of writing from sources or information literacy, i.e. knowledge of successfully integrating reliable sources of information into one’s writing, in the class syllabi. Thus, they suggested for useful workshops to be held for the learners in addition to the course itself to be able to cover different dimensions of academic writing and give feedback on the works of all students to enhance learning. Some even mentioned that separate courses should be designed for academic writing literacy at university, each improving a particular sub-skill of writing.

*Dr. Rostami: I think writing should be taught in different courses, writings with different subjects, like ..., for example, I guess there really should be a separate course for ethics in writing... or a course entitled ... writing and information literacy.... You know, we should define different modules for academic writing. These all cannot be covered in one course.*

**Impact of Technological Facilities on Instructional Decisions.** One of the ways the professors can compensate for the inadequate teaching time is to benefit from blended instruction or available technologies during class time to assist learners to practice less teacher-centered activities while learning. As emphasized by the interviewees, there exists a number of “plagiarism checkers, synthesizing tools, and even online sites providing useful exercises for paraphrasing, documentation styles, and etc.” They declared that the advent of new technologies has created great opportunities for the professors to incorporate informative websites such as “Purdue writing lab”, “reliable online information sources”, or tools such as “plagiarism checkers” into their teaching materials. Dr. Safaie, for example, shared some of the sites and tools she incorporates into her class;

*Dr. Safaie: I use some websites that address writing.... And I find it useful and might use it for particular parts of the course. Then again, you know, in my class the students usually use online sources to incorporate into their writings.... And since I would*



*like them to have a real-life audience, real readers, usually I encourage them to share their writings online. So they will have, like, wikis and weblogs. Also, I'd like to talk about plagiarism in my classes.... If I had access to plagiarism checkers, ... I would spend some time in class on what plagiarism really is, how to avoid it, and ... stuff like that.*

Nonetheless, only the three participants who had the experience of teaching online or blended courses at university claimed to have utilized these educational technologies in their writing class. Not only did the cost issues and availability of the tools hinder the integration of beneficial technology in the class syllabi, but also students' unwillingness led the professors to overlook its usage. For instance, two of the interviewees expressed their desire to use the "reliable online databases" of their discipline, if available, "to introduce acceptable models of written text" to their students and ask them to "search for the sources of information they want to add to their own ideas when writing, through these databases". They also thought free access to plagiarism checkers could be of great help in the writing classes and even be taken as an instructional tool. Similar concerns are raised by Hedayati and Marandi (2014) reporting the findings of their interviews with Iranian EFL teachers with regard to the integration of technology in their courses. "Limited access to technology", "lack of suitable internet connection", and "learners' insufficient digital literacy" were among the constraints the teachers perceived in implementing technology-assisted instruction in their classes. The following extracts discuss the problems the professors would face in their classes if they were willing to integrate technology into their syllabi.

*Dr. Fatahi: One of the limitations I have in my writing class is that I can't use technology in the way I wish to. As far as I know, ... nowadays, there are great websites which can help students in the process of their writings. But due to the technological constraints, and sometimes, because the students are not really familiar with the technology, ... I prefer not to use it in my class. So unfortunately, after a while, I myself get demotivated.... But I know if I'll be able to use it, it has a lot of benefits.*

*Dr. Dabiri: For example, the plagiarism checker is a problem. For the highly reliable ones you need to pay, so it's not available for the students. The free ones... they are not that useful. This [availability] is one of the most important problems.... Well, of course, the cost issues when it comes to buying a particular software and specific plagiarism checkers, that's a serious problem.*

## **Conclusion**

This study investigated the current status quo of source-based writing instruction in Iranian English major academic writing courses. It sought to display the approaches implemented in the aforementioned context to teach and practice the processes embedded in writing from sources and at the same time the social practices associated with the construct of source-based writing.

The results of this research maintained that the syllabi and instructional activities designed for the writing courses did not foreground some of the critical cognitive processes used in the meaning making processes while writing from sources. For instance, synthesizing was largely dismissed by the professors which may have been due to its complicated nature, making it difficult for them to design suitable activities for practice. In some courses the professors overlooked explicit instruction of some of the cognitive processes of source-based writing, such as paraphrasing and summarizing. Overall, genre-based instruction and focus on form rather than meaning were favored over process instruction. In fact, modeling was the common practice employed to raise the genre-awareness of the learner. However, this does not imply that the professors were not aware of the important role of the meaning-making processes while integrating multiple sources into one's writing. This was revealed in their interviews when highlighting the problems students usually confronted trying to make a logical connection among the content of multiple sources they interpret and wish to incorporate in their writing to construct meaning. It is more likely, at least for some of them, that these processes were not included in their syllabi due to the constraints they faced which had an impact on their instructional decisions. Learners' limitations, time constraint, and the impact of technological facilities were among the reasons why the professors put aside some of the dimensions of source-based writing construct in their classes. One of the unresolved problems they had in their classes was the language proficiency level of learners which led the instruction toward a language-oriented approach aiming at improving the linguistic knowledge of learners to help them write within the conventions of their disciplinary register in a foreign language. All of the professors complained about their lack of time to incorporate and practice some of the essential issues of academic writing construct in their courses as well. Furthermore, it was confirmed that a product-orientation approach does not scaffold the writing process of learners in source-based writing. Thus, to meet the full range of students' needs, this paper suggests a socio-cognitive approach toward source-based writing. We argue that the concept of writing process needs to be valued and redefined in source-based writing instruction as the building block of the generation of meaning. This process of meaning construction is not detached from the social conventions of writing but informed by the socio-cognitive theory proposed for writing practices in the academic milieu. The implementation of an integrated socio-cognitive approach to teaching writing from sources acknowledges the presence of new literacies practices in the writing syllabi and empowers both the written text itself as well as the role of the writer and reader in the process of meaning transformation/construction.

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## **Appendix**

### **Interview questions**

1. How would you define the objectives of an academic writing course in higher education?
2. Which sub-skills of writing skill should a professor mainly focus on in an academic writing course in higher education?
3. How important do you think it is for a learner to experience writing from written sources in an academic writing class in higher education? Do you consider source-based writing as a good task to be addressed in the class, if so, how? / If not, why?
4. How can writing from written sources affect the writing skill of learners in higher education?
5. What kinds of class activities/assignments should the students do to practice source-based writing? What kinds of teaching materials should be usually used to practice source-based writing? Explain your own teaching experience in this regard as well.
6. What are the main deficiencies of the tertiary level students in writing from written sources? What reasons do you see as the main sources of these deficiencies? What can an instructor do to mitigate them?
7. What writing activities do you think are relevant and useful for the students to acquire writing from sources, but constraints, such as facilities, administrative issues, technology, etc., don't allow you to work on as much as you wish? What are the constraints?
8. In your opinion what role should technology play in an academic writing course when practicing source-based writing, if any? Should we teach our students to use the internet as a source of input in an academic writing class? Why or why not? (What are its benefits and downsides)?
9. How can we teach the students to benefit from the internet and its information as a source of input?

# Poetic Imagination in Communion With Nature: A Case Study of Mary Oliver's Selected Poems

Research Article  
pp. 31-47

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## Abstract

Considering the significance of ecopoetry and how it widens the ecological horizons of the readers, tracing the ecopoet's mental transition from the moment of direct sensual experiences in Nature to the act of composition enables the readers to fathom out what lies behind the poetic imagination, bringing about the ecological sense of union with the natural. As for the purpose of this study, the researchers intend to examine the ecocentric-ecopoetic elements of the selected ecopoems out of Mary Oliver's *New & Selected Poems, Vol. 1* with the aim of bringing to light the fact that Oliver's main attempt is inviting her readers to reach mental growth through her bringing forth the consciousness that derives from the power of imagination and acute attention given to the world of the non-human, enabling the speaker-poet and her readers to do away with the barriers of self-centeredness and take part in a collective reunion with Nature. Accordingly, the general framework that has been used to conduct the following research is Ecocriticism and its celebration of ecological wholeness between human and non-human agents.

**Keywords:** poetic imagination, Mary Oliver, nature, ecopoetry, ecological wholeness

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## Introduction

Human beings' faculty of imagination is the main gate through which one can contemplate the most unthinkable and the farthest places. Agreeing that human mind is the medium that conditions all the situations, it can be deduced that we are transformed by its impact both within us upon us (Abram, 2010). Be that for real or not, it is the wing of imagination that carries human mind over all the universe and makes it travel with the natural. Probably Mary Oliver had the same point in mind when she wrote, "Said the river: imagine everything you can imagine, then / keep on going" (2009, p. 51). In order for the human beings to be able to imagine Nature and natural elements, they need to go beyond their selves, egos, and join the melodious tune of Nature. As such, they reach a unified insight that leads to a concordant bond between man and Nature in the end (Matthew, 2008). Yet, reaching such holistic vision requires the ecopoet to grant the readers the insight to fathom out the fact that we should counter "the singular totalitarian idea of control" and make room for "the old ideals of harmony, symmetry, balance, order" (W. Berry, 1983, p. 4). A good starting point, as Iovino has remarked, is to "restore ecological imagination as our fundamental 'survival unity,'" for it can reunite man with the land (Lynch et al., 2012, p. 107). That said, the present research intends to examine the role of poetic imagination as the facilitator in bringing about ecocritical unity between man and Nature, observed in a number of selected ecopoems taken out of Oliver's *New & Selected Poems*, Vol. 1, in the hope of putting an end to man's one-sided treatment of Nature; accordingly, the main lens through which the following ideas will be discussed relate to the notion of man/Nature reciprocity inherent in ecocritical studies.

## Method

The methodology in this research is qualitative, since, after all, the aim of this study is to show the role of the poetic imagination as the unifying force between the speaker-poet and the non-human in the selected poems of Oliver. Besides, this research paper will be descriptive and based on the library research and authentic internet sources such as books, e-books, articles, magazines, etc. Thus, the researchers will put forward an ecological examination of Oliver's selected ecopoems in an effort to show how Oliver's poetic imagination acts as the mediator between human mind and the non-human, shedding more light on the ecopoetic-ecocentric awareness of the ecopoet in employing the ecological issues with the hope of putting an end to the man/Nature dualism.

## Review of the Related Literature

Nature and discussions related to Nature writing have always been the center of attention in literary studies. However, with the advent of Ecocriticism in the 1980s the "interconnections between nature and culture" (Glotfelty, 1996, p. xix) came to notice more than before. Among the researches done on the poetry of Mary Oliver the ones used in this paper include, McNew (1989), Bonds (1992), Graham (1994), Burton-Christie (1996), Lucas (2006), Davis (2009), and Zona (2011). As such, McNew has compared and contrasted Oliver with the English romantic poets and offers an anti-patriarchy model that is at



odds with the male poets' trying to achieve "an identity that transcends nature" (1989, p. 75). Bonds has concentrated on the way Oliver responds to the issues of Nature and language differently, believing that her eco-poetry renders the "move back and forth between modes of discourse, categories of perception and orders of experience," that is indicative of "the 'ownerlessness' of the word" (1992, p. 13). Graham's main attempt in her paper has been to juxtapose Oliver's dream of dissolving into Nature with the Western culture's emphasis on individualism and the need for "the formation of strong ego boundaries and stable identities" (1994, p. 352). Burton-Christie has focused on the role of Nature, spirit, and imagination in Oliver's eco-poems to cast light on Oliver's evoking an integrated sense of spirituality that stems from watching the ordinary in a world where Nature, spirit, and imagination follow one another (1996). Lucas has traced the concept of "drifting" in Oliver's eco-poems to demonstrate Oliver's eco-poetry "is a powerful visceral call to engage with a philosophy and an aesthetic of the drift," made possible through the attention paid to the tie between self and the world (2006, p. 10). Accordingly, Davis's examination of Oliver's eco-poetry has followed the motif of "incarnation" (2009) that stresses the eco-poet's "celebration of her longing and the ecstatic, even mystical moments in which that longing is fulfilled through art and spiritual devotion" (p. 620). Last but not least, Zona has summarized Oliver's method as "the selfless practice of full presence" and believes the act of writing for her is "a means of experiencing most fully her interbeing with the observable world" and of enclosing the gap between the self and the other, i. e. Nature (2011, p. 123). With that being said, the researchers believe that tracing the role of the poetic imagination can cast light on the immense power of the eco-poet's mind in creating an ecological interrelation between the speaker-poet and the world of the non-human and act as the supplement to the previous researches conducted on Oliver's eco-poetry, the result of which is the replacement of an egocentric mode of thinking with an ecocentric one.

### **Discussion and Analysis**

A quick survey of Mary Oliver and her literary contributions to the canon of American literature justifies Herald's words which shed light on her outstanding power to express the beauty of the world in a memorable manner (2000). Indeed, her communion with Nature within her eco-poetry is one of the foremost aspects of her eco-poems that absorbs the attention of her readers more than any other thing. As the products of the Pulitzer Prize winning eco-poet, her eco-poetry offers a postmodern alternative to the concept of human beings' self-sufficiency (Bryson, 2002). In defense of the ecological stance of Oliver's eco-poetry, Christensen writes, "In particular, ecologically informed authors such as Mary Oliver devise strategies for cultural survival by proposing functional alternatives to narratives that no longer make sense in light of our evoking knowledge. Oliver's poetry replaces the old, pernicious myth of human independence with an ecological tale of inclusion in a community of interrelated presences" (2002, p. 135). Christensen's emphasizing the notion of interrelation clarifies the important ecological stance of Oliver's eco-poetry that relates to the all-embracing premise of Ecocriticism as it broadens the "notion of 'the world' to include all the ecosphere" (Glotfelty, 1996, p. xix). Accordingly,

it is through reading her eco-poems that readers can enter the world of the eco-poet's mind, imagine the inspirational moments, and sing her songs. To clarify this argument more fully, Felstiner writes, "Response starts with individuals, it's individual persons that poems are spoken by and spoken to. One by one, the will to act may rise within us. Because we are what the beauty and force of poems reach toward, we've a chance to recognize and lighten our footprint in a world where all of nature matters vitally" (2009, p. xiii). Genuinely, Felstiner is trying to touch on the substantial role of each individual human's mind in decrypting the hidden messages tied to the fabric of the eco-poet's words in order to get to the core of her mind. From this point it becomes evident that there is no better way to bind with Nature than through deep contemplation, made possible via the help of imagination, and putting those moments of deep interaction with Nature into words in the so-called eco-poetry. T. Berry, likewise, has written about the visionary impulse we go through during the moments of engagement with our being, the cosmic order which affects us in our sleep, and the visionary instants we face during our waking hours to show the coherence that is evoked through the remarkable power of imagination (2015). In line with that Felstiner casts light on the power of such simple recognitions that can "awaken us, poem by poem, to urban, suburban, or rural surroundings, east and west, at home or on the road" (2009, p. xiii). In an effort to create a link between the above-mentioned arguments and render an ecological reading of Oliver's first chosen eco-poem, mention should be made of the eighth part of Oliver's "Flare," which goes as such:

The poem is not the world.  
It isn't even the first page of the world.

But the poem wants to flower, like a flower.  
It knows that much.

It wants to open itself,  
Like the door of a little temple,  
So that you might step inside and be cooled and refreshed,  
and less yourself than part of everything.  
(Oliver, 2000a, n. p.)

As a flower, the seeds of the eco-poem grow in the eco-poet's imagination and come into fruition. The product is the reader's entrance to the eco-poet's mind that is accompanied by the transformation of the reader and the speaker-poet as they live all the sensuous moments of the eco-poem and become a part of the more-than-human world. This mode of transformation is the product of Oliver's literary style which Zona describes as "writing-as-mindfulness" (2011, p. 123), revealing her acute observation of Nature that leads to the suspension of the motif of egocentrism and progression towards an integrative being with Nature.

However, going beyond one's self and being part of Nature requires the eco-poet to marry the human mind with the world of the non-human. Indeed, Oliver was aware of this fact when she gave voice to the insufficiency of her human capabilities in "Spring Azures" as such:

Sometimes the great bones of my life feel so heavy,

and all the tricks my body knows—

don't seem enough to carry me through this world.

("Spring Azures", Oliver, 1992, n. p.)

In order to reach that goal, she aspires "to have wings—, blue ones—, ribbons of flame," as the butterfly, so that she can "rise / from the black rain water" ("Spring Azures", Oliver 1992, n. p.) and become that butterfly for a moment and experience that incident in her mind. Describing such event as "the discipline of *momento mori*," Burton-Christie believes, it paves the way for Oliver to obtain some insight on life and confirms her position as a notable seeker, experiencing affinity, closeness, and concordance in the world of the non-human (1996). Alford, likewise, argues Oliver's extraordinary characteristics mark her difference from her contemporary poets. One such endeavor is engrossing "the reader in a fully sensual union with nature" (1988, p. 283). This goes in line with Burton-Christie's statement that highlights Oliver's awareness of the ongoing vivacity and beauty of life that comes into notice in her ecopoetry (1996), which is echoed in the following lines:

When it's over, I want to say: all my life

I was a bride married to amazement.

I was the bridegroom, taking the world into my arms.

When it's over, I don't want to wonder

if I have made of my life something particular, and real.

I don't want to find myself sighing and frightened,

or full of argument.

I don't want to end up simply having visited this world.

("When Death Comes", Oliver, 1992, n. p.)

Thus, what soothes her soul is living life to the full, urging the speaker-poet and the reader to "recognize the universal joys, pains, beauties, and terrors experienced in such connectedness" (1988, p. 283). For this reason, the mere visiting of the world is not enough for her; rather, she gives voice to the transformative power of the spiritual that arises from the speaker-poet's encounter with the ordinary and exerts its influence on the speaker-poet and the reader through the help of poetic imagination (Burton-Christie, 1996). Likewise, she does away with the existing rift between man and Nature and the alienating attitude that accompanies the rift and "searches memory and present experiences" (Alford, 1988, p. 283) like when in "Picking Blueberries" the speaker-poet awakens up to the deer's stumbling against her. In such atmosphere all elements of Nature work in sync. The wind blows with its "glossy voice" so as to give the deer instructions. It seems as if the only incongruity seen within this natural environment is the human presence that is indicative of the deer's running away, "floating off toward the trees" (Oliver, 1992, n. p.). The ecopoet's choice of such verbs and adjectives as "wandering, floating, listening, glossy, wide, deep, etc. shows the serenity and peace surrounding the field and the sense of calm and tranquility it gives the speaker-poet once she thinks back on it. This short encounter with the deer is "so memorable and so deep" that is as fresh as thirty years ago, showing the lasting effect Nature has had on the speaker-poet's mind for many years. The fresh

sense of Nature after a long time makes it evident that the most viable treatment for enclosing the current ruptures is retreating to Nature that brings the notion of connectivity, lying in the heart of Ecocriticism, to the mind. (W. Berry, 1999).

Once this healing comes by and the gap between human being and Nature is enclosed it is the power of love and dedication that strengthens such tie. As Celati has pointed out, imagination “puts us in a state of love for something out there” (Lynch et al., 2012, p. 111). In such situation the deeper the sense of love and dedication, the more lasting the bond between the agents, i. e. human and non-human. This is where such eco-poets as Oliver show up to give rise to the necessity of restoring balance to the human-Nature correlation, adhering to the basic premise of Ecocriticism and its rejection of the one-sided, discriminatory tendencies of the contemporary age (Kalmbach, 2012). The restoration of this broken bond is, therefore, as vital as it continues even when one part of the human-Nature equation is not present physically as in Oliver’s “Her Grave” which takes us to the speaker-poet’s recalling the memories she shared with her beloved dog before the dog’s death. Taking the dog as her sample, Oliver reminds us that Nature proceeds independent of the human individuals given that integrity is its major component element (Burton-Christie, 1996). Hence, the speaker-poet states, “A dog comes to you and lives with you in your own house, but you / do not therefore own her, as you do not own the rain, or the / trees, or the laws which pertain to them”. Indeed, not only do the human beings not own Nature, they also do not have the absolute power over the non-human individuals. Accordingly, Oliver chooses to “pray for nothing but modesty, and / not be angry” (“Her Grave”, 1992, n. p.), which can be viewed as an effort to “acknowledge the self’s mutability and multiplicity, not to lose subjectivity” (Graham, 1994, p. 253). Not only is the speaker-poet’s subjectivity not lost, but she is also able to turn her sense of self-centeredness, egocentrism, to some sort of direct engagement with Nature, i. e. ecocentrism, via the help of poetic imagination. In other words, Oliver engages herself with Nature through experiencing moments of first-hand, sensuous communion with the non-human. To do so she gets close to the waterfall to see it for herself and testifies,

For all they said,  
                   I could not see the waterfall  
                           until I came and saw the water falling,  
                                   its lace legs and its womanly arms  
   sheeting down...  
   (“The Waterfall”, Oliver, 1992, n. p.)

The way Oliver attributes feminine qualities to the waterfall and how she sheds light on its howling “like thunder” add much to the delicate majesty of it, turning it into a scene of wonder and awe for the speaker-poet. The grandeur of the waterfall is so deep that it goes beyond the speaker-poet’s imagination and proves that “the natural world is indubitably real and beautiful and significant” (Love, 1996, p. 237). However, the still water at the base of the waterfall shows “some slack and perfectly balanced / blind and rough peace, finally, / in the deep and green and utterly motionless pools” (“The Waterfall”, Oliver 1992, n. p). Despite the power inherent in the water falling on rocks,

Oliver's picturing the womanly tenderness of the waterfall invites the reader to realize that it is the feminine gentleness and godly grandeur of the waterfall that work in harmony. This procedure accounts for Oliver's restoring imagination to place that reanimates the world (Iovino, as cited in Lynch et al., 2021, p. 106) and involves her readers in the process of "cultivating ecological consciousness" (Devall & Sessions, 1985, p. 8) within themselves and becoming "more aware of the actuality of rocks, wolves, trees, and rivers—the cultivation of the insight that everything is connected" (p. 8). It is this sense of connectivity, thus, that empowers the speaker-poet to inaugurate a green dialog with "true real" (Graham, 1994, p. 355) and rise to ecological wholeness.

The desire to form a tie with the real, however, requires the speaker-poet "to look, to touch, to taste, to see, and to smell" everything which opens the speaker-poet's eyes to how the goldenrods "rise in a stiff sweetness, / in the pure peace of giving / one's gold away". Though known as "sneeze-bringers and seed-bearers," these goldenrods "bend as though it was natural and godly to bend" ("The Goldenrod", Oliver, 1992, n. p.). Nonetheless, the insight they grant the speaker-poet, as she mentions, "And what has consciousness come to anyway, so far, / that is better than these light-filled bodies?" ("The Goldenrod"), is the ability to draw the veils of superficial examination to get into the core of their presence and feel joy after such close encounter. Were it not for the wind flaring and the blossoms rustling, the speaker-poet would not reach the recognition that it is necessary that we set aside the boundaries that have long separated us from Nature, let go of ourselves in the arms of Nature, and take up different identities and intermingle with other species (Graham, 1994).

One major step in this regard is to take into consideration the "significance of environmentality," which according to Buell is "defined by the self-conscious sense of an inevitable but uncertain and shifting relation between being and physical context" (2005, p. 62). The conscious alteration of ways of relating to Nature is the message that is conveyed in Oliver's "Peonies". By absorbing the readers' attention to the amount of emotion that peonies can evoke, the speaker-poet draws an informing analogy between their seeming beauty and worth and that of life. To that end, Oliver states:

the flowers bend their bright bodies,  
and tip their fragrance to the air,  
and rise,  
their red stems holding

all that dampness and recklessness  
gladly and lightly,  
and there it is again—  
beauty the brave, the exemplary,

blazing open. ("Peonies", Oliver, 1992, n. p.)

Then, by asking "Do you cherish your humble and silky life? / Do you adore the green grass, with its terror beneath?", the speaker-poet makes it clear that it is crucial is "to be wild and perfect for a moment" ("Peonies") before the opportunity is missed. As Burton-Christie discusses, "Here we are beckoned not

only to observe, to appreciate these “pools of lace,” dancing under a shifting wind, but to abandon our detached perspective and run to embrace them, filling our arms and whispering tender words of love before it is too late, before they are “nothing forever” (1996, p. 85). Discussed in terms of Hitt’s “ecological sublime,” Oliver’s main attempt is to provide her readers with the chance to consider the need for a more comprehensive framework to reflect on the human-Nature relationship more responsibly (Hitt, 1999, p. 605), the main result of which is the propagation of humane values one of which includes “humility before nature” (p. 606). Humility is at issue here in that it relates to “appreciative description” and “loving embrace” in order to enable us to think well about “what we will do” and “how we will live *now*” (Burton-Christie, 1996, p. 85). Simply put, the important issue that we must contemplate is “whether we are prepared to risk loving this world, knowing we cannot hold onto it — perhaps *because* we cannot hold onto it” (p. 85).

Contemplation on our deeds and how we respond to the natural environment stems from how we treat Nature. In other words,

How you act *should* be determined, and the consequences of your acts *are* determined, by where you are. To know where you are (and whether or not that is where you should be) is at least as important as to know what you are doing, because in the moral (the ecological) sense you cannot know *what* until you have learned *where*. Not knowing where you are, you can lose your soul or your soil, your life or your way home. (W. Berry, 1983, p. 103)

From an ecological perspective, knowing where one is goes in line with knowing what to do in close company of Nature and its non-human agents. That is to say, the green call to affirm the unfinished process of the continuation of the tie between human beings and Nature (Müller & Pusse, 2018) is the key notion that Oliver tries to touch in most of her ecopoems. For the speaker-poet being in tune with Nature is the ultimate goal even if she has to learn it the hard way. Such is when Oliver talks about how rain brings the sweet essence of life back to the dead swamp and lets the speaker-poet see the revival of “the withered acres of moss”. Upon witnessing the restorative power of Nature, i. e. the rain, the speaker-poet longs for her death on a rainy day and states, “When I have to die, I would like to die / on a day of rain— / long rain, slow rain, the kind you think will never end” and she expects the ones taking part in her funeral to “travel slowly and with thought, as around the / edges of the great swamp” (“Marengo”, Oliver, 1992, n. p.). Thoughtful vision and contemplation, taking root in the ecopoet’s imagination take us back to our senses, which “feels like magic” and renews “our abstract ideas and dusty agendas” in a “glistening, multiple world”. And the ecopoet is here to show us “the immediate reality of connectedness, of kinship” (Elder, 1996, p. 226), even when that connectedness is achieved through death.

The notion of connectedness serves as the major ecological factor in nature writings of such ecopoets as Oliver in the sense that her ecopoems herald “that human beings must perceive the natural world through human eyes, and by way of the prisms of human cultures” (Wimberley, 2009, p. 3). To make it more explicit, human senses are the gates to the perception of the

natural world around them, as they are the only medium through which human beings can relate to Nature. It is with the help of poetic imagination and senses that Oliver can grasp the existing harmony between the birds floating “in the distance” and the green grass underneath in the green field. Oliver’s likening the grass to the “green sea,” doing its job of feeding the birds until “their bellies swelled” sheds light on the grace of the green grass. The speaker-poet’s visiting the same field “A year later” and noticing that “the grass rises thick and clean,” shining “like the sea,” (“Field Near Linden, Alabama”, Oliver, 1992, n. p.) informs the reader that human beings and Nature are “nested within a complex interdependent hierarchy of ecosystems” (Wimberley, 2009, p. 4) in which sustainability serves the human-Nature continuum. Closely related to this idea is that within such firmly-established bond between human beings and Nature there is no room for such thing as imbalance and disharmony. Accordingly, when it comes to mortality and issues related to life and death, it becomes evident that death in Oliver’s ecopoems is the process of immersion into the body of Nature (Graham, 1994) regarding the fact that her poetry is an invitation to acknowledge our dwelling in the harmonious world of presences (Christensen, 2002). By writing about gannets and how they “blaze down into the water / with the power of blunt spears / and a stunning accuracy—,” despite the sea riling and boiling, thus, Oliver makes it clear that “life is real” and so is pain. However, the hunted fish, condemned to death, does not actually die as the speaker-poet mentions that death is nothing but “an imposter;” hence, the fish is able to “rise from the water inseparable / from the gannets’ wings” in the end (“Gannet”, Oliver, 1992, n. p.).

Christensen, similarly, sheds light on the transformative effect generated through the intermingling of the elements of different beings into one another to blur the distinctions between mortality and immortality in Oliver’s poetry (2002). Therefore, we may infer that the fish’s death can be read as the process of “redemptive regeneration” through “physical mortality” (p. 137). In the same vein, Oliver likens the egret’s hunting the fish to the “dark death,” opening “like a white door” (“The Egret”, Oliver, 1992, n. p.), which echoes the same point, working as a transition from life to death (Kumin, 1993). Nevertheless, Oliver’s main struggle in employing the image of such predator as the egret is to make her readers “confront the violent death and the terror that she sees as fundamental to the natural world” (p. 19). Still, her admiration of the hunting skills of the predators echoes the sublimity witnessed in Nature which stimulates the human individual to move towards ecological integrity (Knott, 2002).

Obviously, in Oliver’s ecopoems ecocritical awakening is achieved through ecological poetic imagination, close observation of the natural world, and reflection on the relationship between humans and Nature. Likewise, Oliver’s “visionary goal” includes “constructing a subjectivity” that encourages the close affinity between human and non-human (McNew, 1989, p. 72). For Oliver, the goal of constructing subjectivity is a means to the renewal of her bond between Nature and her ego which is exemplary of the sense of love echoed through the goldfinches’ building nests, “silvery baskets,” and laying eggs in their nests every year. The same way thistles “rise out of the marshlands of spring with their newly-sprung buds waiting “for midsummer, /

for the long days," to benefit from "the brass heat, / for the seeds to begin to form in the hardening thistles," the goldfinches need to wait for the generous offering of the thistles to see the hatchings of their eggs "in the swaying branches" and "love the world". For the speaker-poet there is no more happiness than hearing these little birds "singing in the wind, above the final fields" ("Goldfinches", Oliver, 1992, n. p.), which testifies Oliver's belief in the interdependent nature of all beings (Davis, 2009) and educates the speaker-poet to oscillate between individual awareness and ecocritical association with Nature (Bonds, 1992). As it relates to Ecocriticism, identifying with Nature requires human beings to bridge the gaps in their relations with Nature and the non-human. As a result, they need to, first and foremost, shift their ego-centered mindsets to an eco-centered one through the generative power of poetic imagination that can lead to the formation of a symbiotic relationship between human mind and Nature. As an instance, Oliver encourages her readers to join the speaker-poet and see how the rice "grew in the black mud" with "stems thinner than candles," so that they can understand the mud is "like a blessing" ("Rice", Oliver, 1992, n. p.), providing human beings with the courtesy denied from them in the advanced, human-centered society, "dominated by the values of a supposed human exceptionalism" (Clark, 2019, p. 14). Accordingly, the speaker-poet summons the reader as such:

I want you to walk out into the fields  
 where the water is shining, and the rice has risen.  
 I want you to stand there, far from the white tablecloth.  
 I want you to fill your hands with the mud, like a blessing.  
 ("Rice", Oliver, 1992, n. p.)

By encouraging the readers to fill their hands with the fertile mud, Oliver paves the way for their growing conscious in terms of ecological concerns dominating "the real, vital world that Oliver opposes to the domesticated one represented by the white tablecloth" (Knott, 2002, p. 185). Likewise, it is an attempt suggesting that responding to Nature and its non-speaking agents unravels the messages and thoughts that human language fails to communicate to the humans (Bonds, 1992). As follows, the speaker-poet refers to nostalgia and summons the readers to take heed of and revitalize their lost tie with Nature which originates from the lost "human feelings" (Worster, 1993, p. 5). Within this ecopoem, in short, Oliver "takes the reader on a quest for origins" in order to ameliorate the human-Nature condition (Knott, 2002, p. 185).

Ecologically speaking, the revival of human bond with Nature is possible when human beings accept the transience nature of life despite all the power it bestows upon them. Thinking that human beings are able to disturb such order is out of the question as the world is a self-regulating whole in which all the major parts work for the same cause, i. e. the stable coexistence of all individuals (Worster, 1993) and death is the inseparable part of such order. However, death is not the end of life and its inevitability is the indicator of the fact that "loss is the great lesson" ("Poppies", Oliver, 1992, n. p.). As the ecopoet casts light on the noticeable beauty of the poppies which,

... send up their  
 orange flares; swaying



in the wind, their congregations  
are a levitation

of bright dust, of thin  
and lacy leaves. ("Poppies")

She also avers that everything will "sooner or later drown / in the indigos of darkness," from which there is no escape. Despite this, Oliver believes that death is not the end of man's story as it is a means to survival for both human and non-human, implying the fact that human survival goes hand in hand with the survival of Nature (Bate, 1991). For the speaker-poet, as well as her readers, the "roughage" of the world "shines like a miracle". The result of this miracle is the light that the speaker-poet sees as "an invitation / to happiness," resulting in "a kind of holiness" that is "palpable and redemptive". For this reason, the sense of the "earthly delight" ("Poppies", Oliver, 1992, n. p.) the speaker-poet finds in the fields "serves as a stay against darkness" and the "renewal of happiness among the poppies becomes an answer to the consciousness of mortality that haunts" the speaker-poet (Knott, 2002, p. 85). As Burton-Christie has explained further, "Oliver is honest enough not to skirt this struggle or to suggest that the "indigos of darkness" have nothing to teach her. But neither is she prepared to admit that the swathe cut by the "black, curved blade" is final, irrevocable, incapable of yielding — somehow — to light" (1996, p. 84).

Oliver's awareness of mortality is, in reality, a call to the human observer to accept the fact that joy and agony accompany each other to the effect "that even the purest light, lacking the robe of darkness, / would be without expression—". With that in mind, the speaker-poet recalls "thinking of the old, wild life of the fields, when, as I remember it, / I was shaggy, and beautiful, / like the rose". Though aging has affected her youth vivacity and the odor of the skunk haunts her "as the brushing of thorns," ("A Certain Sharpness in the Morning Air", Oliver, 1992, n. p.), she finds the old fields as a source of spiritual healing, where the speaker-poet's attempt to regenerate the sense of attending to the wild life grants her the chance to move towards salvation (Knott, 2002). That is why, she believes even a little of the odor of the skunk is "another story" ("A Certain Sharpness in the Morning Air", Oliver, 1992, n. p.), showing that the gloom of physical decay gives birth to "optimism" and "her [Oliver's] capacity to find joy in the natural world that underlies her injunctions to her readers" (Knott, 2002, p. 188). Time and again, Oliver absorbs the readers' attention to how simple trifles of life can fill one's heart with delight. By employing simple imageries and words she brings her message of watchfulness home to her readers. All she intends to communicate to the reader is to invite them to celebrate the reception of the unexpected in the natural world around them attentively so that they can unveil what has gone unnoticed (p. 12). As an example, in "Morning" eco-poem Oliver pictures the owner of a cat talking about some ordinary stuff in their house, "Salt shining behind its glass cylinder. / Milk in a blue bowl. The yellow linoleum. / The cat stretching her black body from the pillow" (Oliver, 1992, n. p.). It seems that the cat is living a life of pleasure and enjoyment, making "her curvaceous response to the small, kind gesture". Upon watching the cat's jumping, playing, and

comforting in the grass, the speaker-poet realizes the value of these simple things that make their life wonderful. The wonder she finds in simple things around her convinces the speaker-poet that she is blessed “with everything wonderful around” her (Oliver, 1992, n. p.), which is the key message rendered to the reader in this ecopoem and ends in the celebration of the ultimate bliss on the part of the human beings, stressing the importance of the notion of humility before Nature (Moore, 2008).

Besides the concept of humility before Nature, which is mostly favored by the eminent scholars of Ecocriticism, being part of Nature and blending into the natural world is another important factor that can be achieved only when human individual is not seen as an Other. It must not, however, be forgotten that Oliver has always been open to the fact that Nature is both harsh and comforting, nurturing yet challenging. Nevertheless, harmony is an inseparable part of it, due to which Oliver pictures the scene of imagining her own death when she falls asleep “as if in a vast and sloping room” filled with white flowers “that open all summer, / sticky and untidy, / in the warm fields”. Upon waking up, she finds herself covered “with blossoms,” wondering whether her body “went diving down / under the sugary vines / in some sleep-sharpened affinity” or she was embraced by the “green energy” that “rose like a wave / and curled over” her. Whatever the case, it is such a delighting experience for the speaker-poet due to which she is not willing to rise, as she says:

Never in my life had I felt so plush,  
                                 or so slippery,  
 or so resplendently empty.  
 Never in my life  
 had I felt myself so near  
                                 that porous line  
 where my own body was done with  
 and the roots and the stems and the flowers began.  
 (“White Flower”, Oliver, 1992, n. p.)

Through this imaginary death, the speaker-poet relishes her company with Nature and donates her earthly flesh to the earth, without any feeling of dissatisfaction, to help the germination of the flowers. The growth of the stems and flowers is the symbol of the speaker-poet’s undergoing the process of self-renewal, which removes the veil of self-centeredness before her eyes and marries the speaker-poet’s mind with the all-embracing Nature, engenders “a sense of self—that is, of being-in-relation” (Zona, 2011, p. 131), and reinforces the utility and importance of all Nature (Evernden, 1996).

For an ecopoet whose ability to write stems from the astounding poetic imagination, that relies on direct observation and sensual experience in Nature and the influence of place on its stimulation, communion with the natural is a rise to poetic inspiration; as she writes, “I walk in the world to love it” (“Wasteland: An Elegy”, Oliver, 2004, p. 40). For her, writing poetry is tantamount to keeping a watchful eye on plants and animals, and then turning this sensual encounter into ecopoems in such a way that readers can join the speaker-poet, not feeling any sort of detachment. To make it more vivid, she proclaims, “The poem in which the reader does not feel himself or herself a participant is a lecture...The point is not what the poet would make of the

moment but what the reader would make of it" ("The Swan", Oliver, 2000b, n. p.). After all, "Plain as a needle a poem may be, or opulent as the shell of the channeled whelk, or the face of the lily, it matters not; it is a ceremony of words, a story, a prayer, an invitation, a flow of words that reaches out and, hopefully, without being real in the way that the least incident is real, is able to stir in the reader a real response" (Oliver, 2004, p. 82). Such is the case when the speaker-poet indulges the reader in a deep contemplation about the value of the world. So, the speaker-poet asks,

What does the world  
mean to you if you can't trust it  
to go on shining when you're

not there?... ("October", Oliver, 1992, n. p.)

By trusting the world here, the speaker-poet intends to show "the need to resituate — even evacuate — the human in order to let the natural world stand forth" (Burton-Christie, 1996, p. 81). In that regard, the speaker-poet needs to be cautious of this opportunity "as though it's the last chance" she is "ever going to get / to be alive / and know" the world ("October", Oliver, 1992, n. p.). For the same reason, she states,

Sometimes in late summer I won't touch anything, not  
the flowers, not the blackberries  
brimming in the thickets; I won't drink  
from the pond; I won't name the birds or the trees;  
I won't whisper my own name. ("October")

However, the paradox that stands out here requires the reader and observer to spot the fox "glittering and confident" and to reflect on the possibility of the fox's existing apart from the human" (Burton-Christie, 1996, p. 81). Probably, however, Nature seems more intact when no trace of human being is seen there, which is why the speaker-poet concludes in the end, "so this is the world. / I'm not in it. / It's beautiful" ("October", Oliver, 1992, n. p.). Beautiful not in an "aesthetic" sense but in an "ethical" one, calling us forth to "relinquish our habit of determining the value and purpose of nature" (Burton-Christie, 1996, p. 81).

It is in this sense that Oliver pursues the fox's searching for the snowshoe hare, moving "like a red rain" until he reaches his goal and nothing is left of the snowshoe hare except for,

the feathery  
scuffs of fur  
of the vanished  
snowshoe hare  
tangled  
on the pale spires  
of the broken flowers  
of the lost summer—  
fluttering a little  
but only  
like the lapping threads  
of the wind itself—

(“The Snowshoe Hare”, Oliver, 1992, n. p.)

Yet, the only thing the speaker-poet can hear is the cold creek running “over the old pebbles / and across the field and into / another year” (“The Snowshoe Hare”). Despite the tragic scene of the eco-poem, nothing can prevent the creek from moving “into the rest of the world,” which is certainly a mark of the inevitability of Nature, justifying Christensen’s belief in Oliver’s reliance on sincere devotion as the stepping stone, turning the act of simple observation of Nature to the moments of inter-being with other presences (2002, p. 140). So, the readers can deduce that it is through the transition from “direct observation toward revelation” that the speaker-poet notices the fact that perfection is just a mere fantasy (p. 141). That pain and suffering “are a part of life on earth,” is beyond doubt, but “Oliver’s predators are never evil” in that both the “predator and the prey are driven by the same force” (p. 146). As Oliver demonstrates in “Hawk,” death and destruction are intertwined with “the white lily of resurrection,” (Oliver, 1992, n. p.) showing that the prey’s being hunted by the hunter symbolizes the fact that for the speaker-poet the world is “as emblematic as well as real” and at the same time “virtuous” (“Comfort”, Oliver, 2004, p. 87).

Virtue is the inseparable part of the world in which both the kill and the hunter live together. If pain is interwoven to the fabric of life, so is death. Yet, for Oliver pondering about the purpose of death leads her to view it as the opportunity to experience a rebirth which provokes “a sense of reverence and awe” (Howard, 1991, p. 343). The seeming violence of the above-discussed eco-poems can be paraphrased in terms of Oliver’s own attitude toward such events in her essay “Owl”, where she mentions, “The world where the owl is endlessly hungry and endlessly on the hunt is the world in which I live too. There is only one world” (Oliver, 1995, as cited in Bryson 2002, p. 146). Being part of this unified world helps Oliver to acknowledge that “even an owl is acting out of love” (Christensen, 2002, p. 146). As Elder clarifies further, Oliver’s describing the gloomy scenes of death in Nature is an effort to picture such scenes sincerely on the one hand and illuminate the pure determination observed in the predator’s intention and concentration (1996, p. 220) on the other, driving the speaker-poet to register the process of death and later rebirth through an ecosystem as a psychological and emotional fact, which results from her undergoing those disheartening moments of sudden dread (p. 221).

## Conclusion

It can therefore be concluded that Oliver’s main contribution in the above-analyzed eco-poems has been an attempt to increase human beings’ eco-poetic-ecocentric awareness of the central function of the eco-poems, which act as a passage between the world of the eco-poet’s mind and that of the non-human. It is from the attitude of noticing and direct sensual experiences in close company of Nature and non-human agents that the eco-poet can unite the readers with herself in an effort to encourage them to get out and see the world in which the eco-poet’s imagination is the mediator between the readers’ minds and the ecological stimulation, blurring the boundaries of self to reach a harmonious attitude in the end. By examining the juxtaposition of the harsh

images of the kill and the predator and the soft and sweet essence of the lilies and other small creatures and the way they contribute to an ecological relief and revival in the end, the readers can see the influential power of the poetic imagination in bringing the life of the more-than-human world and its ecology to the fore and cultivate an ecological inclusiveness and devotion to Nature in themselves. After all, Oliver' ecocentric-ecopoetic informed poetic imagination ignites the flames of thought and change in the readers' minds, bearing the view out that she is truly a poet of Nature whose world is a world of hope and light, empowered by the Nature-dependent poetic imagination. Last but not least, the researchers tried to imply that, by relying on Ecocriticism's advocacy of the mutual interlinkage between human and non-human as the focal point of this study, the transformative power of poetic imagination, the inspiration it receives from Nature, and the revelation it brings forth can be traced more overtly.

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# Revisiting “Axis of Evil”: *Liberal Ironist* and Shepard's *God of Hell*

Research Article  
pp. 49-64

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## Abstract

United States adopted the nineteenth century British model of colonialism for the twentieth century, specially in the exercise of controlling people's perspectives within the country while undertaking the adventure of directly interfering in other countries' affairs. When President Bush addressed three countries around the world as Axis of Evil on January 29, 2002, he was following the same route. Nevertheless, coining the phrase was not enough, and making people believe it required the main task that became possible through creating an intellectual atmosphere in which the focus was to promote the picture of good and evil embedded in the addressing of Axis of Evil. Consequently, any voice out of tune was hushed instantly, even if it meant Sam Shepard who had previously won great fame on the American stage by his family plays. Shepard never stopped on the notion of revealing the multiplicity of self, interacting with different geopolitical situations. As such, it is no wonder that his *God of Hell* is pursuing the same aim, a play totally neglected by the critics and reviewers for being too political and incoherent. Nevertheless, the research at hand is to demonstrate that Shepard is a true intellectual or, in Rorty's term, a liberal Ironist, able to entangle himself from the tissues of the aforementioned cultural war by considering people's susceptibility to humiliation.

**Keywords:** axis of evil, liberal ironist, cultural war, Shepard's God of Hell, Rorty

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## Introduction

The collapse of the Twin Towers and the World Trade Center complex on September 11 created a shocking image for the people around the world. Karlheinz Stockhausen, a German modernist composer, described 9/11 attacks as "the greatest work of art of all time" (Harris, 2004, p. 4). Besides the description being derogatory, it is truthfully referring to how the 9/11 attacks, same as a work of art, is attracting viewers' attention from around the world. However, given corrective lenses on the Stockhausen's artistic view of the 9/11 attacks, Elise Christine Silva attempted to consider it more than "an objectified spectacle" and deem it as a "terror-as-theater metaphor" which is performed for the people around the world (2015, p. 3). If the 9/11 attacks are understood as theatrical performances delivered to people around world, the theater curtain is not to be pulled closed soon and the performance will be continued by other actors. In this vein, President Bush made a theatrical gesture by addressing three countries worldwide as the *Axis of Evil* on January 29, 2002. Therefore, as previously noted by Edward Said that "think tanks, media, and academic centers converged on the necessity of United States force and the ultimate justice of its projection" (2014, p. 288), United States' cultural war tailored a platform on which all the submissive voices are raised and heard through the channel established by the government, even some local voices from the countries situated within the *Axis of Evil* are promoted in the United States to serve the same function<sup>1</sup>. The censored publication of the post 9/11 is clearly shown in the following comment:

In 2004, it came to the attention of the publishing community that the Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC), which monitors transactions with nations under embargo, had for a number of years been requiring any publisher wishing to bring out a work by an author from a so called "enemy nation" to apply for a license. (Borders, 2010, p. xiv)

In a time that even the voices of expatriate writers in America are censored, and only those types of literature are promoted which are used as "propaganda by dictators of every stripe and by fascists of many nations as an opiate to blunt consciousness and to block action" (Borders, 2010, p. xi), there is still hope that literature at its best can be adopted as "a powerful tool of representation and allegory: a tool of recognition, resistance, and transformation" (2010, p. xi). Therefore, remarkable as it is to notice that amidst these wars of words and weapons, literature is finding some validation to "subvert, through its inventive strategies, the violent rhetoric of U.S. Empire" (2010, p. v). This being the case, the originality of this study lies not in

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<sup>1</sup> Anne Donadey and Huma Ahmed-Ghosh in their article entitled "Why Americans Love Azar Nafisi's *Reading Lolita in Tehran*" explicate the reason behind the sudden popularity of a work written by an unknown author like Azar Nafisi to the American audience. His study mainly focuses on how the American political ideology has been decisive in the promotion of this work and the usage of the work for its own purposes. They continue by relating the treatment of Azar Nafisi to the case of authors from the former Soviet Union, such as Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn who "served to bolster a rabidly anti-Communist U.S. ideology" (2005:632).

analyzing those expatriate writers highly affected by the construction of *Axis of Evil* but in addressing Sam Shepard, an already well-known American author whose dissident voice was neglected amidst the powerful rhetorical violence of the American government. Reasoning from this fact, it is no wonder that Sam Shepard's later plays like *God of Hell* is disregarded by the critics or labelled as too political. In this regard, the study at hand tries to form the basis on which Shepard is introduced as a reliable intellectual with regard to Edward Said's viewpoint and Rorty's Liberal Ironist theory, respectively, and then his *God of Hell* is read contrapuntally to demonstrate that Shepard portrays the horrible experience that emigrants (naturalized citizens) and the American people are facing in the United States after the coinage of *Axis of Evil*. However, they are not fully aware of how they are made to behave horribly toward each other.

### Theoretical Framework

The relation between the intellectuals and the shaping of public opinion is undeniable. Gramsci elaborated on this relation by extending the notion of an intellectual into the traditional and organic ones. Considering these two types of intellectuals as having different bases, he maintained that a traditional intellectual is dispensed with the economic, social and political situation of his society while an organic intellectual "gives his class homogeneity and awareness of its own function, in the economic field and on the social and political levels" (Cammett, 1971, p. 202). To Gramsci, an intellectual serves the society as a channel through which a norm gets more acceptable and legitimized; however, the current of this channel is formed persuasively, not coercively. Later on, this latter feature is more closely studied by Edward Said. From Antonio Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks* and Benda's treatise *La trahison des clercs* to Michel Foucault, Said focuses on the relationship between an intellectual and the shaping of the public life and how it is further connected with the politics. He reaches the fine line of defining an intellectual based on certain dualities:

The intellectual, in my sense of the word, is neither a pacifier nor a consensus-builder, but someone whose whole being is staked on a critical sense, a sense of being unwilling to accept easy formulas, or ready-made clichés, or the smooth, ever-so-accommodating confirmations of what the powerful or conventional have to say, and what they do. (1996, p. 23)

Said's definition of an intellectual is reactionary to the concentration of power. The constructed power intends to control the intellectuals for their potentiality to control the public opinions. And since the possible relationship between an intellectual and the central power is inevitable, Said considers it as "[intellectual's] special duty to address the constituted and authorized powers of one's society, which are accountable to its citizenry" (1996, p. 98). Said recognizes the challenge that is facing the intellectual when they are encountered with a central power but also regards it as necessary for the intellectual "to ensure the community's survival during periods of extreme national emergency," (p. 41). Furthermore, he adds that the role of an intellectual in defending his country is undeniable, but he should be cognizant that there are also some "alternatives that are too often marginalized or pushed

aside as irrelevant to the main battle at hand" (p. 41). Said's intent of laying responsibility on the intellectuals to take into consideration the marginal groups of society is stemming from his view of American government after the Gulf War in 1991. He refers to the Gulf War of 1991 as the time that the United States became active in imperialism with a global perspective. He believes that the United States is not solely focusing on sending troops to distant places but also "manufacturing consent" from its public sphere. Employing this term, he makes an effort to make the public tightly hold the idea that the government of the United States is determined to help the people around the world even at the cost of attacking their governments whereas in reality they are more harmful than beneficial. And in his further analysis, Said admits how at last a prevailing view was publicly shared with the dominance of the "rhetoric of the government" (2014, p. 288) which warns that the independence of the nations in the late twentieth century is more threatened by "the new electronics than was colonialism itself" (p. 291). Said's explication of the new type of imperialism in the twentieth century is highlighting the point that imperialism is not only comprised of sending troops to other countries and conquering them; but also needed the direction of everybody's perspective to play the music of the American government. Arriving at 9/11 and the designation and the introduction of *Axis of Evil* to the world by the American government, Said's warning of the new type of imperialism is clearly reiterated to us as the American government attempted to portray certain countries as evil to the eyes of the public.

Nevertheless, in our opinion, Said's definition of an intellectual can become ambiguous as he positions the intellectual in a situation that is dispensed with offering a solution to the society. He claims that intellectuals should never follow a fixed set of formulas or clichés and should always investigate the alternatives. However, as common people are highly tended to admire the intellectuals as the problem-solvers, they would distrust intellectuals if they change their perspectives very often, with this in mind, we suggest that to better comprehend the function of an intellectual in the society, Rorty's theory of liberal ironist should be proposed to create a platform in literature for this purpose. Rorty critically asks for a platform shift on which we are building our lives in the hope that "culture as a whole can be "poeticized" rather than as the Enlightenment hope that it can be 'rationalized' or 'scientized'" (1999, p. 53). Rorty's thinking lends considerable pervasiveness to literature in which the literary author is never after crystallizing a single truth to the reader because in his mind, authors like "Cervantes and Shakespeare began to suspect that human beings were, and ought to be, so diverse that there is no point in pretending that they all carry a single truth deep in their bosoms" (2007, p. 93). Rorty considers sensitivity to the pain and humiliation of others as the most important factor in the shaping of his society. This imaginary society would be Rorty's ideal since no one is trying to find the truth and everyone's opinion should be respected or as Rorty puts it, "all touchstones are such artifacts, would take as its goal the creation of ever more various and multicolored artifacts" (1999, p. 54). In Rorty's society, certain words have new meanings. Accordingly, true or right is not to be firmly attached to some definite ideas forever, whereas they would be the "outcome of undistorted

communication ... in a free and open encounter" (1999, p. 67) and consequently the "traditional epistemological-metaphysical image" would be substituted with a liberal society. His society is based on the "susceptibility to humiliation" (1999, p. 91) and what appears radically different from any other sorts of existing solidarity among the individuals of a society is "the human solidarity that is based on a sense of a common danger, not on a common possession or a shared power" (1999, p. 91). We considered it necessary to expand Rorty's definition of liberal ironist since it could provide us with a type of intellectual who contributes to the society. Moreover, this type of intellectual is giving priority to people's susceptibility to humiliation, and not the blind following of a saying promoted to the public eyes as a truth. Indeed, due to this reason, Rorty's path can be ideal for anyone, more specifically an intellectual, to be followed since, instead of changing the direction concerning the center of power and constructing a truth that might be tainted with political power, the intellectual is to focus on how to avoid one's humiliation and to develop human solidarity among people. In this respect, Shepard's later works are to be considered as the ones in which Shepard distanced himself from the center of the power and underlined the necessity of promoting solidarity among the people in the society rather than attaching to the center of the power.

## Discussion

Sam Shepard's beginning in American literature was promising to the extent that he was even categorized as one of the "certain iconic figures of American culture" (Wade, 2007, p. 298). However, after the publication of *States of Shock* (1991), he fell into a steady decline on the eyes of the critics more to their amazement who considered it unusual of Shepard to be a political writer (Mirowska, 2017, p. 371). His first phase was readily analyzed by American critics in every aspect that even critics like Gary Grant, publishing two prominent articles<sup>1</sup> on Sam Shepard, tried to discuss Shepard concerning his family plays that had already won him great fame. Grant's main focus is on how Shepard is breaking a new journey on studying the "mystery of the self and mapping its states of consciousness" (1991, p. 553); nevertheless, he adds that Shepard has never deemed the isolated self by itself but in relation "with the roots of family tradition, in the dimly perceived vestiges of ancestral ties with the American landscape" (1991, p. 555). As such, he observes how Shepard's characters are shifting their roles with different places and geographical situations to the extent that Shepard's consciousness changes from a single-point perspective on the self to a multiple perspective (1993, p. 124). His view of Shepard that focuses on geographical sites can more or less be seen in other critics' views who believe that Shepard has "documented the ever-changing cultural landscape of America: from its obsessions with rock 'n' roll and a mythic West to the realities of its class consciousness and broken families" (Crank, 2012, p. 2). Altogether, Shepard's new way of seeing the world in the

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<sup>1</sup> Gary Grant has published two articles in *Modern Drama Journal* entitled "Writing as a Process of Performing the Self: Sam Shepard's Notebooks" and "Shifting the Paradigm: Shepard, Myth, and the Transformation of Consciousness" respectively in 1991 and 1993.

70s and the 80s was well praised and welcomed by American critics as he was leveled with "such great figures like Woody Guthrie and John Steinbeck" (Wade, 2007, p. 298). The sudden rise of Shepard to fame in 80s can be mainly explained with respect to the publication of his works at the most appropriate time in American history when the image of America was suffering greatly during the presidency of Jimmy Carter due to the Iran hostage crisis which showed how weak American foreign policy had become (Strieff, 2007, p. 172). Following this conflict that lasted until the end of Carter's presidency, Regan's election evoked a great nostalgia to the great American heritage, which was defined for many Americans as the "images and values of the West... one in which the American character could find its fullest realization" (Wade, 2007, p. 297). Then, the symbol of the west became the Regan's tool to revive the American image, which was shattered into pieces. Therefore, Shepard's great acclaim in 80s "as the poet laureate of the American West" (Coe, 1980, p. 122) can entirely be comprehensible as he got into the heart of this matter and conveyed "the cultural nostalgia of the 1980s and its appetite for long-held attitudes toward American character and promise" (Wade, 2007, p. 298). Through this new perspective, as will be demonstrated, Shepard's popularity is related to its appearance after an appropriate historical time; therefore, with this in mind, we might not hesitate to conclude that Shepard is actively producing some other works after important historical events when and where America is involved. As such, we should go beyond simply relating *States of Shock*, which is written after six years of silence to his "distaste with the public celebration of the 1991 Gulf War" (2007, p. 298), and to consider Shepard as the one who is minutely reading the underlying sociopolitical situations of the time while writing his plays. Also, as Said pointed out in his analysis of Austen's novels that "Austen synchronizes domestic with international authority ... She sees that to hold and rule Mansfield Park is to hold and rule an imperial estate in close, not to say inevitable association with it" (2014, p. 104), we believe that Shepard is treading on the same path by domesticating the concerns of an international issue. Undoubtedly, "late Shepard" (Willadt, 1993, p. 150) is more experienced and has a broader perspective to put America in its global context in his late plays like *God of Hell*. If early Shepard was very astute at detecting the cultural transformations, late Shepard was not less smart to see through the American foreign policy in the Middle East where America broke out the Persian Gulf War:

The notion of this being a heroic event is just outrageous. I couldn't believe it. I still can't believe it. I can't believe that, having come out of the '60s and the incredible reaction to Vietnam, that voice has all but disappeared. Vanished. There's no voice anymore. This is supposed to be what America is about? (Rosen, 1993, 9)

America during late the 70s was no longer carrying the image of a powerful country due to the Iran Hostage crisis and the power of the Soviet Union; however, the beginning of the 90s presented a different image of America. While being recovered by the reworking of Western principles during the presidency of Ronald Regan, America seemed undefeatable as its longstanding opponent, the USSR, "embracing defeat by capitalism, finally

became part of the global capitalist club, capitalism did not have any common enemy, and a new domain of thought was necessary to be constructed" (Islam, 2005, p. 5). Therefore, Shepard's *States of Shock* is centered on conveying this domain of thought even to the point of exaggeration and mockery when certain phrases like "To the enemy" (Shepard, 1993, p. 16), "Without the enemy we're nothing!" (1993, p. 16) or "The enemy has brought us together" (1993, p. 17) are repeated through the play. Shepard never tries to insinuate a point. Instead, he yells it out loud to the face of the audience to grab them and tells them to note that we should never search outside of our borders for enemy whereas "United States is facing an enemy within, posing a threat far more problematic than either Communist Russians or Arab Islamists" (Mirowska, 2017, p. 381). A decade after Gulf War, Shepard reacted to another crucial historic incident in the history of America by writing *God of Hell*, but almost no immediate feedback was provided on his play. Surprisingly, rarely can you find an academic article<sup>1</sup> published in a prestigious journal in America reflecting on Shepard's *God of Hell*; besides, Broadway critics never welcomed it with open arms. Critics mainly attacked Shepard's new play based upon a lack of coherence or having a hasty political fervor that made it stand far away from Shepard's heydays<sup>2</sup>. But Shepard, as an American writer, has noticed and discussed the immediate impact of the designation of the *Axis of Evil* on the interactions between immigrants and American people.

The unprecedented act of calling three countries around the world as the *Axis of Evil* can highly affect everyone related to these countries especially when some have migrated from these countries to United States and have become naturalized American citizen. Though almost a year later, the United States with its president loaded with "a cowboy tone and demeanor" (Wade, 2007, p. 299) attacked Iraq to destroy one of the evil countries and wipe it off from the surface of the earth, the other two countries are still there with the same ruling system and the possibility of invading them still exists there. As such, the compelling metaphor would carry the message that "there is no way to make a deal with evil, except to include in this deal even a greater evil, not for you but for others. Therefore, the Forces of Evil have to be destroyed totally by the Forces of Good" (Heradstveit & Bonham, 2007, p. 425). We can see that good and evil are the two adjectives which are frequently employed for labelling three countries as evil and the other one as the savior; the god-sent doer on earth. To prove the fabrication of this labelling, it suffices to consider Dick Cheney's note, Bush's vice president in *New York Times* on October 17, 2004 in which he asserts that "We're an empire now, and when we act, we create our own reality We're history's actors... and you, all of you, will be left to just study what we do" (Suskind, 2004). Their attempt of creating history in

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<sup>1</sup> Our claim is based upon a thorough research in two online databases of peer-reviewed academic journals named JSTOR and Project MUSE.

<sup>2</sup> Ben Brantley of The New York Times, Frank Scheck of The New York Post David Rooney of Variety and Michael Kuchwara of The Associated Press are expressing this view. You can see that in the following links:

<https://www.broadway.com/buzz/93897/did-critics-find-a-slice-of-heaven-in-shepards-god-of-hell/>

2004 is exactly what Said prophesized in 1993; "in America there has been a cultural war against the Arabs and Islam" (2014, p. 301) which consequently leave us with "a flow of trivial instant books by journalists flooded the market and gained currency for a handful of dehumanizing stereotypes" (2014, p. 301). Such a cultural war took a new form after the coinage of *Axis of Evil* by creating an intellectual atmosphere in which the focus was to promote the picture of good and evil embedded in the addressing of *Axis of Evil*.

As such, we can better see why Shepard named his play *God of Hell*. Most probably, he is referring to the source that is labeling other peoples as evil and forwarding the question that probably the source itself is evil. Indeed, Shepard's use of this title serves as "a satire on Republican fascism" (Prohászka Rád, 2009, p. 62). This kind of representation is highly problematic and the situation can get critical reminding the fact that many emigrants from these countries are now living in the United States as naturalized citizens. These people are unwillingly situated on this axis. Currently, studying the hard situation that these people encounter is part of our contrapuntal reading. Shepard's play can give us the access to feel and understand their suffering. Edward Said raised the point that when we read a text contrapuntally, we expend effort to "act to give those absences a presence" (2014, p. 194). As such, reading the text contrapuntally would raise our understanding above "the author or the intended audience could be expected to endorse" (Wilson, 1994, p. 267). Consequently, we are allowed to take the initiative to our background assumptions to reveal hidden facets of the work. United States' interests in the Middle East are directly related to Iran due to "the geopolitics of the region in which Iran is squarely located" (Dabashi, 2008, p. 185). United States should either put aside its imperial globalization or continue dealing with Iran as long as they are interested in looking for adventures in the Middle East. Though United States never openly waged war on the Islamic Republic of Iran, the "designation of the Islamic Republic as a member of the *Axis of Evil* amounted to an open declaration of war against Iran" (2008, p. 202), and consequently any form of consensus between the two countries became almost impossible since the *Axis of Evil* is working as a "system of demonization ... not just pure political terms but in extended moral and aesthetic terms" (2008, p. 202). Being so, considering the large number of Iranian people immigrating to the United States up to 2002<sup>1</sup> would assuredly be an important issue to be seriously discussed with respect to the coinage of *Axis of Evil*.

By clarifying how this system of demonization works, our contrapuntal reading is centered on a mysterious character in Shepard's *God of Hell* named Haynes whose role in the play is never certainly clarified to the audience. He begins as a friend staying for a while with Emma and Frank but then continues to play other roles. The play begins when Emma and Frank as a couple living in a Midwestern farmhouse, Shepard's favorite setting, are chatting over Frank's friend, Haynes. Frank feels uncertain about everything and finally evades

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<sup>1</sup> Despite the growing tension between the two countries during the last decades, there has been a wave of emigrants arriving at the U.S. from Iran. Indeed, the 1990 U.S. Census has "enumerated about 285,000 foreign born Iranians in the U.S" (Rumbaut and Gold 12).



answering Emma by relating his friend's occupation and status to things which are "all top secret" (Shepard, 2005, p. 9). The very first moment that sparks controversy is Haynes's involvement with some incidents in Rocky Butts though he refuses to discuss it with Emma or Frank and even rejects owing any positions as a scientist or researcher in his dialogues with Emma and Frank; "HAYNES: I'm not in research. I'm not doing any research" (2005, p. 36). However, his resistance against Welch, an official government, is futile. Haynes is made to bow to Welch's command as he soon initiates talking of the incident occurred in Rocky Butts to Welch as follows:

HAYNES: I'm not going back there! The whole state's going to explode. Colorado is going to be blown off the map.

WELCH: Why do you people have this incredible propensity for wild exaggeration? There's some minor leakage—we've acknowledged that. That's why you were hired in the first place, if you recall...

HAYNES: This wasn't lightning! This wasn't some renegade Boy Scout campfire like you ordered the press to print! (2005, p. 52)

Their point of contention is almost clarified; it may be related to the gradual leakage of plutonium from 1952 to 1989 or the fire breaking of 1957 (the day) But in his conversation with Frank, Haynes also explains the plutonium as "the most carcinogenic substance known to man" (2005, p. 33) and its effect on the plants growing on the earth as the same thing that happened in Denver. Seemingly, Shepard is considering Haynes as the one who has tried to reveal this appalling incident to the public though he may have been told to cover it up to the public. The other significant point regarding this character is his originality. He is introduced as Frank's friend but when Frank is forced to consider him as an enemy by Welch; he is marked as a camel-loving person (2005, p. 67). Moreover, in a dialogue between Haynes and Emma, Haynes is surprised to see that Emma has been born and raised in the same place: "HAYNES: Oh—a native? I didn't know that. EMMA: Yes. I was born in this house, as a matter of fact. Right in this room. Right on the spot you're standing, actually. HAYNES: Oh—" (2005, p. 38). Haynes' surprise is to imply the great number of emigrants in the U.S, for indeed America has been founded on the emigrants. Altogether, Shepard has chosen a character who is firstly an emigrant to the United States and secondly a person to reveal a danger to Americans, but instead he is described as the source of danger to Americans, which was an expectation "in the aftermath of 9/11 and the systematic demonization of 'the Arab' and 'the Muslim' as 'the enemy'" (2005, p. 185).

What is noticeable is the process through which Haynes is situated on this *Axis of Evil*. When Welch first meets Emma, he tries to get close to her by presenting "a large cookie in the shape of an American flag, with red, white, and blue frosting" (2005, p. 10). Despite being rebuffed by Emma, Welch continues his intrusion by talking about Emma's husband and calling him "pretty American" (2005, p. 12). Their other point of contention is regarding their view of the land in which Emma and Frank are living as Emma calls it a "Dairyland" but Welch calls it "The Heartland". Afterward, as Emma is hardly justified

regarding Welch's business in her house, she hears this response: "we're on a kind of a talent search for solid citizens who own their own land outright" (2005, p. 15). Welch's emphasis on advertising America and reminding it to Emma is followed by his purpose of searching for solid citizens that can illustrate the point that in Welch's eyes, there is a difference between the Americans and naturalized citizens in the United States and the likely suspect identification of the latter ones. This means an easy scapegoat to bear the blame of their reprehensible actions. This may not be a horrendous act by other countries but surely is by the Americans since "America is not a land or a people: France was a land, England was a people, but America, having about it still that quality of the idea" (Jillson, 2016, p. 97). The idea fully known as American Dream provided the chance of coming to America from different originalities but it is still standing on the chance of progressing and achieving the unreachable goals. Nevertheless, the decay of those respected perspectives is left. This being so, we can readily see the reflection of this in Welch's words addressed to Haynes:

WELCH: (continues stapling) We can do whatever we want, buddy-boy. That should be clear by now. We're in the driver's seat. Haven't you noticed? There's no more of that nonsense of checks and balances. All that red tape. All that hanging around in limbo, waiting for decisions from committees and tired-out lobbies. We're in absolute command now. We don't have to answer to a soul, least of all a couple of Wisconsin dairy farmers. (Shepard, 2005, p. 52)

This may not be irrelevant to deem the above paragraph as Shepard's rewording of Bush's vice president who claimed of creating a new history but at the cost of denying the traditional myths and the idea on which America has been founded. And here Shepard is mainly attacking those falling to the impact of such a fallacious claim. Shepard's *God of Hell* is also unique in terms of the male western character. Generally, "Shepard's male characters unable to escape the nightmares of war and disillusioned with the family's inability to comprehend their trauma, express their frustration through verbal and physical violence" (Weiss, 2009, p. 1); however, Frank is not alike, on the contrary, a submissive person who is not contentious and easily agrees with others' opinion. Nevertheless, Emma is the one who stands up to Welch's intrusion and tries to support Haynes though their first encounter never goes very well. To Emma, Welch defines Frank as a "descent—hereditary-wise. Authentic! He looks authentic" (Shepard, 2005, p. 12) and when he is asked by Emma to explain on this subject more, he adds that "He could be one of those middle Europeans or something. Latvian maybe. Belarusian" (2005, p. 12). Welch's view of Frank is striking the note that Welch as a government agent is inspecting the individuals and tracing their origins. This is highlighted regardless of the fact that they are citizens or not, moreover, this perspective is arising from the circumstances of 9/11 that individual's originality became government's target of attacking as the evil sources. Also, Welch makes Emma aware of the route of his journey that he is "traveling from west to east" (2005, p. 13). If America expanded with the journey of the emigrants from east to west, Welch's journey is affording the view that the government is making an effort

to purge the nation of certain originalities. Moreover, Welch accuses Emma of being indifferent to her originality by pointing to their flagpole which is "empty. Barren. Just the raw wind slapping the naked ropes around. Sickening sound" (2005, p. 17) and continuing by referring how their inner house is also empty of any sign of pride and loyalty to United States: "No miniature Mount Rushmore, Statue of Liberty, no weeping bald eagles clutching arrows. Nothing like that. We could be anywhere" (2005, p. 18). Welch tries to direct Emma's attention toward the American symbols and how they have been neglected by her. This scene is soon followed by Emma's first interaction with Haynes which is really frightening for Emma since he is given a static shock by Haynes for which he has no explanation: "Static shock. I'm sorry. I apologize. I never know quite how to explain this" (2005, p. 25). When the *Axis of Evil* is deemed as "a creative metaphor; that is, a metaphor that is capable of giving us a new view of the world" (Heradstveit & Bonham, 2007, p. 421). People's perspective on both sides of this metaphor is restructured to see the world differently; in other words, the side suffering from the *Axis of Evil* is allowed to describe the other side in whatever preferable ways; criticizing, blaming, and even deserving of being harshly punished. Here, a cursory reading would make this moment ridiculous but Shepard is delicately referring to the interactions of Americans and emigrants, those who could be in contact without any problem; nonetheless, their relationship is shocked without anyone being able to justify the main reason for the static shock. This shocking moment between them is undoubtedly related to the *Axis of Evil* and how different people are situated in that though they may have never been involved in any evil deeds. Moreover, between Frank and Emma, the latter one is the one to detect this shocking feeling since she is the one who is defying this imposing system of thought. Emma's resistance to this systematic way of looking at the world is offered "through overwatering the flowers and burning the bacon she proves to herself that she is in control and has the freedom to choose among a set of activities as well as among a variety of methods of performing these" (Prohászka Rád, 2009, p. 66). Furthermore, blatant usage of this systematic method is manifestly uttered by Welch when she is addressing Haynes while he is taken into her control. This is the moment when Welch tries to rhyme Haynes name with other words and associations of meanings like:

Well, well, well—Mr. "Haynes," is that it? Mr. Haynes? Very inventive. Deceptively simple. Almost poetic. "Haynes"—rhymes with "pains," or is it "shames"? Possibly. Could even be "blames." The choices are endless. Well, not exactly endless. Everything has its limits, I suppose. Everything runs into a brick wall sooner or later. Even the most heroic ideas (2005, p. 50).

Welch is able to lure Haynes out of the basement by conditioning that it may be possible for you to play your own music: "HAYNES: (getting closer to stairs) Do you think I could—I could have my music too? Do you remember my music? Welch: It might be possible. I'll try to pull some string" (2005, p. 56). If we see Haynes as an emigrant coming to the United States in search of his dreams, we easily understand why he is after playing his music because that is

what the country used to generously offer to the emigrants. Indeed, Benjamin's writing was a real comfort for the emigrants coming to America as it clearly encompassed the notion that "though many arrive in America as poor 'servants or Journeymen ... if they are sober, industrious, and frugal, they soon become Masters" (Jillson, 2016, p. 4). However, Haynes is not to be the one who should achieve that moment whereas to be denigrated to live in the basement in Frank and Emma's house and, when arrested by Welch, is promised to probably be able to achieve his dream and live freely as he wants. But considering how Welch is urging Frank to sell all his heifers, it is strongly implied that America is going to move against its basis, not to be the Promised Land anymore. Again Emma is the one reacting to this action and gets really angry and urges Frank to refund the money and take back the heifers, nevertheless, Frank refuses on the basis that he has come from the government. At this moment, Emma who is shocked, answers back like this; "I don't know what our government is anymore. Do you? What does that mean, 'our government'?" (2005, p. 59). And again when Frank persists that he knows better than us and is able to recognize the enemy, Emma interrupts him by saying; "What big picture is that? What enemy?" (2005, p. 59). Frank, who has totally changed, tries to persuade Emma that his friend has been a traitor, "a pretender. They look like us. They act like us. But underneath they're deadly" (2005, p. 60). The unpleasant fact is that Frank has become antagonistic to his friend and considers him as an evil person though Emma is still doubtful about the whole thing. After Welch appears again and talks about how evil Haynes is, suddenly Frank who is almost convinced that his friend is a traitor, while her wife is arguing with Welch, gives a lecture to the audience as follows:

It's times like this you remember the world was perfect once. Absolutely perfect. Powder blue skies. Hawks circling over the bottom fields. The rich smell of fresh-cut alfalfa laying in lazy wind rows. The gentle bawling of spring calves calling to their mothers. I miss the Cold War so much. (2005, p. 66)

In addition to Frank's nostalgic longing for the great past, Frank is claiming to have missed the Cold War. Shepard is telling it to the audience that being in direct contact with a real enemy even at the cost of being threatened by a third world war is better than creating an enemy in the most disgusting way and playing with them like puppets for certain ugly aims. Interestingly, Frank who is wishing this moment, talks back to Emma and says that Haynes is no friend of his anymore since "He's a two-faced, camel-loving-" (2005, p. 67). Shepard never ends Frank's sentence with a period and instead ends it with a dash, a pause that can hint us to read the text contrapuntally, and to read out of it all the emigrants from different nations coming to United States including three hundred thousand Iranians. Moreover, it is revealed that Frank has promised Welch to sell all his heifers for the sake of national security but he is disappointed when he hears that they are going to be used for another purpose; "Rocky Buttes? I thought you told me they were going to be air-dropped into exotic foreign lands. That's what you said. Palm trees! Desert oasis! Parachutes floating! (2005, p. 69)". The first question that arises here is why heifers are given this significance. Shepard, as the poet laureate of the American west, points to a common image in the American west; cattle grazing on western

open lands. The picture is often associated as one of the symbols of the American west though the first generation of Spanish conquistador brought horses and cattle to the New World as draft animals and food sources (Cook, 1992). This means that one of the established image of American west is also an imported product to America by emigrants. Apart from emphasizing the importance of immigrants in forming the United States, this can be implied that Shepard is formulating the notion that American people are duped into believing that by attacking people in the foreign lands, they are gaining national security whereas this is destroying the national solidarity within the country. In this regard, the coinage of *Axis of Evil* was like a new page in the history of United States to change the perspective of Americans to take action against all these people coming to United States just like how Welch at the end of *God of Hell*, is urging Frank to take action against Haynes:

WELCH: You've got to drop all that for now, Frank. Leave the simple past behind. We've got to get a move on here. We're dealing with a ruthless diabolical, treacherous, despicable force. What's the matter with you people? Don't you get it? (2005, p. 69)

The main problem of the usage of *Axis of Evil* as mentioned by Dabashi is that a kind of estrangement and bitter feeling is formed as the consequence of this system of demonization beyond political realm between the natives and the naturalized citizens. Coincidentally, the majority of Iranian people immigrated to the United States who are settled over the Western areas of America: "according to the 2000 U.S. Census, over half of Iranian immigrants 55% lived in California, with Los Angeles still having the largest concentration of Iranian immigrants in California and the U.S." (Rumbaut et al., 1999, p. 12), would get affected by this system. Sam Shepard as a playwright born and brought up in America is pondering over the whole concept of *Axis of Evil* in a radically different perspective away from the mainstream of power in America. Shepard is scrutinizing not a situation in the Middle East or one crisis in America but the impact of this simple coinage on the relationship between the naturalized citizens and the Americans, those who were formerly friends but now looking at each other like enemies. From the beginning of the play, Welch could arrest Hynes by his authority but tried to work upon the couple to hate Haynes. Shepard is trying to depict the pain and misery that people would suffer in their relationship with their friends when a political stance is coining a phrase like the *Axis of Evil*. For Shepard, being humiliated and alienated is unbearable; people should be able to communicate freely in their society. Likewise, the ending of his play is at a moment when Emma is left alone after talking to Welch. She never believed the righteousness of Welch. And therefore, at the closing scene, she closes up the scene without uttering any word but just keeps the door open and rings the bell. This can be concluded that by ringing, she is trying to make people aware of the destructive connotation of this simple coinage, and by leaving the door open, hoping that the Americans are still hospitable to the emigrants coming from different places around the world as it has been the way America has been founded.

## Conclusion

The present paper focused on a contrapuntal reading of Shepard's *God of Hell* with respect to the coinage of *Axis of Evil* after 9/11. It was argued that the theatrical performance of *Axis of Evil* following the horrific incident of 9/11 created a platform on which the American government supported particular controlled and directed voices of the intellectuals. This meant any reading of the terrorist attacks of 9/11 had to be compatible with the perspective of the government. However, Sam Shepard, in his *God of Hell*, shed new light on the destructive effect of 9/11 on the solidarity among the people from various backgrounds in American society. In his *God of Hell*, he has utilized Hayne's character to portray the serious complication that may develop between the naturalized citizens and the American people after the coinage of *Axis of Evil*. His play revealed an acute understanding of the necessity of promoting solidarity instead of hostility in the society; otherwise, multicultural society like the United States would soon collapse into divided states. Additionally, the paper maintained that an intellectual should be, in Rortyan terms, a liberal ironist. Thus, the paper concluded that Shepard as a liberal ironist, could dismiss the claim of the government which was based upon the truth of the *Axis of Evil*. In the end, proving the falsity of good and evil embedded in the *Axis of Evil*, Shepard attempted to show how the coinage of the *Axis of Evil* has only scattered the seed of hatred among the individuals and has made friends into enemies.

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# The Effect of Code-Switching on EFL Learners' Speaking Accuracy, Fluency, and Complexity

Research Article  
pp. 65-80

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## Abstract

This study aimed to investigate the extent to which L2 learners' use of L1 improves their speaking ability. Employing a quasi-experimental research design, the researchers studied the effect of learner code-switching on their speaking accuracy, fluency, and complexity scores. The participants of this study were 117 lower-intermediate students receiving English instruction in eight intact classes in different branches of a private institute. These classes were assigned to two +code-switching and -code-switching treatments randomly. While the participants in the +code-switching group could use Farsi for at most 30 seconds in each activity, those in the -code-switching group were not allowed to switch to their mother tongue. The findings of this study showed that there were no significant differences between the students' speaking ability in terms of fluency and accuracy across the two groups. The complexity scores of the +code-switching group, however, was significantly higher than those in the -code-switching group. The results also showed a significant improvement in the speaking of the students in both groups. Based on the results, it can be said that the use of controlled amounts of learner code-switching could be useful when complexity is the focus of an activity. Furthermore, no sign of detrimental effect of learner code-switching was traced in our study.

**Keywords:** code-switching, speaking, accuracy, fluency, complexity

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## **Introduction**

The presence of students' L1 in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) classes has been an interesting area of research for the last three decades. The use of students' L1 in classes is more probable when students are learning in a context in which English is regarded as a foreign language and students are of the same mother tongue. When students are not banned from employing their mother tongue, language learners, especially those with lower English language ability, are likely to resort to their L1 to communicate with their audience, including their classmates and their bilingual teacher and facilitate their learning process. However, there is no consensus on the positive effect of code-switching on L2 learners' language learning. The mixed results of prior studies motivate further empirical research to help ELT community of practice reach a conclusive picture of the effect of code-switching on L2 students' language learning. Furthermore, more in-depth analyses of data on learner code-switching can contribute to both theoretical and practical spheres of foreign language teaching literature. Prior studies have examined the effect of code-switching on L2 learners' speaking ability; however, none of them has decomposed speaking performance into its components (accuracy, fluency, and complexity). The examination of the components can enable both researchers and practitioners to understand which performance aspect has been affected by the implemented practice. This knowledge is not achieved when the performance is assessed holistically. The present study, in an attempt to fill this gap, aims to investigate the effect of code-switching on students' speaking accuracy, fluency, and complexity. Furthermore, this study will examine the effect of  $\pm$ code-switching conditions on students' speaking fluency, accuracy, and complexity after 20-week treatments.

## **Background**

This section provides a brief review of the literature on learner code-switching in educational settings.

### ***L1 Use in L2 Classes***

The students' alternation between two codes (languages) has been widely known as code-switching. In the realm of educational linguistics, code-switching has been examined through the lenses of sociolinguistic and pedagogy (Bista, 2010). While the former deals with how social factors result in students' alteration between the two (or more) languages at their disposal, the latter addresses the issues pertinent to why and how alterations occur due to pedagogical requirements. The present study deals chiefly with the pedagogical aspect of students' code-switching in an EFL context.

In monolingual EFL classes, all students have a common mother tongue other than English. In addition, the teachers of these classes are usually native speakers of that language or have native-like ability to speak this language (Atkinson, 1993). In these classes, students or teachers might switch between the target language and their mother tongue to get their thoughts and feelings across. This change in the code in which the content is transferred is called code-switching. Based on their approaches to define languages, different scholars have provided different names for the change in the language employed in speaking. Bullock and Toribio (2009) have defined code-switching as "the ability on the part of bilinguals to alternate effortlessly between their

two languages” (p.1). García (2009, p. 45) extended the concept and defined it as “multiple discursive practices in which bilinguals engage in order to make sense of their bilingual worlds”. The definition put forth by García suggests that EFL students employ code-switching not only for expressing ideas, but also for making sense of the foreign language used in EFL classes.

In the realm of foreign language class discourse, the issue of code-switching has been an enchanting area of inquiry since the 1980s (Afroogh, 2018; Koylu, 2018). The investigation of code-switching in foreign language classes can shed light on the way different codes are employed to accomplish the task of communication successfully. Ustunel (2016) argues that the process of code-switching is a common practice in foreign language classes. However, not all scholars have supported the employment of code-switching in the class.

### ***For and Against L1 Use in L2 Classes***

First language-only policy refers to the ban on the use of students’ mother tongue in English language classrooms. This approach, also known as the monolingual principle, encourages the minimal interference of students’ first language in the process of second language pedagogy. Enama (2016) provides the main features of this approach under three points. First, employing students’ language in a classroom is not possible since in a multilingual classroom, a teacher may not be able to use all students’ first languages. This point is more severe when the class is a multilingual in an ESL context (for example, a refugee camp) and the students are from different countries with different languages. Further, teachers will have a difficult task to establish their authority if they use students’ first language. Moreover, the failure in the use of students’ first language can destroy the whole process of language learning.

Although some argue that students’ first language is a significant scaffolding tool to improve students’ second language ability, there are some scholars (Pachler & Field, 2001; Willis, 1981) who believe that there are many other scaffolding tools which function much more efficiently than students’ first language. They argue that tools such as gestures, facial expressions, and modelling speech contingent to students’ level of language development can facilitate the process of teaching and learning even the most difficult (and even the most abstract) items.

The third point mentioned by Enama (2016) is the issue of maximizing students’ exposure to the target language. Some scholars argue that since the majority of students do not have any chance to be exposed to the target language, it would be wise to maximize the use of English in classrooms by banning on the employment of students’ first language. This view has roots in behavioristic approach to language learning, in which the formation of habits through imitation is highly praised.

Following the prescriptions of behaviorism, ban on L2 use has been a well-established approach in L2 language pedagogy because some were worried about the students’ lack of sufficient exposure to English. Some others, especially teachers, thought the use of students’ first language gives students (and other stakeholders) this impression that they are not of sufficient English language ability or teaching ability; thus, they preferred to stick to the target

language and avoid using students' first language in classroom. Further, some teachers cannot use students' first language as they are native speakers of English or another language and cannot speak in students' mother tongue.

The issue of using students' first language has been an enchanting area for discussions at different levels. At the practical level, the norm in many countries force English language teachers to ban on the use of students' first language in their classes as Butzkamm and Caldwell (2009) states, it is "a badge of honor" for them not to use students' first language in classroom. Prodromou (2002), similarly, states that some teachers find the use of students' L1 in their classes as a source of embarrassment and a taboo subject.

As Vivian Cook (2001) states, although the proponents of L1-only policy support their idea loudly, there is no theoretical rationale to follow this policy. In addition, Butzkamm and Caldwell (2009) state that since all of us learn our second language with a background of a first language, which forms the base of one's linguistic knowledge, it is not logical to overlook this base and merely focus on what is built on it.

The prescription of those who are for the ban on learners' L1 is at odds with the tenets of interdependence of first and second language, which acknowledges the contribution of L1 in target language development (Cummins, 1981). Several empirical studies have supported this hypothesis. Some studies have provided evidence for positive cross-lingual transfer in different areas such as understanding concepts (Hoomanfarad & Rahimi, 2020; Swain & Lapkin, 2000), improving meta-cognitive skills (Hardin, 2001), increasing learners' awareness of phonological awareness and functional rules (Enama, 2016). These findings convinced Cummins (2007), among many other researchers, to argue that the education of second language can be improved if instructors employ students' attention to different similarities and differences between the students' first and second languages. He also found that this use of students' first language can improve their use of learning strategies, and consequently, can improve the efficiency of the education.

Based on Cummin's (1981) linguistic interdependence hypothesis, which posits that students' success in learning their second language, highly, depends upon the development of their first language, some scholars (Atkinson, 1993; Auerbach, 1993) proposed the bilingual approach. One of the most basic premise of this approach is that second language learners acquire their second language within the framework formed by their first language, and therefore should not be excluded from L2 classes.

The review of the literature shows that there are some main reasons for the use of the learner's first language in second language classes. The first enumerated reason is that the use of students' first language facilitates both learning and teaching. Balosa (2006), for example, states that the use of students' L1 can boost students' morale and can improve their confidence, develop their cooperation, and help students feel more secure, which can increase their motivation and help them learn more efficiently (Peregoy & Boyle, 2013). In addition, the L1 saves teaching time and makes input much easier to understand (Cook, 2001). The second set of reasons deals with the impact of students' first language on students' cognitive and socio-cognitive development. To be more specific, learners' first language organizes the

students' mind and prepares it to understand and connect new materials to the preexisting knowledge blocks (Caine & Caine, 1994).

Prior scholars (Antón & DiCamilla, 1999; Hoomanfar, 2017; Storch & Wigglesworth, 2003; Swain & Lapkin, 2000) have advocated the use of learners' L1 in second language classes for its cognitive benefits. Following the tenets of the sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1962), Antón & DiCamilla (1999) argue that the use of L1 in language classes improves the chances of their efforts to scaffold their students' learning. Similarly, the use of first language can give learners the chance to employ another cognitive tool, which can facilitate their learning since they can analyze language at a higher level. Storch and Wigglesworth (2003), mentioning the same cognitive advantage of using L1 in classes, state that several language learning opportunities are lost when the program is limited to the use of the second language.

Furthermore, Auerbach (1993) argues that employing L1 in the classroom has an affective effect: when L1 is employed, the anxiety levels of the students are decreased to a low level. This can result in enhancing the affective atmosphere for language learning, observing the sociocultural factors, facilitating using learners' experiences in classes, and enabling the implementation of learner-centered curricula (Auerbach, 1993, p. 19).

Storch and Wigglesworth (2003) also conducted a study on 24 university ESL students in an Asian context. The findings of this study showed that learners used their first language to exchange the definitions of lexical items and explain the grammatical structures when they did not know how to solve their linguistic problems using their L2. The participants in their study stated that they had less difficulty negotiating the meaning and discussing their grammatical choices when they used their L1. Similarly, Stern (1992) stands up for using L1 in second language classes; however, L1 should function as a complement to L2. To Stern, the stage of language learning is a significant factor that determines the amount of first language use in L2 classes.

### ***Prior Studies***

The reviewed controversies over the advantages and disadvantages of learner code-switching in L2 classes show both the complexity of this issue and the need for empirical studies to uncover the affordances of learner code-switching. The findings of previous studies conducted in various contexts (Hasanah, 2019; Jafarigohar et al., 2018; Mirhasani & Mamaghani, 2009; Moodley, 2007; Simin et al., 2005; Syamsudin, 2018) have shown the positive effect of learner code-switching on L2 students' speaking improvement. Previous studies have reported some reasons for students' progress. Some studies (Morini & Newman, 2019; Simin et al., 2005) found that code-switching helped L2 students recall taught items better when they were allowed to work on the materials in their mother tongue. Moodley's (2007) study indicated that L2 students employed code-switching to a wide range of communication and cognitive and social learning strategies such as seeking clarification, providing explanation, elaborating on different issues, managing the groups, influencing peer behavior, expressing their feelings, and claiming the floor to improve their speaking ability in English. Syamsudin (2018) attributed students' improvement in +code-switching condition to their higher level of participation

in English interactions. She argued that the relatively low affective pressure in +code-switching condition encouraged the students to engage more actively in the activities and improve their speaking ability.

### **Present Study**

The current study, unlike previous studies (Hasanah, 2019; Hoomanfard et al., 2021; Mirhasani & Mamaghani, 2009; Moodley, 2007; Simin et al., 2005; Syamsudin, 2018), which have focused on the effect of code-switching on EFL students' performance as a whole, aims to investigate the effects of code-switching on EFL learners' speaking complexity, fluency, and accuracy. This in-depth analysis can inform the literature on how learners' code-switching might affect foreign language learners' improvement of speaking complexity, fluency, and accuracy. Furthermore, the majority of previous studies have been conducted in tertiary education contexts. However, this study is conducted in a private language institute, where intermediate students have more deficiencies in the lexical, pragmatic, and grammatical knowledge.

The present study aims to contribute to the body of code-switching literature by filling this gap in the literature. The following research question guided the present study:

**RQ:** What is the effect of lower-intermediate EFL learners' use of code-switching on learners' speaking fluency, accuracy, and complexity?

### **Methods**

#### ***Participants***

The participants of this study included 117 lower-intermediate English language learners. These participants, who were in eight intact classes, were selected based on convenience sampling. These students were taking a general English course to reach upper intermediate level. Four teachers taught these classes. Each teacher moderated a +code-switching and a -code-switching class. The students' age ranged between 18 and 35. The textbook and class procedures were the same in all these classes and the only traceable difference was pertinent to the treatments (+code-switching vs. -code-switching conditions) of the present study. The classes were held at two branches of a private institute in Tehran. The teachers facilitated the content in these eight classes and they had sessions with the researcher to follow the same procedures. Random assignment was employed to put the intact classes into the two groups of +code-switching and -code-switching. Although the charter of the institute had categorized these students as lower intermediate, the researchers gave the participants the Oxford Quick Placement Test. The comparison of the students' performance at the beginning of the treatment indicated that the mean scores of students' English language proficiency and speaking ability were not significantly different across the eight classes ( $F = .472, p = .008$  and  $F = .97, p = .02$ ) and they were homogenous with regard to these two aspects as all of the participants were within  $\pm 1$  standard deviation of the mean score.

### ***Instruments***

**Oxford Quick Placement Test.** The Oxford Quick Placement Test was used to measure the participants' general level of English language proficiency. This test includes 60 multiple-choice items of vocabulary, collocation, and grammar. This test is mainly employed for proficiency and placement purposes. A high reliability value (0.9) was obtained by Geranpayeh (2003) for this proficiency measure. This test was administered at the beginning of the study and the participants were given 45 minutes to complete the test. This test was selected in the present study as it is a quick and dependable test.

**Speaking Tasks.** The participants accomplished two IELTS speaking tasks (Appendix A) at the beginning and the end of the semester. These tasks were taken from *IELTS Academic 14: With Answers (2019)*, which was published by Cambridge University Publication, provides its audience with authentic tasks, which are taken from prior IELTS administrations.

Each participant selected two topics randomly to talk about. The participants had a 1.5-minute pre-task planning time for each task. The participants were asked to talk for at least two minutes. The followings are the topics of speaking tasks.

- Can you talk about the tourist attractions in your city?
- What would you do if you lost your luggage at an airport
- What would you do if your neighbor threw a party the night before your important job interview?
- How often do you shop online? What are its advantages and disadvantages?

### ***Data Collection and Analysis Procedures***

The participants of this study were assigned to two groups of -code switching and +code switching randomly. In four classes (-code switching), the students were told that English-Only Policy had to be observed. They were not allowed to employ their mother tongue to communicate within the sessions. In the other four classes (+code switching), the students were not either encouraged or discouraged to use their first language. The teachers let them use Persian language whenever they wanted. However, the extended (more than 30 seconds) use of Persian language was interrupted by the teachers by the use of a question or giving the turn to another student to stop the flow of Persian language use in the class. The semester lasted for 20 sessions. At the beginning of the treatment, all students took Oxford Quick Placement test and IELTS speaking section. The results ensured us that all students were lower intermediate English language learners, and they were homogeneous regarding their speaking ability. Furthermore, the IELTS speaking section scores were used as the pre-test scores showing the participants speaking ability.

To examine the effect of  $\pm$ code-switching conditions on learners' speaking ability, the students took IELTS speaking tasks at the beginning and at the end of the semester. The scores of the pre-test and post-test were used to examine the within-subject progress thorough the semester using a series of Mixed ANOVAs.

To quantify the participants' speaking performance across different aspects, some measures were employed. To examine the accuracy of the

participants' performance, 1) error-free clauses, which was operationalized as the ratio of the clauses that was not erroneous to all clauses, and 2) correct verb forms, which was computed as the ratio of all verbs that are used correctly in terms of tense, aspect, modality, and subject-verb agreement to all verbs, were employed. The researchers used mean length of run (mean number of syllables supplied between pauses above 0.28 seconds) and speech rate, syllables per minute, to measure the participants' speaking fluency. Finally, to assess the syntactic complexity, mean length of clause, the ratio of the number of words to the number of clauses in the participants' production (Wolfe-Quintero et al., 1998), and to measure the lexical complexity, number of different words (NDW-ER50), the mean number of different words of 10 random 50-word samples in the participants' production (Ellis & Yuan, 2004) were employed.

## Results

### *Effect of ±Code-switching Conditions on Learners' Speaking Accuracy, Fluency, and Complexity*

The Effect of ±code-switching conditions on learners' speaking accuracy, fluency, and complexity after 20 sessions was examined. To do so, the participants' speaking scores in IELTS Task 2 at the beginning and the end of the semester were examined. One of the differences between the present study and the prior ones is that while in the prior studies the students' ability was reported as a single score, the present study aimed to examine the students' performance based on their speaking accuracy, fluency, and complexity. To collect the required data to uncover ±code-switching conditions on learners' speaking ability, a quasi-experimental design was adopted. The conditions were assigned to the two groups (each including four intact classes) randomly. The scores of the participants' speaking ability, tapped using IELTS speaking Task 2, at the beginning and the end of the semester were used to find the effect of the +code-switching and -code-switching conditions on second language learners' speaking ability.

To understand the changes in the participants' scores in both ±code-switching conditions, the mean scores of the participants of the two groups were compared, and the results of independent samples t-tests showed that there were no differences between the students' mean scores at the beginning of the study. The results showed that the differences between their mean scores were not significant for error-free clauses ( $t = .939$ ,  $p = .350$ ), and correct verb forms ( $t = .443$ ,  $p = .66$ ). Regarding the participants' speaking fluency, the findings showed that the students' mean scores were not significantly different ( $t_{\text{Mean length of run}} = 1.02$ ,  $p = .303$  and  $t_{\text{Speech rate}} = 1.00$ ,  $p = .319$ ). The results also indicated that the complexity mean scores of +code-switching group was not significantly different from those of -code-switching group ( $t_{\text{Mean length of clauses}} = 1.21$ ,  $p = .26$  and  $t_{\text{number of different words}} = 1.21$ ,  $p = .228$ ). These findings indicated that the participants of the +code-switching and -code-switching students' speaking performance was not significantly different.

As provided in Table 1, the accuracy mean scores of the participants in both groups rose noticeably ( $M_{\text{Error-free clauses}} = .57 (.038)$  to  $.71 (.044)$  and  $M_{\text{Correct verb forms}} = .58 (.04)$  to  $.69 (.043)$  in the +code-switching group and  $M_{\text{Error-free clauses}}$



= .58 (.041) to .73 (.042) and  $M_{\text{Correct verb forms}} = .59 (.036)$  to  $.71 (.038)$  in the -code-switching group).

**Table 1**  
*Descriptive Statistics for the Accuracy Measures of ±Code-switching Groups*

		Time 1		Time 2	
		+code-switching	-code-switching	+code-switching	-code-switching
Error-free clauses		.57 (.038)	.58 (.041)	.71 (.044)	.73 (.042)
Correct verb forms		.58 (.04)	.59 (.036)	.69 (.043)	.71 (.038)

To answer the research question, the speaking accuracy, fluency, and complexity of the participants in -code-switching and +code-switching groups and between pre-test and post-test were compared. Table 1 provides the descriptive statistics for the measures of accuracy. A Mixed ANOVA were run to examine the effects of time and conditions on students' error free clause scores. The findings showed that there was a significant, large main effect for time,  $F(1, 115) = 418, p < .001, \eta^2_p = .97$ ; however, the main effect of condition was non-significant,  $F(1, 115) = .980, p = .324, \eta^2_p = .008$ , nor was the interaction between condition and time,  $F(1, 115) = .980, p = .024, \eta^2_p = .001$ . Regarding the correct verb forms, the result of Mixed ANOVA showed that while there was a non-significant main effect for condition,  $F(1, 115) = 2943, p = .420, \eta^2_p = .006$ , the findings showed significant, large main effect for time,  $F(1, 115) = 1360, p < .001, \eta^2_p = .98$ . Another significant main effect was found for the interaction of time and condition, but the effect was small  $F(1, 115) = 7.17, p = .008, \eta^2_p = .059$ . Considering both measures, it can be stated that neither of the conditions was superior over the other in terms of improving second language learners' accuracy, but the within-subject tests showed that their speaking accuracy improved significantly during the treatments.

The fluency of the students' performance was also examined during the treatment. As provided in Table 2, the fluency mean scores of the participants in both groups rose descriptively ( $M_{\text{Mean length of run}} = 4.14 (.09)$  to  $4.64 (.11)$  and  $M_{\text{Speech rate}} = 113.56 (6.55)$  to  $119.44 (6.44)$  in the +code-switching group and  $M_{\text{Mean length of run}} = 4.11 (.011)$  to  $4.62 (.11)$  and  $M_{\text{Speech rate}} = 112.37 (6.19)$  to  $118.18 (6.19)$  in the -code-switching group).

**Table 2**  
*Descriptive Statistics for the Fluency Measures of ±Code-switching Groups*

		Time 1		Time 2	
		+code-switching	-code-switching	+code-switching	-code-switching
Mean length of run		4.14 (.09)	4.11 (.11)	4.64 (.08)	4.62 (.11)
Speech rate		113.56 (6.55)	112.37 (6.19)	119.44 (6.44)	118.18 (6.19)

The comparison of the participants' mean length of run scores at two different times and across the groups showed that there was no significant

effect for condition,  $F(1, 115) = .927, p = .338, \eta^2_p = .008$ , nor was the interaction between time and conditions  $F(1, 115) = .996, p = .320, \eta^2_p = .009$ ; however, a significant, large effect for time was identified  $F(1, 115) = 9357, p < .001, \eta^2_p = .98$ . A Mixed ANOVA was also run for speech rate, and its findings showed that the only significant effect was for time  $F(1, 115) = 1994, p < .001, \eta^2_p = .96$ , and the effects for condition and the interaction of condition and time were non-significant ( $F(1, 115) = 1.08, p = .299, \eta^2_p = .009$  and  $F(1, 115) = .209, p = .648, \eta^2_p = .002$ , respectively).

The last set of scores belong to the participants' speaking complexity. Table 3 provides the descriptive statistics of the two measures tapping speaking complexity. The descriptive examination of the scores reflects a rise in the complexity scores from pre-test to post-test ( $M_{\text{Mean length of clauses}} = 5.97 (.39)$  to  $6.62 (.88)$  and  $M_{\text{number of different words}} = 34.75 (3.72)$  to  $41.95 (3.72)$  in the +code-switching group and  $M_{\text{Mean length of clauses}} = 5.89 (.43)$  to  $6.29 (.43)$  and  $M_{\text{number of different words}} = 35.48 (2.62)$  to  $39.48 (2.62)$  in the -code-switching group).

**Table 3**

*Descriptive Statistics for the Complexity Measures of ±Code-switching Groups*

	Time 1		Time 2	
	+code-switching	-code-switching	+code-switching	-code-switching
Mean length of clauses	5.97 (.39)	5.89 (.43)	6.62 (.88)	6.29 (.43)
Number of Different Words	34.75 (3.72)	35.48 (2.62)	41.95 (3.72)	39.48 (2.62)

The results of Mixed ANOVA for mean length of clauses indicated that there were significant, medium effect for time,  $F(1, 115) = 98.54, p < .001, \eta^2_p = .461$ , and significant, small effect for condition  $F(1, 115) = 5.06, p = .026, \eta^2_p = .042$ , and significant, small effect for the interaction of time and condition  $F(1, 115) = 5.29, p = .023, \eta^2_p = .044$ .

## Discussion

The present study addressed the effect of ±code-switching conditions on learners' speaking complexity, accuracy, and fluency. This research was different from prior studies since unlike previous studies which has examined learners' speaking ability as a unitary entity (Hasanah, 2019; Mirhasani & Mamaghani, 2009), the present study examined learners' speaking accuracy, fluency, and complexity. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, no prior study has addressed this issue, which can show how the presence and absence of code-switching can affect L2 learners' speaking fluency, accuracy, and complexity. The examination of the components can enable both researchers and practitioners understand the affordances and limitations of an implemented practice, which are not identifiable when the performance is assessed holistically.

As the results of Mixed ANOVA showed, the only significant differences across the two groups were only in the complexity of the students' speaking

performance. To be more precise, although no significant difference was seen between the speaking accuracy and fluency of the participants in the +code-switching and -code-switching groups, those in the +code-switching group provided more complex utterances in the post-test. Since prior studies (Hasanah, 2019; Mirhasani & Mamaghani, 2009) have investigated the learners' speaking ability as a unitary entity, the comparison of results of this study with their findings is not possible. However, the only significant difference in this study was the superiority in the speaking complexity of those in +code-switching group. One of the studies investigating the effect of learner code-switching on EFL students' accuracy and fluency was conducted by Noorbar and Mamaghani (2016). The findings of their study indicated that those learners who were allowed to switch to their mother tongue in a semester were superior to those who were banned to use their L1 in their speaking accuracy and fluency. The findings of their study showed that learner code-switching positively affected their participants' accuracy and fluency. The significant difference, toward +code-switching group, in their study might be due to the similarity of the pre-test and post-test tasks. As they have mentioned in their study, the same tasks were employed to collect data, which could result in testing effect, in which the research instruments jeopardize the internal validity of the study. The use of the same tasks which could have elicited the same lexical and structural items might have resulted in the significantly higher scores in the post-test.

In the present study, no significant difference was found between the accuracy and fluency mean scores of -code-switching and +code-switching group students; however, the complexity mean score of +code-switching group was significantly higher. The more complex utterances provided by +code-switching group students might be attributed to their more varied experimentation with the target language through obtaining lexical and structural items using their first language. The high number of information obtained through the participants' first language might have resulted in the acquisition (or practice) of more varied lexical and structural items. The activation of the learned items through monologues and discussions might have encouraged the participants in the +code-switching group to use a wider range of lexical and structural items in comparison to their counterparts in -code-switching groups.

The accuracy and fluency mean scores of the two participating groups, however, were not significantly different. These results, along with the results of Mixed ANOVAs, showed that the participants in both  $\pm$ code-switching conditions, the participants' speaking accuracy, fluency, and complexity improved significantly during the study. Unlike prior studies (e.g., Enama, 2016; Pachler & Field, 2001; Sert, 2005) which found the detrimental effect of code-switching on learners' language ability development, the findings of this study indicated that learner code-switching had no adverse effect on learners' speaking ability improvement.

## Conclusions

This study examined the lower-intermediate EFL students' speaking accuracy, fluency, and complexity under  $\pm$ code-switching conditions.

Furthermore, the effect of a semester of these conditions on the participants' speaking ability was examined. The findings showed that when the participants performed the task under  $\pm$ code-switching conditions, those in the +code-switching condition outperformed their counterparts in the -code-switching group in accuracy and complexity; however, the students in the -code-switching group's fluency scores were higher. The effect of these two conditions after a 20-session semester showed that there were no significant differences between the accuracy and fluency of the participants; however, the complexity scores of the students in +code-switching group were significantly higher.

While learner code-switching has been under attack for having adverse effect on EFL students' speaking ability, the results of the present study indicated that those in the +code-switching group had significantly higher complexity scores at the end of the study and no significant difference was found for speaking accuracy and fluency. These findings refute the claims against the use of learners' L1 for its negative effects on learners' speaking ability, if a reasonable limitation is set for the amount of L1 use. Another noteworthy finding of this study which might be attractive for materials developers is the higher speaking accuracy and complexity levels while performing tasks under +code-switching items. These findings suggest that when the participants can reach out for help in their first language, they seem to have an easier task to deal with the complexity of their tasks. Thus, when the materials developers aim to focus on the learners' speaking complexity, the integration of the learners' first language into the task design seems to be an effective measure.

Considering the significant effect of learner code-switching on the participants' complexity, which deals with the use of varied lexical and structural items, this study suggests that EFL teachers should allow their students to use their L1 in peer-tutoring activities to broaden their knowledge of lexical and structural items. The controlled employment of learners' first language in peer-tutoring and peer-response activities might encourage those who are less competent to ask their questions more freely and improve their linguistic knowledge. The ban on the participants' L1 can deprive these low-level students of a significant source of language learning.

The present study had a main limitation, which can motivate future studies. The first one dealt with the scarcity of literature on the effect of code-switching on speaking fluency, accuracy, and complexity in different contexts. This dearth in the similar studies have made the comparison of the results of the present research with those of prior studies fairly impossible. Further studies can be conducted to examine specific points (e.g., a grammatical structure, comprehension of a text) in both +code-switching and -code-switching to uncover the students' level of improvement in short and long run. Furthermore, the effects of learner code-switching on L2 learners' development of other language skills and components can be examined.

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## **Appendix A**

### **Speaking Tasks**

Describe something you liked very much which you bought for your home.

You should say:

What you bought

When and where you bought it

Why you chose this particular thing

and explain why liked it so much.

Describe a book that you enjoy reading because you had to think a lot.

You should say:

What this book was

Why you decided to read it

What reading this book made you think about

and explain why you enjoyed reading this book.





# The Impact of Task-Based Collaborative Output Activities on Learner Engagement in Writing Tasks

Research Article  
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## Abstract

The present study explores the factors that shape learner engagement in writing tasks and the role that output-based instructions could perform in elevating the level of engagement. In so doing, to develop a measure for evaluating learner engagement in writing tasks, a pool of eight university teachers was interviewed and five university students participated in a think-aloud protocol and a total of 139 English-major university students were asked to complete the newly-developed inventory. The result of inter-coder reliability was acceptable and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) provided support for the factor structure of the measures. The final validated inventory comprised four factors and 23 items. Following this, the findings obtained from an experiment on 31 English-major students revealed that both types of task-based (collaborative) instructions including debating and dictogloss could elevate the level of students' engagement in writing tasks. More specifically, the statistical analyses indicated that the debate-based instruction could increase the students' engagement in writing tasks more than the dictogloss instruction. In the end, the linkage between task-based (collaborative) output activities, engagement in writing tasks, and engagement components were discussed, and the pedagogical implications were offered based on the results of the study.

**Keywords:** learner engagement, debating, dictogloss, written performance, emotions

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## Introduction

The conventional view in language classes presumes that writing functions mainly to develop patterns of oral language use, grammar, and vocabulary (Crowhurst, 1991). However, this view is being substituted by the idea that writing in a second language is a meaningful activity in and of itself. As pinpointed by Persky et al. (2003), writing is generally used in various communicative activities such as creating academic essays, writing business or newspaper reports, or web pages and e-mails. Likewise, Naghdipour (2016) emphasized the need to be proficient in English writing skills, taking the increasing development of globalization and the importance of worldwide communication.

Learner engagement in task performance, as an interesting topic for scholars in education (Fredricks et al., 2004), has been underrated in the domain of SLA (Aubrey, et al., 2020). In general, learner engagement is referred to as the cognitive and emotional involvement of the learners in doing a learning task (Schunk & Mullen, 2012). In the last two decades, studies have demonstrated solid evidence for the direct relationship between student engagement and academic success, and for the significant relationship between disengagement and poor academic performance (e.g., Kelly, 2008; Sirin & Rogers-Sirin, 2004). Furthermore, the notion of language engagement is closely linked to Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) Flow Theory based on which concentration, interest, and enjoyment must be experienced at the same time in an activity in order for flow to occur.

Taking the interplay between task-based instruction and learner engagement in writing, Hyland (2019) notes that writing is more than a matter of arranging elements in the right order which represents the challenging nature of writing skills. According to Shernoff et al. (2003), learner engagement is linked to challenging tasks, and it is affected by contextual and classroom factors such as instruction and interaction. One of these creative task-based instructions that could enable students to enhance their L2 writing ability is dictogloss which, as a task-based (collaborative) output activity, could assist learners to employ their grammar resources to reconstruct a text (Benati, 2017). Another task-based instruction that is in line with process-oriented approach to writing instruction is debate-based instruction. According to el Majidi et al. (2020), although debate is generally interwoven with oral communication, it is also useful for L2 writing instruction.

Meanwhile, in their seminal work, Hiver et al. (2021) represented the first systematic review of 20 years on language engagement research taking both conceptual and methodological issues into account, and the results of their analyses revealed that there is a very little construct-validating research on language engagement. Likewise, Fredricks and McColskey (2012) noted that the most frequently used approach to measuring engagement is self-report which cannot capture the multidimensional nature of engagement. Whereas engagement is highly context-dependent (Shernoff, 2013), reviews of measurement techniques for engagement show that the number of valid indirect measures of student engagement is very few (Hofkens & Ruzek, 2019). In a similar vein, to the best knowledge of the researcher, there is a paucity of research in the Iranian context to identify the indicators and constructs of

learner engagement in writing tasks. Moreover, the role of task-based speaking activities in learner engagement in writing tasks has not been a focus of research in our classroom context. In this study, learner engagement at the level of task engagement is defined as “a state of heightened attention and involvement, in which participation is reflected not only in the cognitive dimension, but in social, behavioral, and affective dimensions as well” (Philp & Duchesne, 2016, p. 54).

## **Review of Literature**

### ***Learner Engagement and SLA***

A large number of published studies show that learner engagement has a direct relationship with satisfactory academic outcomes such as higher academic success (e.g., Finn & Zimmer, 2012; Fredricks et al., 2004). More specifically, in the language classroom setting, Ellis (2018) declared that exploring engagement through task-based instruction is informative because it stimulates learning cognitive processes like noticing that would enable students to absorb the L2 more successfully. Actually, task engagement is closely related to the notion of increased attention and involvement while accomplishing a learning task (Philp & Duchesne, 2016). In the Iranian context, the existing related literature reveals that engagement affects the teachers' and learners' academic performance (e.g., Fathi, et al., 2021; Hamedi et al., 2020; Modarresi, 2019; Shahian et al., 2017).

Taking the existing engagement models into consideration, previous research in the field of language learning acknowledges a combination of factors for learner engagement (Handelsman et al., 2005; Reschly & Christenson, 2012). For example, Skinner and Belmont (1993) found clear reasons for emotional and behavioral engagement; however, lack of attention to cognitive engagement left their model unexamined. Later, Fredricks et al. (2004) extensive analysis of engagement has guided many scholars to follow their model of engagement; nevertheless, having analyzed different models, they detected overlapping factors for cognitive and behavioral engagement. In the same vein, Handelsman et al. (2005) designed and validated a questionnaire for evaluating student engagement called the Student Course Engagement Questionnaire with four distinct dimensions including: skills, participation/interaction, emotional, and performance engagement. More recently, having reviewed the related literature, Redmond et al. (2018) developed an online engagement framework for higher education, categorizing a list of 24 indicators of engagement.

### ***Task-Based (collaborative) Output Instructions***

Much of the greater part of the literature acknowledges the effectiveness of (collaborative) tasks in promoting learning development (Ellis, 2018; Leow, 1998). For instance, Leow (1998) found that when learners devote their attention to grammatical items, their writing accuracy is enhanced. More specifically, Collins (2007) confirmed the effectiveness of Dictogloss, as a task-based (collaborative) output technique, in using verb tenses in a Japanese classroom. Whereas Dictogloss has been documented to be effective in L2 research (Malmqvist, 2005), the number of studies that examined its applicability with respect to proficiency level is few (Gallego, 2014).

The related literature has also showed that there is a positive association between debating and language development (el Majidi et al., 2018; Stewart, 2003). Furthermore, the previous literature indicates that L2 learners have a positive reaction to debating as an instructional tool (Doody & Condon, 2012; Lustigova, 2011). Recently, el Majidi et al. (2020) investigated the effectiveness of debate instruction in writing development in the context of secondary school and concluded that debate-based instruction enhanced students' writing performance, representing an increase in a number of indices of accuracy, fluency and complexity measures. More recently, Modarresi (2021) found that both dictogloss and debating instructions could significantly enhance L2 learners' writing performance, representing an increase in a number of indices of accuracy, fluency and complexity measures.

### ***Theoretical Framework of the Study***

The researcher opted for the theoretical underpinning developed by Philp and Duchesne (2016) for learner engagement in the task-based language classroom entailing four interrelated components: behavioral, affective, cognitive, and social engagement. Moreover, the next interdependent theoretical perspectives the support the idea that dictogloss and debating as task-based speaking activities are effective tools for language learning include Long's (1996) interaction hypothesis based on which engagement in meaning promotes learning and Swain's (1993) output hypothesis based on which output enables learners to produce language more deeply.

Taken together, the researcher tried to construct a measure for evaluating engagement in writing tasks. To the best knowledge of the researcher, no empirical study has been carried out in L2 research to identify the factors that shape learner engagement in writing tasks for intermediate EFL learners in the Iranian context. The study hypothesized that task-based (collaborative) output activities could enhance learner engagement in writing tasks. Therefore, the following research questions are addressed in this study:

**RQ1:** What factors do mainly determine learner engagement in writing tasks for Iranian EFL learners from the perspectives of university teachers and students?

**RQ2:** Does the engagement in writing inventory enjoy construct validity?

**RQ3:** Do dictogloss and debating increase learner engagement in writing tasks?

## **Methodology**

### ***Participants***

At first, to discover the university teachers' views on the different factors of learner engagement in writing tasks, the researcher opted for criterion sampling to choose the participants for the first phase of the study. In doing so, he set the standards needed to the objectives of the study and looked for the participants who met those requirements. The standard specified by the researcher included: a) being an English university teacher, b) holding a PhD degree in English language, and c) having experience of publishing scientific papers on teaching and learning English. Altogether, a pool of eight individuals

took part in the interview phase of the study from different universities including Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, University of Neyshabour, University of Bojnord, Islamic Azad University of Mashhad, and Islamic Azad University of Quchan, all located in the northeast of Iran. Moreover, five students were selected to participate in 'concurrent think-aloud protocol' (Ericsson & Simon, 1993) to identify the factors that contribute to engagement in writing based on purposive sampling. Following this, after the new inventory was developed, 139 participants majoring in English Language Teaching, English Translation, and English Literature who were junior and senior students (females:  $n = 81$ , 58.30%; males:  $n = 58$ , 41.70%; Mean age = 21.64, SD = 1.23) joined in the second phase of the study based on availability sampling from the same universities mentioned above. The study sample for the third phase of the study consisted of 37 English-major junior BA students selected based on convenience sampling from Islamic Azad University of Quchan. They participated in a supplementary course of Panel Discussion and Writing Development during the academic year. Moreover, the researcher administered the Oxford Quick Placement Test (OPT) to the participants for homogeneity purposes. Six of the students were not classified in intermediate level (two students in class A and four students in class B) so that their writing performance on the pre-test and post-test were not included in the data analysis. Thus, the final sample included in the experiment consisted of 31 intermediate students (class A =16 & class B =15) (females:  $n = 17$ , 54.80%; males:  $n = 14$ , 45.20%; Mean age = 21.48, SD = .96).

### ***Instrumentation***

The first instrument used to identify the teachers' opinions about factors contributing to L2 learner engagement in writing tasks included four interview open-ended questions based on which they participated in face-to-face interview sessions. The contents of the questions revolved around their familiarity with learner engagement, their experience of employing task-based activities, and factors that contribute to learner engagement or disengagement while doing writing tasks. As for the content validity of the interview questions, the researcher carried out a pilot study through which three non-participating colleagues provided feedback on the interview questions. Further revisions were made based on their comments on the wording of the questions.

The second instrument used to measure students' level of engagement in writing tasks was the Engagement in Writing Inventory which was developed and validated specially for the aim of this study. To do this, the results emerged from the content analysis of the interviews and think-aloud protocols, along with the previous related literature, supplied the contents of the items comprising the inventory. The inventory included a 5-likert scale with 'strongly disagree', 'disagree', 'nor agree or disagree', 'agree', and 'strongly agree'.

The last instrument utilized to measure L2 learners' language proficiency before the experiment was OPT which contains 60 multiple choice vocabulary and grammar items. The scoring criteria categorize the test takers into four levels of English language proficiency: elementary (1-14), pre intermediate (15-29), intermediate (30-44), and upper intermediate (45-50).

Those volunteers who were classified in intermediate level were included in the present study.

### ***Procedure***

The study was carried out in three major steps. During the first step of the study, the relevant information for the interviews with eight university teachers were collected during four weeks from September 2018 to October 2018. The sample size seemed to be adequate since, according to (Dörnyei, 2007), an interview study with a sample size of six to 10 might work well. The researcher already arranged the appointments with the participants, informing them about the purpose of the study. Their responses were also audio-taped for further analysis.

Moreover, in this respect, five students participated in concurrent think-aloud to verbalize what they were going through while they were engaged with a writing task. The researcher asked the participants to tell whatever they were thinking about while doing the writing task. The writing task included writing an essay on the topic “the advantages and disadvantages of living in a small city”. The data were collected during three weeks from September 2018 to October 2018. The students’ verbal reporting was audio-recorded for further analysis.

During the second step of the study, the study adopted a clear procedure entailing three phases to ensure the psychometric properties of the inventory. Initially, the question items were constructed with reference to the information collected from the interviews and the previous related literature on the issue. The items were designed on the basis of a four-component framework in accordance with Philp and Duchesne’s (2016) guidelines, tapping into the students’ behavioral, affective, cognitive, and social engagement in the task-based language teaching classroom. Second, as the initial piloting, three individuals, specialized in L2 testing and assessment, were asked to pinpoint the problems with the content and clarity of the items. Third, after the researcher received the feedback from the initial pilot group, he conducted the final piloting phase during which the relevant inventory was administered to 139 students from November 2018 to December 2018.

Finally, in the third step of the study, prior to the treatment phase, the students were made homogenous in terms of language proficiency by means of OPT, and then, they were divided into two experimental groups. Before the treatment phase, the researcher administered the Engagement in Writing Inventory to the students. The treatment phase lasted for eleven sessions beginning from January 2019 to May 2019 with classes holding once a week for 90 minutes for each group, and the teacher in both classes allocated approximately the first 45 minutes to free-opinion speaking tasks and the second 45 minutes of his time in each class to writing tasks. The participating teacher who was the author provided the instruction for both groups. Taking the experiment, class A, consisting of 15 students, was taught through dictogloss instruction and class B, consisting of 16 students, through debating instruction. Both instructions dealt with the speaking and writing activities, meeting the requirements of the course.

As for the dictogloss group, the teacher, following the procedure suggested by Wajnryb (1990), presented the (collaborative) output tasks in four stages including preparation, dictation, reconstruction, analysis and correction. During the first stage, the teacher started the class with a warm up, reviewing the necessary vocabulary and collocations to cope with the task. During the second stage, the students listened to a related text read by the teacher at normal speed and they were asked not to take any notes. During the third stage, they worked in small groups and the teacher encouraged them to reconstruct the text. Finally, in the last stage, they analyzed, compared, and corrected their texts. The teacher was also around to provide them with feedback, if needed.

The debate group was given the chance to be for or against in the debate mostly in groups of four individuals in which two students were acted as protagonist and two as antagonist. Following the procedure developed by el Majidi et al. (2018), the teacher presented each debate on a triple level. Initially, on the learner-content level, the students were asked to interact with information, arguments, and texts. Then, on the learner-instructor level, the teacher encouraged the students to debate on the topic and offered feedback on their performance. Finally, on the learner-learner level, the students debated the topic in their groups. Following the treatment phase, the researcher administered the Engagement in Writing Inventory to see whether dictogloss and debating could increase learner engagement in writing tasks.

### ***Data Analysis***

To analyze the data, as for the first objective of the study regarding the factors shaping L2 learner engagement in writing tasks, the researcher opted for a “theme-based procedure” (Dörnyei, 2007) so as to categorize the responses obtained from the interviewees and for concurrent think-aloud protocols. The inter-rater agreement and inter-rater reliability for coded transcripts were also taken care of. It is worth mentioning that the inter-coder agreement requires that the two coders reconcile through discussion (Garrison et al., 2006) and the inter-coder reliability requires that the two coders choose the same code for the same unit of text (Krippendorff, 2004). As for the construct validity of the related inventory, the internal consistency of the inventory, along with its sub-constructs, was measured by Cronbach's Alpha coefficients. The construct validity of the inventory was initially examined through Factor Analysis. Thereafter, goodness-of-fit indices determined the validity of the measurement model (Kline, 2011). Regarding the third objective of the study to examine whether dictogloss and debating instructions could increase the learner engagement in writing tasks, One-way ANCOVA was run.

## **Results**

### ***Results Emerged from the Interviews and Think-aloud Protocols***

As for the first research question of the study regarding the main factors that shape learner engagement in writing tasks for Iranian EFL learners from the perspectives of university teachers, the researcher, having analyzed the results obtained from the interviews and think-aloud, categorized the most salient themes and commonalities. Some of the statements made by the

teachers are reported in Appendix A. To this end, to assure the inter-coder reliability, having coded the data, the researcher provided the second person who was one of his colleagues with the data to code. Thereafter, the second person coded the responses by eliciting the commonalities and he also formulated rather similar findings with minor differences. Following the guidelines proposed by Campbell et al. (2013), the researcher divided the number of coding agreements by the number of agreements and disagreements combined and he achieved 67 percent inter-rater reliability. There were 48 common themes that at least one of the coders invoked a code and of these, there were 33 cases that both of the two coders had invoked the code. Therefore, the level of inter-coder reliability was 68 percent ( $33/48 = .68$ ). However, after negotiating discrepancies, the study reached 84 percent inter-coder reliability ( $28/33 = .84$ ). Therefore, following the coding reliability and agreement, the number of common themes reduced to 28 codes as follows: *Focus, time, motivation, effort, interest, family support, enjoyment, challenging tasks, attention, teacher help, writing development, persistence, willingness to interact, life problems, problem-solving, anxiety, context, grammar, mental loading, friendship classmates, generating ideas, energy, fluency, project-based tasks, being connected, distress, task difficulty level, and punctuation.*

Actually, the common codes delineate the scope of engagement entailing different contextual and situational factors. Factors such as attention, focus, motivation, willingness to interact, and project-based tasks show that engagement would be of particular interest to those researchers who follow the predominant line of thinking in SLA such as sociocultural theory, constructivism, and cognitive-interactionist approaches. Although there are different perspectives on the definitions and conceptual frameworks of engagement, some factors are consistent across definitions and frameworks such as active participation, interest, and attention (see also Reschly & Christenson, 2012). Moreover, the indicators of learner engagement in writing tasks stress the affective factors that have already been regarded as the less visible dimensions of engagement by some scholars (Zhang, 2020). Finally, engagement is linked to positive behaviors such as effort, persistence, and energy that can elevate the level of engagement while accomplishing a writing task.

### ***Psychometric Properties of the Inventory***

Firstly, to determine the internal consistency of the inventory, Cronbach's Alpha estimated the reliability of the whole items, including 23 items, as 0.80. Moreover, the reliability of each of the four underlying factors was also examined as follows: Factor One: 0.86, Factor Two: 0.82, Factor Three: 0.76, and Factor Four: 0.74. Then, to measure the construct validity of the inventory, first of all, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure was checked and since it was .66 so that it was acceptable. Moreover, the Barlett's Test of Sphericity value was also significant ( $p = .0005 < .05$ ) which was acceptable; therefore, factor analysis was appropriate. During the final piloting of the study, the inventory, containing 28 items, was administered to 139 students.



**Table 1***The Results of Principal Component Analysis*

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	7.59	27.10	27.10	7.59	27.10	27.10
2	4.99	17.82	44.93	4.99	17.82	44.93
3	2.52	9.03	53.96	2.52	9.03	53.96
4	2.06	7.36	61.32	2.06	7.36	61.32
5	1.60	5.73	67.06	1.60	5.73	67.06
6	1.49	5.33	72.40	1.49	5.33	72.40
7	1.14	4.07	76.47	1.14	4.07	76.47
8	.97	3.48	79.95			
9	.84	3.00	82.95			
10	.74	2.67	85.63			
11	.56	2.01	87.64			
12	.48	1.71	89.35			
13	.45	1.61	90.97			
14	.38	1.38	92.35			
15	.34	1.24	93.60			
16	.30	1.07	94.67			
17	.24	.88	95.55			
18	.22	.81	96.36			
19	.20	.73	97.10			
20	.17	.62	97.73			
21	.14	.52	98.25			
22	.13	.46	98.72			
23	.11	.40	99.12			
24	.08	.30	99.42			
25	.07	.26	99.68			
26	.05	.19	99.87			
27	.02	.07	99.95			
28	.01	.04	100.00			

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

As illustrated in Table 1, seven factors were extracted from principal component analysis which had eigenvalues more than 1.0 and accounted for 76.47% of the variance. Items 12 and 27 were removed from the inventory since their loadings were less than 0.30 on any factor. Moreover, items 14 had the problem of multicollinearity, or high loadings ( $r > 0.90$ ). For this reason, it was also excluded from the inventory so that the number of items was reduced to 25. Thereafter, the researcher opted for the Scree test to discover the number of factors for rotation. The Scree test represented a four-factor solution as a more parsimonious grouping of the items. Following this, the factor rotation was run to represent the underlying factor structure.

**Table 2**  
*The Components of Engagement in Writing Inventory*

	Component			
	1	2	3	4
item5	.83			
item20	.79			
item10	.69			
item3	.63			
item17	.56			
item12	.47			
item14		.82		
item16		.76		
item18		.71		
item9		.64		
item7		.49		
item21		.41		
item23			.76	
item11			.72	
item2			.66	
item8			.62	
item15			.58	
item22			.51	
item1			.41	
item13				.82
item6				.74
item4				.73
item24				.67
item19				.48
item25				.47

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

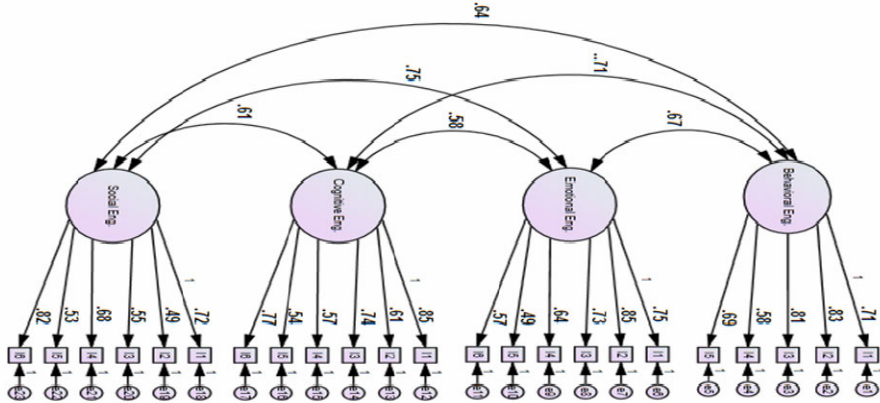
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 7 iterations.

As displayed in Table 2, the first factor included 6 items, the second factor included 6 items, the third factor included 7 items, and the fourth factor included 6 items. After factor rotation, the whole items consisted of 25 items. As the final step of construct validation process, the results of Amos 20 displayed a good fit to the data. Some modifications were carried out on the model because some measurement models did not indicate adequacy to the data (see Figure 1). Altogether, two items were removed including one item from factor one and one item from factor three because of low loadings. Indeed, after modifications were made, the goodness-of-fit of the model enhanced significantly.  $\chi^2/df$  was 2.35, less than the cutoff point of 3; RMSEA was .071, less than .08; and GFI, CFI, and TLI were .91, .92, and .91, respectively, which were above the suggested cutoff point of .90 (Tseng & Schmitt, 2008).

**Figure 1**

*The Results of SEM (Behavioral, Emotional, Cognitive and Social Factors)*



As shown in Figure 1, the association between the factors and the items was satisfactory since it was more than .30 and less than .90. As for the association for factors, the emotional and social factors had the higher correlation of .73, and the behavioral and cognitive factors had the higher correlation of .71. Therefore, each pair of these four factors was more dependent on each other. Consequently, the final inventory comprised four factors and 23 items. Pondering on the content of the items, the researcher named these new factors as follows: Factor one: Behavioral Engagement, Factor two: Emotional Engagement, Factor three: Cognitive Engagement, and Factor four: Social Engagement (see Appendix B). The sub-constructs encompassing the validated scale could provide a comprehensive portrait of the multidimensional nature of learner engagement in writing tasks in L2 settings. Actually, engagement can be regarded as a meta-construct in L2 development, taking behavioral, emotional, cognitive, and social factors into account, and because of its multiple dimensions, Ellis (2019) refers to engagement as “the major force of learning” (p. 480). Since the number of validated instruments for measuring student engagement is very few (Hofkens & Ruzek, 2019), the inventory designed and validated in this study can be used as an instrument for evaluating learner engagement in writing tasks in further research.

***Task-Based (collaborative) Output Activities and Engagement in Writing***

As for the third objective of the study regarding whether dictogloss and debating could increase learner engagement in writing tasks, the researcher ran One-way ANCOVA. To meet the requirements, initially, the general distribution of scores for both groups was checked. The relationship was clearly linear so there was no violation in the assumption of the linear relationship. Moreover, the results of tests of between-subjects effects indicated that there was not violation of the assumption of homogeneity of regression slopes.

**Table 3**  
*Means and Standard Deviation of Variables*

	group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
pre-test scores	dictogloss group	16	61.18	10.65
	debate group	15	58.86	5.02
post-test scores	dictogloss group	16	72.62	9.99
	debate group	15	79.20	9.68

As shown in Table 3, prior to the treatment phase, the mean score of the dictogloss group was 61.18 with the standard deviation of 10.65 and the mean score of the debate group was 58.86 with the standard deviation of 5.02. However, following the treatment phase, the mean score of the dictogloss group reached 72.62 with the standard deviation of 9.99 and the mean score of the debate group reached 79.20 with the standard deviation of 9.68. Indeed, the results indicated that both types of task-based (collaborative) instructions could elevate the level of students' engagement in writing tasks.

**Table 4**  
*ANCOVA Test Results*

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	1871.32 <sup>a</sup>	2	935.66	20.54	.00	.59
Intercept	323.28	1	323.28	7.09	.01	.20
pre group	1536.64	1	1536.64	33.73	.00	.54
Error	1275.51	28	45.55	12.26	.00	.30
Total	181292.00	31				
Corrected Total	3146.83	30				

a. R Squared = .595 (Adjusted R Squared = .566)

However, as shown in Table 4, the results obtained from One-way ANCOVA confirmed that the two groups were significantly different in terms of their scores on the engagement in writing tasks [ $F(1, 28) = 12.26, p = .00$ , partial eta squared = .30]. The debating instruction could increase the students' engagement in writing tasks more than the dictogloss and the value of effect size was .30 which was large, according to Cohen's (1988) guidelines. Although both dictogloss and debating are regarded as task-based (collaborative) output activities that could help students enhance their writing ability, the results revealed that the debating instruction could elevate the level of involvement because of the nature of the discussion, and engaged students can develop further and faster (Egbert, 2020). Therefore, debate as an instructional tool can provide advantages for students to increase their engagement and bolster their performance in writing tasks.

## Discussion

The current study demonstrated that different factors contribute to shaping L2 learner engagement in writing which were categorized into 28 factors based on the responses emerged from EFL university teachers and students. Likewise, the underlying constructs of Engagement in Writing Inventory represented different dimensions for engagement entailing

behavioral, emotional, cognitive, and social engagement. Finally, the results of One-way ANCOVA confirmed that task-based (collaborative) output activities could boost the learners' engagement in writing tasks.

As of the items comprising engagement in writing factors, items loadings on factor one, including five items, deal with the time spent by the learners to do the task, their active participation in doing the task, avoiding whatever drives them into distractions, the amount of energy they channel into the writing tasks, and the amount of effort devoted to the task. Therefore, the researcher came up with behavioral engagement as the label for factor one. Items loadings on factor two, entailing 6 items, are mainly concerned with the feelings and senses of the learners while doing writing tasks, among which are their enjoyment, interest, willingness to interact with other students, gaining satisfaction from their writing performance, suffering from bad stress, or distress, and showing frustration over fruitless attempt. Therefore, the researcher decided on the name emotional engagement for factor two.

Items loadings on factor three, consisting of 6 items, mainly cover the challenges facing learners in carrying out the writing tasks, ability to cope with demanding tasks if they become deeply involved in writing, thinking hard and carefully while completing the task, paying close attention to aspect of writing proficiency in terms of accuracy, fluency and complexity, becoming absorbed in their writings, and remaining focused on the writing task. Altogether, the researcher came up with cognitive engagement as the label for factor three. Finally, the contents of the items loadings on factor four, consisting of 6 items, mainly include external factors contributing to the engagement entailing family support, peer encouragement, the quality of teacher feedback, classroom atmosphere, the communicative intent, and project-based works. Thus, the researcher decided on the name social engagement for factor four.

Considering the first objective of the study, the results of the coding reliability and agreement supported the content validity of commonalities emerged from the interviews and concurrent think-aloud protocols. The findings of the study are aligned with the previous studies on the role of common themes and codes such as the work by Appleton et al. (2008) who categorized 16 common themes for engagement such as time on task, homework completion, participation, self-regulation, and belonging to groups. Likewise, the study conducted by Aubrey et al. (2020) revealed a variety of learner-level and task-level factors that are germane to learners' engagement and disengagement in tasks. The present study also identified factors related to disengagement such as anxiety and distress. These factors are mostly pertinent to emotional engagement and the replacement of negative emotions by positive emotions in the classroom would lead a disengaged student to a progression to engaged student. Higher engagement with the task would make a demotivated student remotivated. The obtained results are also in line with another contemporary research work undertaken by Mercer and Dörnyei (2020) who equated engagement in a learning task to active participation, focused attention, and involvement.

As of the second objective of the study concerning the construct validity of the related inventory, the results of the measurement model confirmed a four-factor structure for engagement which is in line with the

contemporary research work undertaken by Pekrun and Linnenbrink-Garcia (2012) who mainly came up with behavioral, cognitive, emotional, and social constructs for engagement. The results of the study corroborate the related literature in that the multidimensional nature of engagement makes it a unique construct with the three dimensions of behavioral, cognitive, and emotional engagement (e.g., Appleton et al., 2008; Fredricks et al., 2004). To be more specific, the first existing factor of engagement in writing tasks is behavioral engagement in this study which is in line with the finding of Finn and Rock (1997) who found behavioral engagement as an important component of academic success. The second existing factor is emotional engagement which has been considered as a key element affecting degree of willingness to do task and the learners' sense of enjoyment and frustration (Hamedi et al., 2020). The third factor is cognitive engagement which put emphasis on memory processes and attention (Pekrun & Linnenbrink-Garcia, 2012). And, the fourth existing factor is social engagement which is aligned with the finding of Philp & Duchesne (2016) who found interactions and collaborations determining in a task-based language classroom.

Finally, taking the third objective of the study into account, the obtained results revealed that EFL learners experienced increased engagement in writing through output-based (collaborative) tasks which is in agreement with the study carried out by Shernoff et al. (2003) who concluded that task-based group work instruction increases students' learning engagement. The results of the study are consistent with the study undertaken by Yang (2008) who declared that the interplay between speaking activities and writing tasks scaffolds writing development. The findings of the study confirmed that group work and panel discussion can establish engagement for the reason that these types of activities could trigger students' attention and active participation, foster positive emotions, and maintain the engagement, therefore; engagement to a large extent is similar to working within students' zone of proximal development to guarantee that engagement is initially established and then maintained (Modarresi & Alavi, 2014; Rogoff, 1990).

### **Conclusion**

The findings of this study make a strong case for addressing the issue of engagement in writing and embracing the future perspective of EFL learners' engagement factors: their active participation, focused attention, emotions, and interactions. Indeed, the attention devoted to the students' engagement in their second language learning is of great value since students can be actively engaged on writing tasks provided that the students could incorporate their behavioral, emotional, cognitive, and social engagement into the writing tasks. The present study reinforces the conclusion that writing tasks are highly challenging, requiring higher mental loads; however, the amalgamation of speaking activities with writing tasks can make such challenges interesting and exciting for the students so that they would engage more in the tasks if they are equipped with task-based (collaborative) output instructions. Indeed, it seems that higher engagement with the task is related to higher-order thinking processes that would enable students to think creatively. In this regard, courses such as panel discussion could offer rich interactions for the learners to reflect on and revise their L2 output.

The study presents a number of implications for EFL learners and teachers in the second language environment. L2 learners are suggested to benefit from their behavioral and cognitive abilities by participating actively in the class to expand their mental capacity with focus on problem-solving techniques and delve into the learning tasks through deep thinking. Students should notice that positive emotional factors could foster their perseverance and increase their motivational intensity since cognition without emotion would not lead to successful progress. L2 teachers are recommended to provide the students with activities that are derived from new findings in the field of SLA. Indeed, classroom teachers could act as instructional scaffolding, helping students to engage fully in the tasks while diagnosing their disengagement factors.

Although the present study offers some interesting insights, it has a number of limitations along with some recommendations for future research. First, care should be taken in terms of external generalizability of the findings since the sample is not representative of all English-major students at university level. Second, due to the limited number of students available, the study included no control group in the experiment. Indeed, according to Mackey and Gass (2016), whereas the use of a control group is generally recommended, in some circumstances, the inclusion of a control group might not be possible for practical reasons. Finally, as of the relationship between output-based (collaborative) instructions and learner engagement, a fruitful area for further research can examine the extent to which these variables can contribute to the development of writing proficiency in terms of accuracy, fluency and complexity or the extent to which learner engagement with writing proficiency is related to the brain waves from a neuro-linguistic perspective so that now the door is open for engaged researchers to carry out further research into the role of engagement in the Iranian context in order to construct a comprehensive picture of engagement in reference to learning a new language.

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**Appendix A**  
**Sample Excerpts Emerged from the Interviews**

Participants	Excerpts	Codes
Interviewee A	Those who find themselves involved in doing the writing tasks exert much more effort to accomplish the tasks.	Effort
Interviewee B	Students who are willing to interact with the teacher inside and outside the classroom use language more effectively.	willing to interact
Interviewee C	To me, context gives life to learning so that classroom environment can increase students' motivation in doing the writing tasks.	context, friendship classmates
Interviewee D	Some students are perfectionist. They like to produce flawless writings so they spend considerable time to fulfil a task.	time, writing development
Interviewee E	I think that motivation is a central factor in language learning and motivated students practice more.	Motivation
Interviewee F	Actually, writing tasks need more concentration and students who are focused are able to solve difficult writing problems.	focus, problem- solving
Interviewee G	In my opinion, writing is a matter of software first of all and students who immerse themselves in the task can produce creative writings.	mental loading, generating ideas
Interviewee H	Meanwhile, teachers have a significant role in increasing students' interest; supportive and knowledgeable teachers capture students' attention.	interest, teacher help, attention

## **Appendix B**

### **Engagement in Writing Inventory**

#### **Behavioral Engagement**

- 1) I spend enough time to do the task.
- 2) I can cope with the distractions.
- 3) I put all my energies into the task.
- 4) I do my best to create an excellent writing.
- 5) I participate actively in completing the task.

#### **Emotional Engagement**

- 1) I enjoy writing.
- 2) I am willing to interact with my peers.
- 3) I can write without feeling distressed.
- 4) I am interested in creative writing.
- 5) I get inner satisfaction from my writings.
- 6) I rarely feel frustrated with my performance.

#### **Cognitive Engagement**

- 1) I challenge to solve the writing problems.
- 2) I can complete difficult tasks if I get into them.
- 3) I think hard and critically while writing.
- 4) I find myself absorbed in doing the task.
- 5) I pay attention to all aspects of writing.
- 6) I can stay focused.

#### **Social Engagement**

- 1) My family is supportive.
- 2) My classmates are helpful.
- 3) The teacher's feedback is informative.
- 4) The classroom context is motivating.
- 5) Writing connects me to the world.
- 6) I think I do well in project-based tasks





# The Role of Listening Proficiency Level in EFL Learners' Strategic Competence

Research Article  
pp. 103-122

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## Abstract

Examination of language learners' strategy use within the context of language ability may contribute to realizing the role of language knowledge in strategic competence. This study employed mixed methods sequential explanatory design and examined whether the level of listening proficiency as a part of language knowledge affects Iranian EFL learners' cognitive and metacognitive strategy use. The objective was to explore the role of listening proficiency level in EFL learners' strategic competence. Therefore, in the quantitative part of the study, 343 Iranian EFL learners answered a cognitive and metacognitive listening strategy questionnaire (CMLSQ) before and immediately after completing the listening section of a TOEFL test. The results of the MANOVA revealed that the high proficiency group was significantly different from the low proficiency group regarding their strategic knowledge and strategic regulation as the two dimensions of strategic competence. The qualitative data also showed that high proficiency listeners adopted a wider range of strategies than low proficiency listeners. The quantitative and qualitative data analyses proposed that the high proficiency listeners dealt with the test tasks more strategically than the low proficiency ones. The results of the current study suggest that the implementation of strategic competence depends upon the availability of a certain level of linguistic competence in a second language. The findings emphasize the need for a judicious approach to teaching listening, considering both listening skills and listening strategies.

**Keywords:** listening proficiency, cognitive strategies, metacognitive strategies, strategic knowledge, strategic regulation

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## Introduction

A look into various models of language ability (e.g., Bachman & Palmer, 1996, 2010; Canale, 1983; Canale & Swain, 1980) indicates that although different scholars have incorporated several components into their models, they agree on strategic competence as an indispensable module. Bachman and Palmer (1996, 2010) presented one of the most highly acknowledged and widely referenced models of language ability in L2 research. In their model, “language ability” involves two dimensions: “language knowledge” and “strategic competence.” Strategic competence, based on Bachman and Palmer (2010), is described as a “set of metacognitive components or strategies, which can be thought of as higher-order executive processes that provide a cognitive management function in language use, as well as in other cognitive activities” (p. 48). That is to say, learners need to employ both cognitive and metacognitive strategies in successful language performance.

As Phakiti (2008) argued, the notion of strategic competence in Bachman and Palmer’s view is similar to metacognition since both concern self-regulation. A review of metacognition research (Flavell, 1985; Paris & Winograd, 1990) reveals the presence of two main components. The first component is *knowledge about cognition*, which involves awareness of one’s ability to meet the demands of a cognitive goal. The second one is *regulation of cognition*, which is executive and helps orchestrate cognitive aspects of problem-solving.

Likewise, studies on the second language (L2) strategy use indicate that both knowledge of cognitive and metacognitive strategies and actual use of such strategies establish the basis of strategic competence. Thus, exploring individuals’ strategic competence requires a simultaneous examination of both their “knowledge of cognitive and metacognitive strategies in a variety of contexts (strategic knowledge)” and their “reported actual use of the strategies in a specific context (strategic regulation)” (Haghghi et al., 2019b, p. 122).

Examining the role of strategic competence in language performance leads to exploring how to cultivate strategy use of EFL learners and thus promote their communicative language ability. Nevertheless, the problem is that not all language learners use the same language strategies even if they study similar materials, in the same classroom, under identical conditions (Oxford, 1990). Some variables could influence the choice and application of language strategies (Dornyei, 2005). Most studies have indicated that the level of proficiency must be considered when focusing on strategy use (Griffiths, 2008; Griffiths & Incebay, 2016; Yang, 2007). In other words, proficiency is a significant element that determines the choice of a strategy.

The current study deals with the role of listening proficiency level in strategic competence. Even though a plethora of empirical studies have demonstrated that second language proficiency is influential in strategy use, most have used reading tasks to measure language performance (Pan & In’nami, 2015). Moreover, as far as the researchers know, no other research has investigated the effect of listening proficiency level on strategic competence regarding its two components: strategic knowledge and strategic regulation. Following Phakiti (2008), the authors of the current study borrowed *trait* and *state* notions from anxiety research (Spielberger, 1972) as an analogy to



strategic knowledge and strategic regulation, respectively. Therefore, in this study, strategic knowledge represents *trait* cognitive and metacognitive strategies, whereas strategic regulation represents *state* cognitive and metacognitive strategies.

## Literature Review

### ***Strategic Competence in Bachman and Palmer's (1996, 2010) Model***

Bachman and Palmer's (1996) model is one of the most well-acknowledged and widely referenced models of language ability in L2 research. In this model, language ability has been considered to consist of two dimensions of *language knowledge* and *strategic competence*. Strategic competence, according to Bachman and Palmer (1996), is a "set of metacognitive components or strategies, which can be thought of as higher-order executive processes that provide a cognitive management function in language use, as well as in other cognitive activities" (p. 70).

Subsequently, Bachman and Palmer (2010) introduced the updated model of language use in which cognitive strategies were incorporated. They conceptualized strategic competence as "a set of metacognitive strategies involved in planning, monitoring, and evaluating individuals' problem solving" (p. 49). They further considered cognitive strategies as the ways in which individuals execute the output of metacognitive strategies in actual language use. In their framework, the primary contributor to strategic competence is hypothesized to be language users' metacognitive strategies that "provide a management function in language use" (p. 48). On the other hand, Cognitive strategies are employed when individuals execute plans in a particular language use situation. Thus, both cognitive and metacognitive strategies are involved in Bachman and Palmer's (2010) model. Accordingly, Bachman and Palmer's strategic competence is similar to metacognition in nature. In other words, the concept of metacognition is at the heart of strategic competence.

### ***Metacognition***

Metacognition is one of the most reliable factors that may predict learning (Wang et al., 1990). Vandergrift and Goh (2012) conceived of metacognition as "language learners' ability to think about their own thinking and to think about how they process information for a range of purposes and how they manage the way they do it" (p. 83).

A general agreement among metacognitive researchers (e.g., Flavell, 1985; Paris & Winograd, 1990) shows that metacognition involves two fundamental dimensions: "knowledge about cognition" and "regulation of cognition." Knowledge about cognition is conceptualized as one's acquired knowledge about cognitive processes that control and regulate cognitive processes (Schneider, 1988). Regulation of cognition refers to the processes learners use to monitor and control their cognitive practices to achieve desired goals (Flavell, 1985). In other words, it describes how individuals monitor and evaluate their cognitive behavior, which includes knowing how to use and monitor specific strategies for the learning process.

### ***Listening Proficiency and Strategic Competence***

Language knowledge is one of the fundamental factors determining the adoption and implementation of language strategies (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990). In this regard, Goh (2002) and Vandergrift (2003) explored the strategies employed by second language learners with high and low levels of language proficiency. The results suggested that cognitive strategies were almost equally employed by the groups. However, the learners with a high level of proficiency utilized more metacognitive strategies than the low proficient ones. Similarly, Liu (2008) studied strategy use across different proficiency levels and found that strategy use was positively associated with the students' listening proficiency.

Some studies have explored the role of proficiency level in the listening strategy use of Iranian EFL learners. Mohseny and Raeisi (2009), for instance, explored the strategy use of Iranian EFL learners considering their level of language proficiency. The results showed that strategy use was positively associated with the listening ability of the learners. Also, cognitive strategies were identified to be implemented more frequently than the other strategies.

Moreover, Bidabadi and Yamat (2011) studied the utilization of listening strategies among Iranian EFL learners across their proficiency levels. Listening strategies were found to be positively correlated with the learners' level of proficiency. Additionally, the results revealed that learners with both high and low levels of proficiency utilized metacognitive strategies more frequently than cognitive strategies. Furthermore, Tavakoli et al. (2012) explored the contribution of metacognitive knowledge in the listening test performance of language learners with different levels of listening ability and found that metacognitive knowledge was highly related to listening performance.

However, several other studies yielded controversial results. For instance, Rezaei and Almasian (2007) did not find any significant association between strategy use and language learners' level of proficiency. In another study, Hong-Nam and Leavell (2006) observed that the intermediate-level learners employed more overall strategies than the advanced learners. Also, Vandergrift (2003) reported that the use of cognitive strategies was equally frequent among learners with different proficiency levels.

Reviewing the related literature reveals that researchers have not reached a common consensus regarding the role of the level of proficiency in L2 learners' strategic competence yet. Therefore, it is fair to say that there is still a great need for further research in the area of strategic competence concerning the level of proficiency. Accordingly, the current study investigated the role of the level of listening proficiency in the use of trait and state cognitive and metacognitive strategies by Iranian EFL learners. The researchers postulate that the findings of this study will contribute to clarifying how learners with varying levels of listening proficiency utilize strategies. In other words, the present study aims to offer a more comprehensive picture of the learners' strategic competence vis-à-vis listening proficiency. The following research questions helped the researchers achieve the objectives.

**RQ1:** Do test-takers with varying levels of listening proficiency use trait cognitive and metacognitive strategies differently?

**RQ2:** Do test-takers with varying levels of listening proficiency use state cognitive and metacognitive strategies differently?

**RQ3:** How do EFL learners with varying levels of listening proficiency differ in using cognitive and metacognitive strategies?

## **Method**

### ***Participants***

The participants consisted of 343 respondents (227 females and 116 males) in the age range of 19 to 27. The participants were selected non-randomly based on convenience sampling from BA students (juniors and seniors) majoring in English Translation and Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) from Islamic Azad University, Shiraz and Dezful Branches. Based on the descriptive statistics of the listening test (mean = 27.17; SD = 9.5), the participants who had scored above +1SD (scores above 36) on the listening section of the TOEFL test formed the high proficiency group (more-proficient listeners), and those who had scored below -1SD (scores below 18) made the low proficiency group (less-proficient listeners). All the participants were native speakers of Persian.

### ***Instruments***

A second language listening comprehension test, a self-report listening strategies questionnaire (Haghighi et al., 2019a), and a retrospective interview were employed to obtain data from the EFL learners regarding their use of cognitive and metacognitive strategies in listening test performance.

**Listening Comprehension Test.** The listening section of an actual TOEFL-PBT, already used by ETS in a worldwide test administration in 2002, was administered to measure the participants' listening performance. The test has 50 multiple-choice items, consisting of three subsections of short conversations between two people (30 questions), more extended conversations on general issues (8 questions), and 12 questions about lectures or talks.

**Cognitive and Metacognitive Listening Strategies Questionnaire (CMLSQ).** The CMLSQ (Haghighi et al., 2019a) measured the participants' implementation of cognitive and metacognitive strategies. This questionnaire consisted of 34 items in two sections, 17 items in cognitive listening strategies (CLS) and 17 items in metacognitive listening strategies (MLS). The total reliability index for the CMLSQ using Cronbach's alpha was 0.88, and for the MLS and CLS sub-sections were 0.86 and 0.90, respectively, which are accepted as high-reliability indices.

**Retrospective Interview.** The researchers designed a retrospective interview with ten participants to elicit more detailed information and to triangulate the data obtained from the self-report questionnaire. The interviews gathered additional information concerning the last research question. As there was a small number of participants (i.e., five highly successful and five unsuccessful ones), the strategy use patterns extracted from the qualitative data should be considered tentative.

## Design

This study applied a mixed methods sequential explanatory design with a quantitative phase followed by a qualitative one. The quantitative stage was a causal-comparative study. The independent variable was the listening proficiency with two levels (high proficiency and low proficiency), and the dependent variables were cognitive strategies and metacognitive strategies

## Procedure

A total of 365 copies of the CMLSQ were administered through face-to-face contact to measure the participants' application of trait cognitive and metacognitive strategies (i.e., strategic knowledge). Before administering the questionnaires, the researchers tried to assure the respondents that the answers would not be considered right or wrong and that the researchers were only intended to evaluate how learners accomplish comprehension of oral texts. The participants were required to assign a value to each item on a 6-point rating scale ranging from 6 "Always" to 1 "Never." It took about 15 to 25 minutes to complete the questionnaire. After a two-week interval, the participants took the listening section of a standard version of TOEFL-PBT. Then, the CMLSQ was administered immediately after the listening test. This time, the questionnaire items were in the simple past tense to measure the participants' perceived actual strategy use (i.e., state cognitive and metacognitive) during the listening test. The researchers had to discard 22 cases out of the 365 questionnaires due to missing data and used 343 questionnaires for data analysis.

One of the researchers conducted retrospective interviews in Persian. First, the interviewees took the listening section of the TOEFL test in ten minutes to remember how they thought during the test. The test consisted of two short and two long conversations and the related multiple-choice comprehension questions. The interviewer paused on each section to give the respondents some time to think. The purpose of this listening activity was to simulate a test situation. Next, the interviewees talked about the strategies they used before, during, and after listening to the dialogue and when answering comprehension questions. After data collection, the interviews were audio-taped for further analysis and then were transcribed and translated into English. To establish the accuracy of the data, the transcripts were double-checked by the researchers. The purpose of this analysis was to specify how different test-takers with varying listening abilities employed different types of strategies in the listening test. After coding the transcripts, the researchers identified shared patterns of strategy use.

## Data Analysis

The data collected from participants' responses to the questionnaire and their listening test scores were entered into SPSS 18. Quantitative as well as qualitative data were examined to answer the research questions. MANOVA (Multivariate Analysis of Variance) was performed to analyze the quantitative data. For qualitative data analysis, two general steps were followed. First, the data extracted from the retrospective interviews were transcribed. Then a content analysis of the transcribed data was performed to identify some iterative ideas and then group them into specified coding frames.

**Results**

**Quantitative Phase of the Study**

Tables 1 and 2 summarize the descriptive statistics of the listeners' use of trait and state cognitive and metacognitive strategies, respectively. Cognitive strategy factors were composed of inferencing, elaboration, prediction, summarization, and note-taking strategies. Planning, monitoring, and evaluating were metacognitive strategy factors.

**Table 1**

*Descriptive Statistics for Trait Metacognitive and Cognitive Strategies*

Variables		Maximum	Minimum	Mean	SD
Metacognitive Strategies	Planning	41	10	27.40	6.32
	Monitoring	24	4	15.84	3.91
	Evaluation	36	13	23.52	5.35
Cognitive Strategies	Inferencing	42	14	30.69	5.99
	Elaboration	12	3	7.64	2.21
	Prediction	24	8	15.10	3.58
	Summarization	12	3	8.61	2.12
	Note-taking	24	2	7.15	4.04

**Table 2**

*Descriptive Statistics for State Metacognitive and Cognitive Strategies*

Variables		Maximum	Minimum	Mean	SD
Metacognitive Strategies	Planning	40	12	27.26	6.33
	Monitoring	23	4	14.27	3.38
	Evaluation	33	7	22.46	5.17
Cognitive Strategies	Inferencing	41	9	30.46	6.06
	Elaboration	24	3	6.95	1.97
	Prediction	24	5	14.65	3.08
	Summarization	12	2	8.64	1.84
	Note-taking	12	2	5.54	2.91

Next, descriptive statistics were employed to analyze the participants' performances on the listening test. As shown in Table 3, the lowest and highest observed listening scores were 10 and 46, respectively.

**Table 3**

*Descriptive Statistics of Listening Test*

Variables	N	Maximum	Minimum	Mean	SD
Listening	343	46	10	27.17	9.50
Valid N(listwise)	343				

Then, the learners who had scored above +1SD (above 36) on the listening test formed the high group (more-proficient listeners), and those who had scored below -1SD (below 18) on the listening test made the low group (less-proficient listeners). This way, the top 86 high and the low 82 test-takers

were located. Table 4 indicates that the high group performed on the listening test with a minimum of 36 and a maximum of 46, whereas the minimum score for the low group was 10, and the maximum score was 18.

**Table 4**

*Descriptive Statistics of the Low Proficiency and High Proficiency Groups*

	Proficiency Level	Mean	SD	N
Trait Cognitive	Low	61.82	11.21	82
	High	72.00	9.77	86
Trait Metacognitive Strategies	Low	58.11	14.23	82
	High	75.07	9.08	86

To answer the first research question, MANOVA was performed. However, before running the MANOVA, Box's Test of Equality of Covariance Matrices was employed to examine the difference in the covariance of the independent variable (listening proficiency with two levels) across the dependent variables (two categories of listening strategies). In this table, the reference level of probability should be .001. As Table 5 shows, the covariance matrices for the dependent variables were not significantly different ( $p > 0.05$ ). Hence, the data enjoyed the homogeneity of variances assumption.

**Table 5**

*Test of Equality of Covariance Matrices*

Box's M	153.618
F	1.709
df1	81
df2	16697.611
Sig.	.301

Another essential assumption of the MANOVA is the equality of error variances, verified by examining Leven's Test of Equality of Error Variances. As Table 6 shows, the assumption of the equality of variances was met,  $p = .172$ ,  $p = .239$ .

**Table 6**

*Test of Equality of Error Variances*

Variables	F	df1	df2	Sig.
Metacognitive Strategies	1.04	1	341	.239
Cognitive Strategies	1.04	1	341	.172

Therefore, MANOVA was performed to determine the influence of listening proficiency levels on using trait cognitive and metacognitive strategies. The results showed that high and low proficiency groups were significantly different in using trait cognitive and metacognitive strategies,  $F(2, 165) = 50.77$ ,  $p = .001$ , Wilks' Lambda = .619, partial Eta squared = .381. Also, the eta squares indicated that the proficiency level explained non-trivial

portions of the variance in the cognitive and metacognitive strategy use (see Table 7).

**Table 7**  
*Multivariate Tests of Group Differences in Trait Strategy Use*

	Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Pillai's Trace	.381	50.77**	2	165	.001	.381
Wilk's Lambda	.619	50.77**	2	165	.001	.381
Hotelling's Trace	.615	50.77**	2	165	.001	.381
Roy's Largest Root	.615	50.77**	2	165	.001	.381

As shown in Table 7, all four multivariate test statistics are significant. This result implied that less-proficient and more-proficient listeners are not the same regarding their use of trait cognitive and metacognitive strategies. However, it is unclear whether proficiency level was effective in using cognitive strategies, metacognitive strategies, or both. Therefore, the multivariate tests for each type of strategies were examined individually further to explore the group differences in the trait strategy use. The results indicated that less-proficient listeners were significantly different from more-proficient listeners in both cognitive strategy use,  $F(1, 341) = 85.64, p < 0.01$ ; and metacognitive strategy use,  $F(1, 341) = 39.36, p < 0.01$  (see Table 8).

**Table 8**  
*Tests of Between-Subjects Effects for Trait Strategy Use*

	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Trait Cognitive Strategies	12074.11	1	12074.11	85.64**	.001	.340
Trait Metacognitive Strategies	4342.17	1	4342.17	39.36**	.001	.192

An investigation of the mean scores (Table 4) indicated that the high proficiency group employed higher levels of trait cognitive strategies ( $M = 72.00$ ) and metacognitive strategies ( $M = 75.07$ ) than the low proficiency group (cognitive  $M = 61.82$  and metacognitive  $M = 58.11$ ). This finding rejects the null hypothesis stating that no difference exists among test takers with varying listening proficiency levels regarding their use of trait cognitive and metacognitive strategies.

Another MANOVA was performed to answer the second research question. Box's test of homogeneity of variance/covariance matrices (Table 9) and Levene's test of equality of error variances (Table 10) justified the use of the test.

**Table 9***Test of Equality of Covariance Matrices*

Box's M	218.852
F	2.435
df1	81
df2	16697.611
Sig.	.211

**Table 10***Test of Equality of Error Variances*

Variables	F	df1	df2	Sig.
State Cognitive Strategies	1.37	1	341	.201
State Metacognitive Strategies	1.10	1	341	.196

Then the MANOVA was conducted to determine the influence of listening proficiency levels on using state cognitive and metacognitive strategies. The results (Table 11) showed that the group with a higher level of proficiency was significantly different from the group with a lower level of proficiency regarding their use of state cognitive and metacognitive strategies,  $F(2, 165) = 50.770$ ,  $p < 0.01$ , Wilks' Lambda = .619, partial Eta squared = .381. Eta squared showed that the proficiency level explained non-trivial portions of the variance in the cognitive and metacognitive strategy use.

**Table 11***Multivariate Tests of Group Differences in State Strategy Use*

	Value	F	Hypothesis Df	Error df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Pillai's Trace	.438	64.38**	2	165	.001	.438
Wilk's Lambda	.562	64.38**	2	165	.001	.438
Hotelling's Trace						
Roy's Largest Root	.780	64.38**	2	165	.001	.438
Root	.780	65.38**	2	165	.001	.438

As shown in Table 11, all multivariate test statistics are significant, implying that less-proficient and more-proficient listeners do not use state cognitive and metacognitive strategies equally. However, it is not clear whether proficiency level affects test takers' use of cognitive strategies, metacognitive strategies, or both. Thus, multivariate tests for each type of strategy were examined individually to investigate the group differences in the state strategy use. The results (Table 12) indicated that more-proficient listeners were significantly different from less-proficient and in their use of cognitive strategies,  $F(1, 341) = 107.48$ ,  $p > 0.01$ ; as well as metacognitive strategies,  $F(1, 341) = 47.19$ ,  $p > 0.01$ .



**Table 12***Tests of Between-Subjects Effects for State Strategy Use*

	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Trait Cognitive Strategies	15239.02	1	15239.02	107.4**	.001	.393
Trait Metacognitive Strategies	15239.02	1	15239.02	47.19**	.001	.221

An examination of the mean scores (Table 4) indicated that the high proficiency group employed higher levels of state cognitive strategies ( $M = 69.128$ ) and metacognitive strategies ( $M = 73.651$ ) than the low-proficiency group (cognitive  $M = 49.646$  and Metacognitive  $M = 34.598$ ). This finding rejects the null hypothesis stating that no difference exists among test takers with varying listening proficiency levels regarding their use of state cognitive and metacognitive strategies.

### Qualitative Phase of the Study

The researchers designed a retrospective interview with ten participants, five highly successful ones from the high proficiency group and five unsuccessful ones from the low proficiency group, to answer the third question. The participants were interviewed individually in Persian. First, they were provided with the listening section of the TOEFL test (consisting of two short and two long conversations and the related multiple-choice comprehension questions) with pauses on each section. After each section, the interviewer asked the participants a series of questions to elicit the strategies they employed before, during, and after listening to the dialogue and the strategies they used to answer the comprehension questions. The interviews were recorded for further analysis. For analyzing the data, the interview responses were transcribed and translated into English. To ensure the accuracy of the transcripts, they were double-checked by the researchers. Afterward, these written transcriptions were meticulously scrutinized to find regularly reported strategies for both groups.

Content analysis revealed the use of different strategy types by test-takers. The reported strategies of high and low proficiency test-takers were classified under seven categories, comprising the three classifications of metacognitive strategies (i.e., planning, evaluating, and monitoring) and four types of cognitive strategies (i.e., inferencing, elaboration, predicting, and note-taking).

The metacognitive strategies reported by the test takers included planning, evaluation, and monitoring.

**1. Planning.** The first metacognitive category extracted from the responses was planning. When listening to the text, the higher-proficiency listeners tried to direct their attention and decide what to do to understand better. They were likely to be aware of why and how to use a strategy to

complete test tasks. When asked what they did before and while listening to the text, some of them gave the following responses:

*"I set some goals for myself. For example, I decided to understand the main topic by paying attention to some words that I knew."; "I decided to remember some important words or phrases so that I could use them in answering the questions."*

On the other hand, the lower-proficiency listeners could not direct their attention to the sentences they were about to hear as well as higher-proficiency test-takers did. Instead, they concentrated on what they could not listen to previously and relinquished their listening task easily. Due to the lack of proficiency, they had comprehension difficulty and focused on some parts of the text. The followings are some representative extractions:

*"I wanted to understand what the text was about. But when I heard some words I didn't know, I couldn't go further and lost the rest of the conversation. The sentences were too long and hard to understand, and I gave up further listening."*

It appeared that both high and low proficiency groups knew that getting prepared before listening could help in their understanding. Both groups had the knowledge and awareness of such strategies; however, higher-proficiency test-takers used listening strategies more appropriately than lower-proficiency test-takers due to linguistic variables, which facilitated listening comprehension.

**2. Evaluation.** The second metacognitive category extracted from the responses was evaluation. More proficient test-takers evaluated their performance and the strategies they used. They assessed how well they did the task, commented on the areas in which they had problems, and suggested that this was an experience to be used for future tasks. For example, one student commented:

*"I think I've done well in the listening task, and the strategies I applied were helpful."*

The less-proficient test-takers could articulate their comprehension problems, too. However, they could not evaluate the effectiveness of the strategies they used. In other words, the more proficient test-takers were more capable of assessing their performance and strategy effectiveness than less proficient ones.

**3. Monitoring.** The last metacognitive category extracted from the responses was monitoring. Some higher-proficiency test-takers implemented monitoring strategies while listening to the text. For example, one student commented:

*"I would get confused if there were many words I didn't know."*

However, the monitoring strategies did not appear to be used among the lower-proficiency test-takers. One of them, for instance, said:

*"When I was listening to the text, all I hoped to do was to understand it. I didn't have time to care whether or not the words I heard were right in the context."*

The cognitive strategies reported by the test takers included inferencing, prediction, elaboration, and note-taking.

**1. Inferencing.** The first cognitive category extracted from the responses was inferencing. Some extracts of their responses are:

*"For me, listening to the main ideas, paying attention to keywords, and making inferences based on my own experience were more practical."; "I paid attention to the relationship between the listeners and speakers in the conversation. This helped me to understand some parts of the conversation."*

The lower-proficiency students were familiar with these types of strategies and tried to use them while listening to the text. However, they experienced some problems in implementing the strategies because they lacked linguistic knowledge. For example, one of the students noted:

*"I knew I should look for the keywords, but sometimes I couldn't recognize the keywords in listening."*

**2. Prediction.** Both higher and lower proficiency test-takers reported using similar strategies in this category. One of the more proficient test-takers mentioned:

*"I tried to read the test items to guess the words used in the conversation."*

Also, one of the less proficient test-takers reported:

*"When I received the test, I first overviewed it and tried to predict the content of the passage using the test items."*

However, what differentiated the two groups of test-takers was related to the accuracy of predictions. The more proficient students could predict the text more accurately than the less proficient ones. In other words, the less proficient students made wrong predictions due to the failure to understand the previous sentences, probably because they lacked linguistic knowledge, which led to problems in recognizing words, phrases, and sentences.

**3. Elaboration.** In this category, both groups of test-takers used the following strategies:

- Using the experience and knowledge to help understand
- Comparing what was understood with what was known about the topic

One of the test-takers, for instance, commented:

*"My personal experiences were helpful. I had some relevant information about the topic, which helped me guess and understand some parts of the text."*

It is worth mentioning that less proficient students relied heavily on the background knowledge about the passages to comprehend the text despite their lack of linguistic knowledge.

**4. Note-taking.** The last cognitive category extracted from the responses was note-taking. Both groups were familiar with note-taking, but not all used this type of strategy. Although some students emphasized the effectiveness of taking notes while listening, some did not believe in its importance. For example, one of the students commented:

*"I needed to take notes for long and difficult sentences because I forget what was said after listening."*

However, another one said:

*"Taking notes of keywords was not helpful. I preferred answering the test items quickly than spending time taking notes."*

Also, the less proficient participants mentioned that they knew this type of strategy but did not use it because the speaker was too fast, and they failed to keep up with the listening text when they were taking notes. In contrast, the more proficient participants could use note-taking more effectively. One of them, for instance, reported:

*"I didn't have sufficient time to write down all the main points. I wrote down the first word of each phrase or sentence."*

## **Discussion**

The first and second research questions examined the differences between the two groups of language learners with high and low levels of listening proficiency regarding their reported use of trait and state cognitive and metacognitive strategies in listening performance. The findings showed that high and low listening proficiency groups were significantly different regarding their use of state and trait cognitive and metacognitive strategies. The result implied that listening proficiency was a significant factor that differentiated the two groups regarding their implementation of cognitive and metacognitive strategies. This finding is in congruence with Goh's (2000), O'Malley & Chamot's (1990), and Vandergrift's (2003) studies on listening strategies.

The results also revealed that the high proficiency group had a greater desire to use metacognitive strategies than the low proficiency group. To put it another way, learners with a higher level of proficiency utilized metacognitive strategies more frequently than learners with a lower level of proficiency. This finding aligns with Goh and Taib's (2006) and Vandergrift and Tafaghodtari's (2010) studies. The findings are also compatible with studies that demonstrated a positive association between proficiency level and metacognitive strategy use (Goh, 2002; Oxford et al., 2004; Vandergrift, 2003). The results are also congruent with the investigations that examined the impact of the level of proficiency on using cognitive and metacognitive strategies in reading test performance (Phakiti, 2003). Following the current research findings, the researchers propose that a certain level of proficiency is an essential prerequisite for learners to employ metacognitive strategies. This finding can be related to the 'threshold hypothesis' proposed by Alderson (2000) in reading comprehension. According to the threshold hypothesis, learners can employ language strategies after attaining a certain amount of language knowledge. The application of metacognitive strategies in listening performance is presumably sensitive to a threshold level of listening proficiency.

Regarding cognitive strategy use, the results indicated that listeners with high level of proficiency used more cognitive strategies than low proficiency listeners. This result finds support from studies by Baleghizadeh and Rahimi (2011), Kok (2018), and Vandergrift and Tafaghodtari (2010). The lower use of cognitive strategies during the listening performance can be

related to the lower and inefficient implementation of metacognitive strategies by low proficiency listeners. Metacognitive strategies perform executive functions over cognitive strategies (Haghighi et al., 2019b; Phakiti, 2008). The researchers suggest that the effective implementation of cognitive strategies depends on the listeners' implementation of metacognitive strategies. Another proposition is that cognitive strategies are knowledge-based, and their implementation depends on the listeners' linguistic competence.

To sum up, the listeners with different listening proficiency levels utilized similar types of strategies in listening test performance. However, they used different proportions of these sources in their strategy use. Therefore, the researchers argue that these listeners share a particular ability, namely 'strategic competence' (Bachman & Palmer, 2010), comprising knowledge of cognition and regulation of cognition. It appears that a higher level of listening proficiency leads to a higher level of strategic competence. Therefore, the implementation of strategic competence depends upon the availability of linguistic competence in the target language. The researchers hypothesize that strategic competence is a function of L2 proficiency. In other words, the findings support the idea that the application of strategic competence needs a certain level of linguistic competence.

The last research question explored the utilization of cognitive and metacognitive strategies in listening test performance among listeners with varying proficiency levels. The qualitative data provided further insight into the role of proficiency level in strategy use. Concerning the metacognitive strategies, the researchers found that more proficient participants utilized a far greater variety of strategies when comprehending different texts. In contrast, the less proficient ones implemented fewer strategy types. In cases where both groups mentioned similar strategies, the more proficient students usually knew how to use them better than the less proficient ones.

Regarding cognitive strategies, both more-proficient and less-proficient listeners actively employed cognitive strategies including inferencing, prediction, elaboration, and note-taking to comprehend the oral passages. What differentiated the two groups, however, was the accuracy with which the strategies were utilized. In other words, more proficient students used the strategies more accurately than less proficient ones. This difference might be due to the lack of 'linguistic knowledge' in less proficient students and their problems in recognizing words, phrases, and sentences, leading to making wrong inferences and predictions.

These findings are in line with the studies by Graham and Macaro (2008), Park (2010), and Vandergrift (2005), which indicated qualitative differences in L2 learners' use of strategies concerning their level of listening proficiency. According to Goh (2002), the plausible explanation for the distinction of more proficient and less proficient listeners in using cognitive and metacognitive strategies might be that less-proficient listeners are often preoccupied with unfamiliar words or expressions and have a limited range of strategic knowledge. On the other hand, as Vandergrift (2003) argued, more-proficient listeners are involved in a greater depth of interaction with the text by employing different strategies, resulting in more successful comprehension.

In conclusion, both quantitative and qualitative data analyses demonstrated that the high proficiency listeners performed the test tasks more strategically than the low proficiency ones. These findings suggest that even if listeners know different types of strategies, they cannot achieve intended performance if they lack the necessary linguistic knowledge relevant to that task. This result is consistent with different language ability models, including Bachman and Palmer (1996, 2010), Canale (1983), and Canale and Swain (1980), indicating that language knowledge plays a determining role in language performance.

### **Conclusion and Implications**

This study examined the differences among the learners with high and low levels of listening proficiency regarding their use of cognitive and metacognitive strategies. The objective was to investigate the role of listening proficiency level in students' use of strategies. The quantitative results revealed that the learners with a higher level of proficiency were significantly different from learners with a lower level of proficiency in using cognitive and metacognitive strategies. This finding leads to the conclusion that listening proficiency is an important indicator of the difference in using cognitive and metacognitive strategies among different test-takers in listening performance. The results also showed that high proficiency group used cognitive and metacognitive strategies more frequently than low proficiency group. In conclusion, the results proposed that listeners with different listening proficiency levels utilize similar types of strategies (i.e., cognitive and metacognitive strategies) in listening performance. However, they use different proportions of these sources.

Moreover, the qualitative data shed more light on the role of the level of listening proficiency in using cognitive and metacognitive strategies. The qualitative results were in line with quantitative analysis findings in that the students with different listening proficiency levels used cognitive and metacognitive strategies differently. In sum, the outcome of quantitative and qualitative data analyses implied that the high proficiency listeners dealt with the test tasks more strategically than the low proficiency ones. Therefore, the findings support the idea that the implementation of strategic competence depends upon the availability of a certain amount of linguistic competence in the target language.

The present study contributed to the literature by indicating that a difference in EFL learners' level of listening proficiency as a part of language knowledge would affect their strategy use. It is usually recommended to have strategy instruction for beginner-level students to improve their language learning. However, the results of this study proposed that learners need to attain a certain amount of language knowledge before strategy instruction.

The findings of the previous studies (e.g., Cross, 2009; Goh & Taib, 2006; Graham & Macaro, 2008; Vandergrift & Tafaghodtari, 2010) revealed that implementing cognitive and metacognitive strategies leads to better listening performance. On the other hand, the present study showed that higher listening proficiency leads to more frequent and appropriate strategy use. Presumably, there is a reciprocal relationship between strategy use and level of listening

proficiency. Accordingly, the pedagogical implication is the need for a prudent approach to listening instruction, which requires attention to listening skills and listening strategies. By integrating strategy instruction into skill-focused listening practice, EFL teachers help their students utilize both resources to support and enhance their listening ability.

This study employed a cross-sectional assessment of learners' strategy use that might have limited generalizability. Therefore, future studies can be conducted mainly to investigate consistency in using cognitive and metacognitive strategies use over time in listening performance. In addition, the instruments used to obtain data from the participants on their use of cognitive and metacognitive strategies were restricted to Likert-scale questionnaires. Although the factor structure of the questionnaire has been analyzed thoroughly, it cannot be claimed that self-report data directly reflect mental processing. Further studies can employ other qualitative instruments, such as think-aloud protocols, to provide a better understanding of the strategic processing. Moreover, the researchers failed to control the moderating effect of gender as the number of female participants was almost twice the number of male ones. Future studies can use a more proportionate ratio of male and female participants, which would produce more dependable data.

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**Abstracts  
of Papers  
in Persian**



## رویکردی اجتماعی-شناختی به آموزش نوشتار مبتنی بر منابع: برداشت‌های اساتید و محدودیت‌های موجود

مقاله پژوهشی

صفحات ۳۰-۷

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### چکیده

در این مقاله رویکردی اجتماعی-شناختی در تدریس مهارت نوشتاری مبتنی بر منابع به عنوان یکی از فعالیت‌های نوشتاری رایج در جامعه دانشگاهی مورد بررسی قرار می‌گیرد. نوشتار مبتنی بر منابع، فرایندهای شناختی انتخاب نقدانه منابع معتبر درون‌داد، برقراری ارتباط میان محتوای آن‌ها با نظرات خود شخص و تلفیق منابع در متن نوشتاری یک شخص برای تولید معنا را شامل می‌شود. همچنین، نوشتار مبتنی بر منابع، نیازمند ابعاد اجتماعی-بافتی دانش نوشتاری دانشگاهی از قبیل اخلاقیات در حق تألیف منابع و آگاهی نویسندگان نسبت به ژانر رشته تحصیلی است (دووی، ۲۰۱۰). بنابراین هدف از تحقیق کیفی تفسیری پیش رو، بررسی وضعیت کنونی رویکردهای به‌کارگرفته‌شده در کلاس‌های مهارت نوشتاری دانشگاهی ایرانی در رشته‌های انگلیسی مانند ادبیات انگلیسی، ترجمه زبان انگلیسی و آموزش زبان انگلیسی برای تمرین نوشتار مبتنی بر منابع است. در این راستا، هفت استاد دانشگاه که از سابقه تدریس در کلاس‌های نوشتاری دانشگاهی در محیط آموزشی مورد نظر برخوردار بوده، بر اساس نمونه‌گیری هدفمند انتخاب شدند تا در مصاحبه‌های ژرف‌نگر نیمه‌ساختاریافته شرکت کنند. نتایج به‌دست‌آمده نشان می‌دهد که کلاس‌های نوشتاری دانشگاهی، نمی‌توانند به صورت کارآمد فرآیندهای شناختی تولید معنا در نوشتار مبتنی بر منابع را ارزیابی کنند. این موارد تحت‌الشعاع آموزش تولید-محور حاکم از پیش موجود و تعدادی از محدودیت‌های مورد تأکید مصاحبه‌شوندگان، از جمله محدودیت‌های یادگیرندگان، محدودیت زمانی، و موانع تسهیلات دسترسی به فناوری‌ها هستند. کاربردهایی پژوهش حاضر برای تدوین‌گران برنامه درسی و مدرسان نوشتار دانشگاهی بحث و بررسی خواهد شد.

**کلیدواژه‌ها:** نوشتار مبتنی بر منابع، رویکرد اجتماعی-شناختی، آموزش مهارت نوشتاری، نوشتار ترکیبی، نوشتار دانشگاهی

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## تخیل شاعرانه در ارتباط با طبیعت: بررسی موردی اشعار منتخب مری الیور

مقاله پژوهشی

صفحات ۳۱-۴۷

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### چکیده

با توجه به اهمیت شعر محیط‌گرا و اینکه چگونه افق‌های بوم‌شناختی خوانندگان را می‌گستراند، دنبال کردن انتقال ذهنی شاعران محیط‌گرا از لحظه تجربه‌های حسی مستقیم در طبیعت تا کنش ترکیب، خوانندگان را قادر می‌سازد تا عمق آن‌چه که در ورای تخیل شاعرانه مانده است که سبب حس اتحاد بوم‌شناختی با طبیعت می‌شود را درک کنند. بر مبنای هدف این پژوهش، محققان برآنند که به واکاوی عناصر بوم‌شناختی-شعرطبیعت‌محور در اشعار برگزیده محیط‌گرای «اشعار جدید و منتخب» مری اولیور، جلد اول بپردازند با هدف آشکارسازی این واقعیت که تلاش عمده مری اولیور دعوت خوانندگان در رسیدن به رشد ذهنی به واسطه آگاهی برآمده از قدرت تخیل و توجه دقیق به جهان غیر بشر است، شاعر سخنران و خوانندگانشان را توانمند می‌سازد تا موانع خود-محوری را کنار زده و در تجدید اتحاد جمعی با طبیعت شرکت کنند. بر این اساس، چهارچوب کلی که برای انجام این پژوهش به کار گرفته شد، نقد زیست‌محیطی و نکوداشت آن از تمامیت بوم‌شناختی بین عوامل انسانی و غیر انسانی است.

**کلیدواژه‌ها:** تخیل شاعرانه، مری اولیور، طبیعت، شعر محیط‌گرا، یکپارچگی زیست‌محیطی

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## تجدید عهد «محور شرارت»: آزادی‌خواه طعنه‌زن و خداوندگار جهنم شیپرد

مقاله پژوهشی  
صفحات ۶۴-۴۹

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### چکیده

ایالات متحده مدل استعمار بریتانیایی قرن نوزدهم را برای قرن بیستم، اقتباس کرد، به ویژه در اعمال کنترل دیدگاه‌های مردم درون کشور، در تمام مدتی که پذیرای ماجراجویی دخالت مستقیم در امور کشورهای دیگر بود. هنگامی که رئیس‌جمهور بوش سه کشور در سراسر جهان را در ۲۹ ژانویه ۲۰۰۲ محور شرارت خطاب کرد، همان مسیر را دنبال می‌کرد. با این وجود، ابداع این عبارت کافی نبود و متقاعد کردن مردم با ایجاد فضای فکری که در آن تمرکز بر ترویج تصویر خیر و شر در پرداختن به محور شر نهفته بود، امکان‌پذیر شد. در نتیجه هر صدایی خارج می‌بایست خنثی شود. حتی اگر سم شیپرد مورد نظر باشد که قبلاً شهرت بسیاری را در صحنه تئاتر آمریکا با بازی‌های خانوادگی‌اش به دست آورده بود. شیپرد در مورد مفهوم ابراز چندگانگی خود در تعامل با شرایط جغرافیایی مختلف هرگز از پا نایستاد. بنابراین جای تعجب نیست که *خداوندگار جهنم* او این هدف را دنبال کند، نمایشنامه‌ای که به سبب بسیار سیاسی و بی‌ربط بودن کاملاً مورد غفلت منتقدین و داوران قرار گرفت. با این وجود، پژوهش حاضر برای نشان دادن این است که شیپرد یک متفکر واقعی یا از نگاه ریچارد رورتی، یک آزادی‌خواه طعنه‌زن است که می‌تواند با در نظر گرفتن حساسیت مردم به تحقیر، خود را درگیر موضوع‌های جنگ فرهنگی مذکور کند.

**کلیدواژه‌ها:** محور شرارت، آزادی‌خواه طعنه‌زن، جنگ فرهنگی، نمایشنامه *خداوندگار جهنم*، رورتی

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## تأثیر رمزگردانی بر صحت، روانی، و پیچیدگی گفتار فراگیران انگلیسی به عنوان زبان دوم

مقاله پژوهشی

صفحات ۶۵-۸۰

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### چکیده

این پژوهش بر آن است تا ببیند چه اندازه استفاده از زبان اول توسط فراگیران زبان دوم توانایی گفتاری آن‌ها را بهبود می‌بخشد. با به کارگیری یک طرح پژوهش نیمه-تجربی، پژوهشگران تأثیر رمزگردانی زبان‌آموز را بر نمره‌های صحت، روانی و پیچیدگی گفتاری آن‌ها مورد بررسی قرار دادند. شرکت‌کنندگان در این پژوهش شامل ۱۱۷ نفر دانش‌آموز پائین‌تر از سطح متوسط بودند که آموزش انگلیسی را در هشت کلاس در شعبه‌های مختلف یک مؤسسه خصوصی دریافت کردند. کلاس‌ها به صورت تصادفی به دو دسته‌ی رمزگردانی تقسیم شدند. در حالی که شرکت‌کنندگان در گروه +رمزگردانی می‌توانستند حداکثر به مدت ۳۰ ثانیه از فارسی در هر تمرین استفاده کنند، آن‌هایی که در گروه - رمزگردانی بودند اجازه نداشتند به زبان مادری خود سخن بگویند. یافته‌های این پژوهش نشان داد که تفاوت معناداری در توانایی گفتاری دانشجویان از جنبه‌ی روانی کلام و صحت در بین شرکت‌کنندگان دو گروه وجود نداشت. اما نمره‌های پیچیدگی گفتار گروه +رمزگردانی، به طور چشمگیری بالاتر از میانگین گروه - رمزگردانی بود. نتایج همچنین نشان‌دهنده‌ی پیشرفت معناداری در گفتار دانش‌آموزان در هر دو گروه بود. بر اساس نتایج می‌توان گفت که میزان کنترل‌شده‌ی رمزگردانی زمانی مفید است که پیچیدگی کانون یک فعالیت باشد. افزون بر این، هیچ نشانه‌ای از تأثیر مخرب رمزگردانی زبان‌آموز در بررسی ما یافت نشد.

**کلیدواژه:** رمزگردانی، گفتار، صحت، روانی، پیچیدگی

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## تأثیر فعالیت‌های تکلیف-محور مشارکتی خروجی بر درگیری زبان آموز در تکالیف نوشتاری

مقاله پژوهشی

صفحات ۸۱-۱۰۱

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### چکیده

پژوهش حاضر به بررسی عواملی می‌پردازد که درگیری زبان‌آموز در تکالیف نوشتاری را شکل می‌دهد و نقشی که آموزش‌های خروجی-محور می‌توانند در بالا بردن سطح درگیری زبان‌آموز داشته باشد. در انجام این کار، به منظور طراحی مقیاسی برای ارزیابی درگیری زبان‌آموز در تکالیف نوشتاری، مجموع ۸ استاد دانشگاه مورد مصاحبه قرار گرفتند و ۵ دانشجو در پروتکل تفکر با صدای بلند شرکت کردند و از ۱۳۹ دانشجوی رشته انگلیسی درخواست شد تا پرسش‌نامه تازه طراحی شده را تکمیل کنند. نتایج پایایی درون موضوعی قابل قبول بود و مدل‌سازی معادلات ساختاری، پشتیبانی برای ساختار عاملی سنج‌ها فراهم نمود. پرسش‌نامه نهایی اعتبارسنجی شده دارای چهار عامل و ۲۳ گویه بود. پس از این، نتایج به‌دست‌آمده از یک آزمایش بر روی ۳۱ زبان‌آموز انگلیسی اصلی نشان داد که هر دو نوع آموزش تکلیف-محور مشارکتی شامل بحث و دیکته تفسیری می‌توانند سطح درگیری یادگیرنده را در تکلیف نوشتاری بالا ببرند. به ویژه اینکه تحلیل آماری نشان داد که آموزش بحث-محور بیش از آموزش دیکته تفسیری، می‌تواند درگیری دانش‌آموز را در تکلیف نوشتاری افزایش دهد. در نهایت، ارتباط بین فعالیت‌های تکلیف-محور مشارکتی خروجی، درگیری در تکالیف نوشتاری و مؤلفه‌های درگیری بحث‌گردید و کاربردهای آموزشی بر پایه یافته‌های تحقیق پیشنهاد شد.

**کلیدواژه‌ها:** درگیری زبان‌آموز، بحث، دیکته تفسیری، عملکرد نوشتاری، عواطف

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## نقش سطح مهارت شنیداری در توانش راهبردی زبان آموزان ایرانی

مقاله پژوهشی

صفحات ۱۲۲-۱۰۳

مریم حقیقی<sup>۱</sup>

مژگان رشتچی<sup>۲\*</sup>

پرویز بیرجندی<sup>۳</sup>

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### چکیده

بررسی کاربرد راهبرد فراگیران زبان در بافت توانایی زبان می‌تواند به فهم نقش دانش زبانی در توانش راهبردی منجر شود. این پژوهش، روش‌های ترکیبی طرح پژوهش متوالی توضیحی را به کار گرفت برای اینکه بررسی کند آیا سطح توانش مهارت شنیداری به عنوان بخشی از دانش زبانی، کاربرد راهبردی فراشناختی و شناختی فراگیران زبان انگلیسی ایرانی را متأثر می‌سازد. هدف پژوهش، کشف نقش سطح مهارت شنیداری در توانش راهبردی زبان‌آموزان انگلیسی است. در بخش کمی پژوهش، ۳۴۳ زبان‌آموز انگلیسی ایرانی به پرسش‌نامه راهبردهای شناختی و فراشناختی شنیداری بلافاصله قبل و بعد از تکمیل و شنیدن بخش شنیداری آزمون تافل پاسخ دادند. نتایج تحلیل واریانس چندمتغیره نشان داد که نتایج نشان داد که تفاوت معناداری از نظر استفاده از راهبردهای شناختی و فراشناختی - به عنوان دو بعد توانش راهبردی - میان زبان‌آموزان با سطح توانایی شنیداری بالا و پائین وجود دارد. تحلیل کیفی داده‌ها نیز نشان داد که زبان‌آموزان با مهارت شنیداری بالا راهبردهای بیشتری را در مقایسه با مهارت شنیداری پائین اقتباس کردند. نتایج تحلیل کمی و کیفی داده‌ها نشان داد که زبان‌آموزان با مهارت شنیداری بالا در مقایسه با زبان‌آموزان با مهارت شنیداری پائین، با تکالیف آزمون، به صورت راهبردی تری برخورد می‌کردند. در مجموع نتایج کمی و کیفی پژوهش مؤید آن است که به کارگیری توانش راهبردی مستلزم وجود سطح معینی از دانش زبان دوم است. با توجه به یافته‌های پژوهش حاضر به نظر می‌رسد برای آموزش توانایی شنیداری باید از رویکردی خردمندانه استفاده شود که هم مهارت‌های شنیداری و هم راهبردهای شنیداری را مورد توجه قرار دهد.

**کلیدواژه‌ها:** مهارت شنیداری، راهبردهای شناختی، راهبردهای فراشناختی، دانش راهبردی، قاعده‌مندی راهبردی

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مریم حقیقی، مژگان رشتچی، پرویز بیرجندی



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## افق‌های زبان دانشگاه الزهرا(س)

سال ششم، شماره دوم، تابستان ۱۴۰۱ (پیاپی ۱۲)

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