

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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- 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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### 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>

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

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[http://www.credoreference.com.library.muhlenberg.edu:80/entry/cupchilddev/developmental\\_genetics](http://www.credoreference.com.library.muhlenberg.edu:80/entry/cupchilddev/developmental_genetics)

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### 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) ...

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### 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.).

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## Contents

- 7-34 **Challenges and Opportunities of Shifting to Online Education in University EFL Classes During the COVID-19 Pandemic**  
*Somayeh Fathali*
- 35-62 **Developmental L2 Learning Epistemology: The Construct and Its Relationship with General Epistemological Beliefs**  
*Masoomeh Rahmani, Marzieh Bagherkazemi, Alireza Ameri*
- 63-89 **Effects of Pre-task Planning, Online Planning, and Combined Pre-task and Online Planning on Young Learners' Oral Production**  
*Ali Aaj, Parviz Maftoon, Masood Siyyari*
- 91-113 **Flipped Learning in a General English Course: Learner Performance across Personality Traits, Ambiguity Tolerance, and Willingness to Communicate**  
*Ahmadreza Eghtesadi Roudi, Mohammad Pazhouhesh*
- 115-147 **The Impact of Reflective Reciprocal Teaching on Iranian Intermediate EFL Learners' Academic Self-Concept**  
*Sara Badakhshan, Khalil Motallebzadeh*
- 149-178 **The Mediating Role of Cognitive Engagement in the Relationship Between Achievement Goals and Academic Burnout among Iranian EFL Learners**  
*Hamideh Taheri, Mahnaz Kaboodi, Mohammadreza Nasr*
- 179-208 **The Semiosis of Digital Commensality toward Sustainable Communication: A Case Study of Food-Related Applications Using Instagram's Intertextuality**  
*Farideh Haghbin, Narjes Monfared*
- 209-234 **Translated Fiction in Iran: Readers' Reception and Expectations**  
*Mazdak Bolouri, Jalil Jalali*



# Challenges and Opportunities of Shifting to Online Education in University EFL Classes During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Somayeh Fathali<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

The outbreak of the COVID-19 revolutionized education all around the world. The urgent shift to online education (emergency remote teaching) has been very demanding for administrators, teachers, students, and anyone involved in education. Although online and blended learning has long been practiced in education, this sudden unplanned shift created a different image, especially in less technologically developed countries. Accordingly, the present case study aimed at understanding the existing challenges and opportunities of this urgent shift to online education through the perspectives of Iranian EFL university students in online General English (GE) classes. A total of 68 university students participated in the study and the data was collected through semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and students' reflection sheets. Content analysis using Nvivo 11<sup>®</sup> was conducted for the triangulated textual data. The findings were categorized into four major groups of challenges and opportunities, including technological, psychological/affective, linguistic, and environmental/social. Overall, 16 challenges and 11 opportunities were investigated that are discussed thoroughly in the paper.

**Keywords:** computer-assisted language learning, COVID-19, EFL students, emergency remote teaching, online education

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## Introduction

Following the growth of computer networking and access to computers, in the mid-1970s, a new form of education emerged as *online education* (Harasim, 2000), which is well defined as “a form of distance education where technology mediates the learning process, teaching is delivered completely using the internet, and the students and instructors are not required to be available at the same time and place” (Joksimović et al., 2015, p. 100). Thus far, several other key terms, with slight differences in nature, have been used interchangeably referring to online education including, e-learning, web-based learning, internet-based learning, technology-enhanced learning, distance learning, computer-assisted learning, or computer-mediated learning. Besides, the use of computers for learning has been extended to other areas of study, such as language learning and resulted in an independent area of study named computer-assisted language learning (CALL) which Levy (1997) defines as “the study of applications of the computer in language teaching and learning” (p. 1). However, in 2020, with the sudden spread of the Virus, the pre-planned, well-organized teaching, either face-to-face, blended (Garrison & Kanuka, 2004), or online courses all changed to a newly created form of online education called emergency remote teaching (ERT, Hodges et al., 2020).

Due to the importance of continuing courses and the impossibility of conducting face-to-face classes, educational institutions had to make spontaneous decisions about switching to entirely online education. The demanding and complicated shift to online education caused difficulties for administrative managers, staff, teachers, parents, and most importantly students, especially in less technologically developed countries (Demuyakor, 2020; Ferri et al., 2020; Mukhtar et al., 2020; Yusuf, 2020; Zheng et al., 2020). This sudden change happened to all disciplines around the world, including English language teaching (ELT). Even though online and blended learning has long been practiced in ELT with the emergence of CALL, as highlighted by Gacs et al. (2020), this unplanned shift is not comparable to the planned online language teaching. Several studies have been conducted all around the world to investigate ERT in different contexts and disciplines (Bao, 2020; Ferri et al., 2020; Jeffery & Bauer, 2020; Shim & Lee, 2020; Zheng et al., 2020). However, very few studies focused on the area of ELT (Gacs et al., 2020), in particular from the perspective of English as a Foreign language (EFL)



students.

The findings of the previous studies in different disciplines in students' first language (L1) indicate several technological, psychological, and environmental challenges and opportunities (Ferri et al., 2020; Jeffery & Bauer, 2020; Shim & Lee, 2020). Even though the medium of delivery (i.e., technology) have been the center of several recent studies at the time of COVID-19, the medium of instruction (i.e., language) and the possible linguistic challenges and opportunities have not been considered, even in ELT-related studies (Demuyakor, 2020; Karuppanan & Mohammed, 2020; RahmtAllah, 2020; Sayuti et al., 2020). Therefore, regarding both the medium of delivery and the medium of instruction, the present exploratory study aimed at investigating the challenges and opportunities caused by this sudden change from EFL university students' perspectives in Iran. Although previously there had been multiple studies on CALL and MALL (mobile-assisted language learning), the new online ELT education during COVID-19 in Iran has not been studied in terms of the existing challenges and opportunities. Therefore, it is hoped the findings of the present study would help the improvement of the unplanned online education in Iran.

### **Literature Review**

The advent of packet-switched networks, email, and computer conferencing gradually paved the way for computer networking and the formation of the first fully online course in 1981 (Harasim, 2000). According to Garrison (2011), online education is different from traditional distance education that dates back to the mid-1800s (Verduin & Clark, 1991), in terms of both theory and practice. While distance education was based on the "industrial production of prepackaged study materials" (p. 3), online education was derived from theories and approaches of constructivism. As stated by Wilde & Hus (2019), online education is the use of a delivery method through the medium of technology when students and instructors are physically away from each other. Online education gives new roles to students and instructors whereby students become more active and the instructors more passive (Harasim, 2000; Koch, 2014). Joksimović et al. (2015) clearly defined online education as "a form of distance education where technology mediates the learning process, teaching is delivered completely using the internet, and the students and instructors

are not required to be available at the same time and place” (p. 100). As stated by Nakayama et al. (2014), learning management systems (LMS) or web-based platforms are the main mediums for fully online classes. Effective online education, which has been studied for decades, is the result of careful long-term planning and arrangements. However, the online education offered in response to the lockdown situation caused by COVID-19 is entirely different from the actual online education (Hodges et al., 2020). The unplanned hurried shift to online education during the pandemic cannot be compared with online education and it should rather be named as ERT that was followed by specific operational challenges (Hodges et al., 2020).

On the other hand, the challenges of this sudden shift differed in different contexts and for different disciplines. Although everyone in each context faced several challenges, highly technologically developed countries could adapt themselves easier and faster to the new situation than the developing countries (Demuyakor, 2020; Ferri et al., 2020; Mukhtar et al., 2020; Yusuf, 2020; Zheng et al., 2020). “In developing countries, digital learning remains a challenge because of the limited scope of Internet services and related technologies” (Zheng et al., 2020, p. 4).

In addition, the challenges differed from discipline to discipline. One of those affected disciplines has been English language teaching, in which not only the medium of instruction is a language different from the students’ first language (L1), but also the medium of delivery differs. Of course, the pandemic is not the first time that computers are integrated into ELT. The emergence of CALL dates back to the 1960s (Warschauer & Healey, 1998), and Levy (1997) defines this multidisciplinary field of study as “the study of applications of the computer in language teaching and learning” (p. 1). Since then there have been myriad studies in this regard reviewed by several scholars (Gillespie, 2020; Hwang & Fu, 2018; Pérez-Paredes, 2019). ELT has witnessed numerous fully online courses, blended courses (Garrison & Kanuka, 2004), and flipped classrooms (Bergmann et al., 2011). Nevertheless, similar to all other disciplines, the sudden shift to online education created a different image and caused several difficulties.

According to Bailey and Lee (2020), “For English as a Foreign Language (EFL) courses, newcomers to online teaching must set realistic online teaching goals, avoid common obstacles in online teaching, and learn which online

assignment types are appropriate” (p. 179). It is believed that the difficulty of transferring language courses to online environments is not the same for all courses. Some courses, such as conversation, pronunciation-based, and writing might have more difficulty in being transferred to online education (Bailey & Lee, 2020; RahmtAllah, 2020; Sayuti et al., 2020). During the pandemic, several researchers studied the challenges and opportunities of the quick shift to online education in different contexts as well as EFL contexts (Demuyakor, 2020; Ferri et al., 2020; Jeffery & Bauer, 2020; Karuppannan & Mohammed, 2020; RahmtAllah, 2020; Sayuti et al., 2020; Shim & Lee, 2020).

Shim and Lee (2020) investigated students’ experience with online education in terms of their satisfaction, dissatisfaction, and desired improvements. The findings indicated that the students were highly satisfied with “comfortable educational environments, smooth interactions, and efficient time utilization” (p. 3); however, the three main areas of their dissatisfaction were related to network problems, lack of enough interactions, and lack of concentration. In the same year, Jeffery and Bauer (2020) also conducted a study to investigate chemistry students’ experience with online education during COVID-19, and interestingly, the findings of their study reflected some critical factors that are important not only in online education but also in face-to-face teaching. They emphasized the importance of cognitive and affective issues like hands-on practice tasks, motivation, self-efficacy, the accessibility of teachers, and enough interactions as highly influential factors. They also highlighted that all the challenges of online education are augmented in ERT.

In a study conducted by Ferri et al. (2020), the investigation of the students’ challenges with online education revealed technological, pedagogical, and social factors. Lack of access to the required digital devices and poor internet connection were the main technological challenges. Moreover, low digital literacy, lack of motivation, unstructured course content, and lack of teaching methods for online education were the main pedagogical issues. Finally, the social issues were related to poor human interactions between teachers and students, lack of appropriate space at home, and interference with other family members working in the same area. They concluded with an emphasis on the importance of finding solutions to overcome the challenges of ERT and developing new policies that accord with the existing

situation.

Karuppnanan and Mohammed (2020) conducted a study to find out the factors affecting English language learners during the shift to online education in Malaysia. Through a conceptual framework, they proposed factors affecting e-learning such as language-related and psychological factors. Lack of motivation was one of the main psychological factors. Among the language-related factors, they hypothesized that language proficiency level, language skills, and teaching methods were among the highly influential factors. Students with lower levels of proficiency had more difficulties adapting themselves to the new situation. Besides, the two language skills of writing and speaking were among the most challenging skills to deal with in online education (RahmtAllah, 2020; Sayuti et al., 2020). And finally, teachers had difficulty in adapting their teaching methods to the new online education. According to Demuyakor (2020) there are a few factors that affect online learning among the English language learners such as, teaching methods, psychological factors, language skills, and proficiency level.

In general, considering the integration of technology in the context of the present study, firstly, the Iranian Ministry of Education with the assistance of the Ministry of ICT gradually integrated technology into the educational system (Ebadi, 2005). A report given by Shafiee (2005) indicated that between 2005 and 2009, integrating e-learning in the educational system of Iran was the responsibility of the Ministry of ICT (cited in Fotouhi-Ghazvini et al., 2008). Therefore, teachers, both at schools and universities, were invited to welcome different technological tools into their classes. Along with this notion, CALL courses started to appear in Iran and several studies were conducted focusing on the use of technology for language learning (Dehghanzadeh et al., 2019; Elekaei et al., 2019; Sharifi et al., 2017). Fathali and Emadi (2021) reviewed 687 Iran-based CALL publications in the three leading databases of Web of Science, Scopus, and Google Scholar from 2007 to 2019. The findings indicated the importance of research on the use of technology for language learning and some gaps that should be overcome in this area, including the lack of theoretical basis for the studies. Overall, at the time of the COVID-19 pandemic and the obligatory shift to online education, the number of studies increased in this area. However, similar to other contexts that lack studies in ELT (Gacs et al., 2020), a limited number of studies conducted in Iran mainly focus on

teachers and instructors (Khatoony & Nezhadmehr, 2020; Mousavi et al., 2021; Saidi & Afshari, 2021). Therefore, the present study tries to bridge the existing gap by answering the following question,

- What are the challenges and opportunities caused by the sudden shift to online education during the COVID-19 pandemic from Iranian EFL university students' perspectives?

### **Methodology**

The present study is an exploratory qualitative study that tried to investigate the challenges and opportunities of shifting to online education. As stated by Ary et al. (2010), one of the most primary and simple ways of investigating a phenomenon through a qualitative study is a basic qualitative/interpretive approach in which the data is collected through different methods such as interviews, observations, and so forth. The goal of such studies is “to understand the world or experience of another (Ary et al., 2010, p. 29).

### **Participants**

The aim of the present study was to explore the challenges and opportunities of the sudden shift to online education from the perspectives of EFL Iranian students taking part in general English classes at a national university. Two GE classes, including 79 students ( $N_1=38$ ,  $N_2=41$ ) that had gone through the sudden shift to online education were chosen for the present study. The participants were from different disciplines including, civil engineering, financial management, literature, art, history, biotechnology, etc. The participants' ages ranged from 18 to 24 ( $M = 19.37$ ,  $SD = .86$ ) and they were all female. Four students dropped the course in the middle of the semester, and seven students did not deliver the requested reflection sheets throughout the course. Finally, 68 participants remained as the main participants of the study. All the participants signed an informed consent form that explained the aim and procedure of the study.

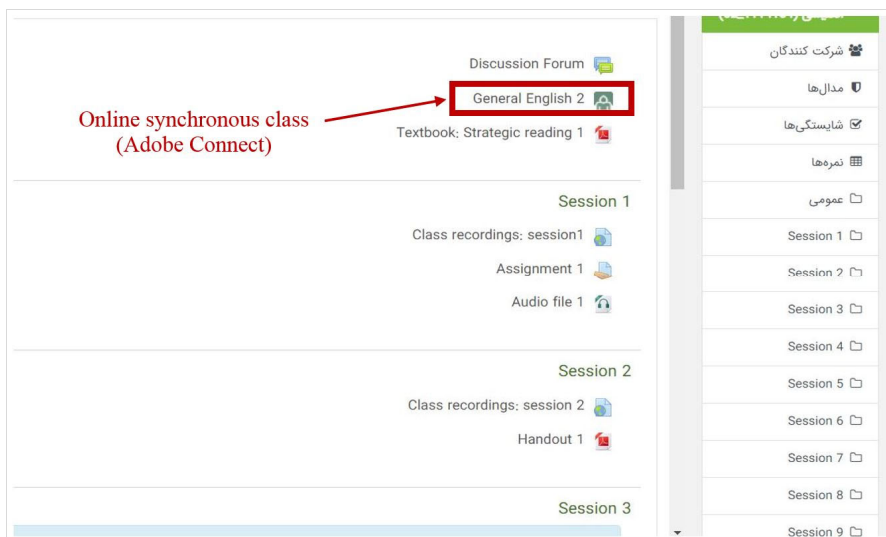
### **Research Context**

The study was conducted at a national university in Iran. The General English classes are three-credit courses that are held twice a week (a 90-minute

session and a 60-minute session). The whole course consists of 16 sessions including a session for the final exam. Before the pandemic, the classes were held as traditional face-to-face classes at the university. However, after the spread of COVID-19 and the lockdown of universities, the educational system of the universities changed to online education through learning management systems (LMSs). The LMS used at this university was a web-based platform for delivering course materials, assessing students, interacting with students, delivering asynchronous mode of teaching, and conducting online synchronous sessions through Adobe Connect (Figure 1). It should be noted that all the sessions of the present GE courses were held as real-time online synchronous sessions through Adobe Connect (Figure 2). Usually, there are no pre-defined curricula for GE classes, and depending on students' needs and levels of language proficiency, the course lecturer designs a syllabus at the beginning of the course. Considering the context of the present study, the students practiced all the four main language learning skills of reading, listening, writing, and speaking. The students practiced reading and writing using the book *Strategic reading 1*, published by Cambridge University Press; and practiced listening and speaking using audio files prepared by the teacher followed by discussion times.

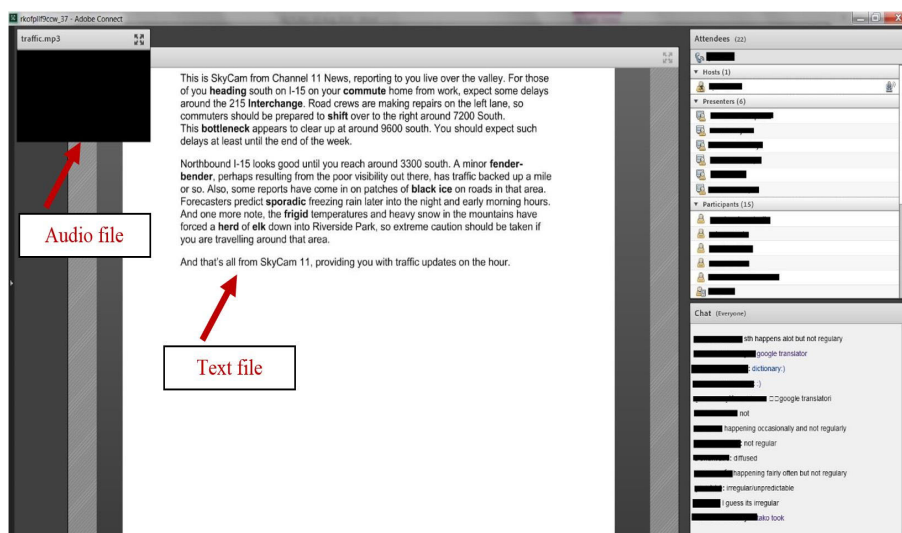
### Figure 1

University's learning management system (LMS)



**Figure 2**

*An online synchronous session in Adobe Connect*



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

The data for the present study was collected through three data collection instruments including reflection sheets, semi-structured interviews, and focus groups. The researcher who is also the teacher of the classes asked the students to write a reflection sheet indicating their challenges with online education and more specifically online language learning, the existing barriers, the opportunities caused by this sudden shift, the pros and cons of online language learning compared to traditional education, and so forth. Almost every four sessions, the students received a link to a blank reflection sheet prepared through Google forms and they were supposed to freely write their reflections in the sheet. The students were asked to write their reflections in English as much as possible. However, some students delivered their reflection sheets partially in Persian due to their low English language proficiency. It should be mentioned that no word limit was considered for the reflection sheets. Every student delivered a total of three reflection sheets at the end of the course. Two rounds of focus group interviews were conducted throughout the course, each time with around 15 students, in which the students shared their reflections about online education. The students were asked to talk about their experience with online language learning and freely express their challenges and in

general their feelings toward online language learning. Finally, 23 students were randomly selected for in-depth semi-structured interviews with the focus on the students' challenges and opportunities with online education including all the four categories of technological, psychological/affective, linguistic, and environmental/social. The interview guide is presented in Appendix 1. The interviews were held online and each lasted around 20 to 30 minutes. The focus group discussions and interviews were recorded and transcribed for the content analysis. It should be noted that, upon the request of a few very low proficient language learners, the interviews were conducted in Persian (students' L1) and were translated into English for the content analysis.

A rich amount of data was collected through the three instruments of the study and they were analyzed via qualitative content analysis. According to Downe-Wamboldt (1992), content analysis is a good way to "provide knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon under study" (p. 314). A qualitative content analysis software, Nvivo 11<sup>®</sup>, was utilized for the analysis of the textual data. The analysis was conducted through several steps. Initially, the collected reflection sheets and transcribed data of the focus groups and interviews were imported into the Nvivo 11<sup>®</sup>. Then, the data were organized, read several times, and coded carefully. Coding is a process of labeling pieces of textual data in order to identify what each piece is about (Charmaz, 2006). Child nodes (sub-nodes) and nodes were assigned to do the coding of the data in Nvivo 11<sup>®</sup>. Groups of codes (nodes) that were repetitively found in the data helped the formation of themes and categories. Categories include a group of codes while themes include a group of similar categories. A deductive approach to categorization was implemented in this study (Given, 2008). Based on the previous literature and the researchers' experience, the data was coded and categorized against the four categories of technological, psychological, linguistic, and environmental. The trustworthiness of the findings was addressed by inter-coder agreement. A colleague with extended experience in ELT and qualitative data analysis was requested to do the coding of two reflection sheets and two interview transcripts independently using the developed coding categories, and the comparison of the two sets of coding revealed a 91.3 level of agreement (Miles & Huberman, 1994).



## Results and Discussion

The present study aimed at investigating the challenges and opportunities of the sudden obligatory shift to online education from the perspectives of Iranian EFL learners studying English in GE classes. Four main categories of technological, psychological/affective, linguistic, and environmental/social were elicited from the three bodies of data. Due to the space limitation, for each section one interview extract is provided, and some samples of reflection sheets are provided in Appendix 2.

### *Challenges of Shifting to Online Education in GE Classes*

**Technological Challenges.** The primary category with the largest amount of data was related to the technological challenges associated with the Internet connection, digital literacy, and digital devices. As presented in Table 1, almost all the students experienced challenges with the Internet connection and its instability. They all complained about the low connection speed and the difficulty of entering the online classes as well as multiple disconnections during the class. The findings of several studies at the time of the COVID-19 pandemic revealed quite similar technological challenges, especially in technologically developing countries (Chiner et al., 2021; Demuyakor, 2020; Ferri et al., 2020; Mukhtar et al., 2020; Yusuf, 2020; Zheng et al., 2020). Lack of appropriate infrastructures added to the difficulty of shifting to online education in developing countries more than the developed countries.

*Because of low [sic] internet connection, sometimes it take [sic] me 15 minutes to enter the class and I disconnected [sic] during the class several times*

Moreover, the students mainly referred to their lack of digital skills and low digital literacy within their reflections (Table 1). Although the students use technology in their everyday life frequently (Fathali et al., 2022), and they are considered digital natives, who have spent “their entire lives surrounded by and using computers, videogames, digital music players, video cams, cell phones, and all the other toys and tools of the digital age” (Prensky, 2001, p. 1), they are still not ready for online education and the use of technology for learning. The students looked for specific training and how-to-instructions for proper online education.

Similar to previous studies (Chiner et al., 2021; Ferri et al., 2020; Shim & Lee, 2020), it was difficult for the students to adapt themselves to online education in terms of the online environment, materials, assignments, assessment, etc.

*I think it is very difficult to learn LMS and download and upload files. I see video [sic] on You Tube to use Adobe Connect*

The last technological challenge with online education was associated with some students' difficulty in accessing appropriate digital devices. Along with the study conducted by Ferri et al., (2020), several students in their reflection sheets and the interviews repeatedly mentioned that they had no appropriate digital devices for the online classes (Table 1). One of the major requirements for the online class was a working microphone which had become the students' main obstacle. Students had either old desktop computers or laptops that could not transfer the voice. In addition, the students using mobile phones for the online classes suffered from the small interfaces and the difficulty of clearly seeing the shared screen. It is found that several eye problems could be caused by computer screens, and there is a big difference between reading from a computer screen and a hardcopy (Chu et al., 2011; Thomson, 1998), thus, it is obvious that small screens of mobile phones could make learning much more demanding.

*We don't have computer in the house [sic] and I use my mobile phone to come to online class. It is very very difficult to see the teachers [sic] screen. I cannot read the text.*

**Psychological/Affective Challenges.** The second category dealt with the psychological challenges. Following the technological challenges, psychological issues have been the center of so many other studies during the pandemic (Aguilera-Hermida, 2020; Chiner et al., 2021; Ferri et al., 2020; Göksu et al., 2021; Karuppanan & Mohammed, 2020; Jeffery & Bauer, 2020; Neuwirth et al., 2020; Zheng et al., 2020). Similar to the findings of several previous studies such as Chiner et al. (2021), one of the major issues that students frequently referred to in their reflection sheets and the interviews was their lack of motivation for online education and the feeling of being isolated (Table 1). The students underlined that being in face-to-face classes and meeting teachers and friends could give them more motivation to continue education. They referred to the importance of meeting up with their friends and having interactions. So many students were freshmen who had

not yet seen their university and they could not even imagine how university classes differed from high school classes.

*I was happy that high school finished and I wanted to go to university. But this classes are worse than high school and so boring. I want to see my friends at university and go out after classes with my friends.*

As indicated in Table 1, another psychological issue that was mentioned frequently by the students was their fear of being heard online and being recorded. The students pointed out that it was more stressful for them to speak using technology rather than speaking face-to-face. Beaudoin and Hong (2021) also found that students' emotions such as fear are associated with their use of digital and social media. The students also felt anxious about being recorded especially when they had an online presentation. Due to the poor internet connection, the students hardly shared their cameras while speaking or having presentations, and it was only their voice being heard, but they still felt stressed about the recording and their privacy. On the contrary, Neuwirth et al. (2020) found that the students only felt uncomfortable when they turned on their cameras.

*I don't like speaking with microphone because I think about my friends listen [sic] to me and I am shy*

The third psychological issue, shown in Table 1, was associated with the students' anxiety with assessment. They repeatedly stressed that they were worried that their low digital literacy and internet connection would influence their outcome and final score. They were concerned with being compared and judged with the ones who have higher digital literacy and better digital devices, and are faster in adapting themselves to online education.

*I always have problems with microphone and I know my teacher think [sic] I don't work hard. I study a lot but my computer is very old and I can't talk in the class*

The last issue in this regard was the students' concern about the current situation which influenced their concentration both in their everyday life and during the classes (Table 1). They were worried about getting sick themselves or their family members. They believed the long-term worry had influenced their concentration and attention span. Also in previous studies (Chiner et al., 2021;

Jeffery & Bauer, 2020), students' lack of concentration during synchronous classes at the time of the pandemic was found as a learning barrier, yet the reasons for the loss of concentration were not deeply investigated.

*I am all the time thinking about this virus. I think my mind is full with news [sic] about covid [sic] and it is difficult to concentrate on my learning*

**Table 1**

*Categories and themes related to the challenges*

Challenges	Thematic classifications	Number of occurrence (N)
Technological challenges	• Poor internet connection and its instability	232
	• Low digital literacy	192
	• Lack of appropriate digital devices	153
	• Lack of motivation and feeling isolated due to the lack of interaction with teachers and friends	187
Psychological/ affective challenges	• Fear of being heard and recorded online	119
	• Anxiety of being judged and measured inappropriately and unfairly	103
	• Being stressed due to the pandemic and lack of concentration	73
	• Low linguistic literacy	179
Linguistic challenges	• Not being able to see the teacher talking face-to-face	136
	• Heterogeneous classes with different proficiency levels	112
	• Difficulty of having interactions in L2 rather than L1	97
	• Lack of concentration due to the language of the class	58
Environmental/ social challenges	• Lack of appropriate area at home to participate in online classes, and also surrounding noise that caused reluctance to enable microphone and camera	162
	• Financial issues related to preparing digital devices and the Internet	134
	• Families' negative viewpoint about the excessive use of digital devices	74
	• Feeling uncomfortable to be heard by the family members	32

## Linguistic challenges

Throughout the reflections, some themes were extracted that were associated with the English language. As reported in Table 1, the students frequently referred to the difference they felt between their online classes in L1 and L2. They highlighted their low linguistic literacy as one of their major challenges in EFL online classes.

*My English is bad. I don't understand the lesson on computer [sic]. It is difficult more [sic] than Farsi classes.*

Furthermore, as shown in Table 1, limited facial expressions and body language, which are key teaching aids (Bao, 2020), also increased the students' difficulty in EFL classes.

*I like to see teacher in class so I can see her face she talk [sic]*

The students referred to the heterogeneity of the classes in terms of English language proficiency as another linguistic challenge in online classes (Table 1). General English classes at university are not homogenized regarding the students' English language proficiency, and the classes are usually a combination of elementary, intermediate, and advanced levels. Gillett-Swan (2017) is of the opinion that the "one size fits all approach" that is applied to traditional face-to-face classes cannot be similarly applied to online classes and its misapplication can kill engagement and participation of the students in the online classrooms.

*Some friend [sic] have good English and teacher think [sic] we have good English too and teacher teach [sic] very fast in class*

Moreover, as reported in Table 1, another students' challenge in online EFL classes was related to interactions in L2. Besides the challenges with the online environment and lack of interaction with teachers and other students that exist in L1 classes, the students frequently highlighted more restrictions in L2 classes regarding interactions.

*I forget English when I am stress [sic] because of internet [sic] and teacher hearing [sic] my voice. Farsi is good to speak with microphone.*

Finally, compared to the online classes conducted in L1, the students pointed out the difficulty of concentration in English classes. English, the central medium of instruction of the GE classes, in addition to the obsessions with the

online environment such as internet connection, voice over the microphone, etc. cause the absence of intense concentration of the students.

*In Farsi class I listen, but in English class I don't understand English, I think about other things when teacher speak [sic]*

### **Environmental/social challenges**

As displayed in Table 1, similar to the previous studies at the time of the COVID-19 pandemic that investigated environmental/social issues related to online education (Demuyakor, 2020; Ferri, 2020; Neuwirth et al., 2020), the findings of the present study indicated environmental/social challenges as below,

- Lack of appropriate areas at home to participate in online classes. Students mainly complained about surrounding noise that caused reluctance for enabling microphones and cameras.

*My family is always at home and it is difficult for me to find a quiet room for my classes and I can't use microphone*

- Financial issues related to preparing digital devices and paying the Internet fees. Several students could not afford to buy appropriate digital devices, even a few had trouble buying a smartphone.

*My English is good and I like the class, but I can't afford the cost of the Internet, therefore, I have to skip some of the classes*

- Families' negative viewpoint about the excessive use of digital devices. As a kind of sociocultural issue, several students mentioned that their families do not feel comfortable with their children being engaged with digital devices for long hours as they think it might not be for the sake of studying only.

*My mother is all the time checking me and making sure if I am really studying while I am at the computer. She is afraid I waste time surfing on the net [sic]*

- Students' felt uncomfortable being heard by the family members while they had to speak through their microphones in the online classes.

*In the home [sic] my brother laugh to [sic] me when I speak English in online class*

***Opportunities of Shifting to Online Education in GE Classes***

The most interesting finding was that the primary reflection sheets and the first interview session were just filled with challenges, worries, and anxieties that left no room for talking about opportunities. However, towards the end of the course, the students started experiencing some opportunities that are also categorized into technological, psychological/affective, linguistic, and environmental/social challenges.

**Table 2***Categories and themes related to the opportunities*

Opportunities	Thematic classifications	Number of occurrence (N)
Technological opportunities	• Digital literacy improvement	66
	• Getting digitally equipped	28
Psychological/affective opportunities	• Willingness and confidence to participate in other online courses available on the Internet	62
	• Feeling more competent to use digital devices	57
	• Having access to the recorded classes and being able to repeat learning on their own speed	58
Linguistic opportunities	• Being able to have more listening and speaking practice	55
	• Access to additional materials online throughout the class including dictionaries.	53
Environmental/social opportunities	• Taking part in other online English courses and using available online materials	31
	• Saving time	56
	• Not being forced to be present in a specific place at a specific time.	43

**Technological Opportunities.** Towards the end of the course, the students referred to their progress in digital literacy and how they had become more accustomed to the use of digital technology for learning. A few students also highlighted the opportunity of getting digitally equipped due to online education.

*Online class help [sic] me to learn computer [sic], I didn't know LMS before*

**Psychological/Affective Opportunities.** The two major psychological/affective opportunities were identified as the increase in the students' self-confidence and willingness, firstly, to participate in other online courses available on the Internet, and secondly, to use digital devices for learning.

*I like online class now and I search in Google for free online classes*

**Linguistic Opportunities.** One of the major linguistic opportunities pointed out by the students in online classes was their access to the recorded classes and the possibility of watching the class several times. Since some low-proficient students lagged behind in the English classes, they found it helpful to be able to repeat the class at their own speed.

*English is difficult and it is good to see video of class again, I learn more*

Another remarkable finding associated with linguistic opportunities was related to the students' use of online dictionaries/ translators during the class. They stressed that during the face-to-face classes they could hardly access dictionaries/translators. However, the EFL online classes provided the opportunity of using dictionaries/translators to better understand the course materials and instructions, as well as facilitate their correct interaction.

*I use Google translate when I say something in class. I first write in Google translate and after [sic] say it.*

Finally, a few students referred to the larger amount of input including audio/video files to listen/watch that they received through online classes than traditional face-to-face classes.

*I like listening to files in adobe connect. My listening very improved [sic].*

**Environmental Opportunities.** In line with previous studies (Shim & Lee, 2020), some students referred to saving time and flexibility of place as the two environmental/social opportunities of online classes.

*This is good that I don't waste time going and coming from university*



## **Conclusions and Implications**

At the time of the COVID-19 pandemic, in addition to the entire changes in everyone's life, several fundamental changes happened in the educational systems affecting administrators, teachers, students, parents, and everyone involved in education. Therefore, the present study was conducted to explore the challenges and opportunities of this unexpected shift from the perspectives of EFL students. The findings resulted into four main categories of challenges and opportunities including, technological, psychological/affective, linguistic, and environmental /social. Even though towards the end of the course some opportunities were highlighted by the students, taken together, the findings suggest a much larger number of challenges than opportunities. The results confirmed previous studies that investigated several technological, psychological, and environmental challenges (Demuyakor, 2020; Ferri et al., 2020; Jeffery & Bauer, 2020; Karuppanan & Mohammed, 2020; RahmtAllah, 2020; Sayuti et al., 2020; Shim & Lee, 2020). However, the present study also provides insights into the ELT area where the medium of instruction is a language different from the students' L1, and online education brings different challenges and opportunities.

The findings of the present study have considerable implications during and after the pandemic. The challenges investigated as technological, psychological /affective, and environmental/social challenges must seriously be taken into consideration by policymakers, educational institutions, and even families, and they must quickly find and offer solutions to overcome these challenges. Iranian EFL teachers and students need further assistance to deal with these challenges to be able to transform them into opportunities. For instance, in line with some previous research, especially in developing countries (Chiner et al., 2021; Demuyakor, 2020; Ferri et al., 2020; Mukhtar et al., 2020; Yusuf, 2020; Zheng et al., 2020), issues related to the Internet connection demand quick governmental actions. Additionally, educational institutions should provide systematic training to improve the students' digital literacy and enhance their use of LMSs and online teaching platforms.

Moreover, it is of significant importance to enhance students' psychological state of mind during the lockdown and facilitate their motivation. Teachers might need to reconsider materials and teaching methods they used in face-to-face traditional classes and make them more interactive and engaging in online

classes. Another considerable issue is related to the assessment. Different systems of measurement and assessment should be developed for online education in order to ensure the students of fair and logical assessment. Teachers must be aware of the students' anxiety with unfair assessments and online exams which is not only measuring their content knowledge but also involves some other factors such as digital literacy and facility.

It is also necessary to control the students' anxiety with environmental issues such as surrounding noise. It can be explained to the students that these noises are common in everybody's house and there is no need to be embarrassed by family members' voices being heard in online classes. Furthermore, simple indoor environmental issues could be solved by family members valuing online education more and preparing appropriate spaces at home for their children's education.

In particular, the present study concentrated on general English classes in Iran with English as the medium of instruction. Therefore, in addition to the common technological, psychological/affective, and environmental/social challenges that the students experienced in all online classes, they also faced several linguistic challenges. Low linguistic literacy, lack of essential teaching tools such as body language and facial expressions, multi-level classes in terms of language proficiency, lack of concentration, and adequate interactions due to the language of the class were the linguistic challenges of the students that should be thought of seriously. Second/foreign language classes should be treated differently from other online classes held in L1. General English classes are similarly held at universities all around the world with diverse curricula and teaching methodologies. However, according to my exposure to and experience of GE classes in some EFL contexts such as Iran, Japan, and Malaysia, most of the GE classes share the common condition of being multi-level. In terms of online education, a multi-level class is not only a matter of language proficiency, but other factors, such as psychological, situational, individual, and digital literacy also become crucial. These factors correlate fairly well with experiencing different challenges and opportunities. As indicated by the findings of this study, the Iranian EFL students have been able to feel the challenges of being in a multi-level class in terms of digital literacy, digital facilities, language proficiency, and individual differences. The existing differences added to the students' anxieties with online education and caused several problems.

Therefore, it is of significant importance to consider the existing inequalities, especially in EFL contexts, and to find solutions to help overcome them in different contexts.

It should be highlighted that the present study has two major limitations. Even though the findings of this study might portray the existing challenges and opportunities of the sudden shift to online education, the participant of this study were EFL students of a national university in Iran, accordingly, the generalizability of the findings should be taken into consideration carefully across other countries. In addition, this was a female-only university and further research might reach other challenges and opportunities with male participants.

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## Appendix 1

The interviews started with a general question of “What kind of challenges did you have with the online classes?”, then depending on the participants’ replies, they were guided with some questions such as

- Did you face any connection problems? Please explain
- Do you think your computer knowledge was important in online classes?
- Did you have any anxieties with the online classes? Any specific feeling toward the online classes? Any fears, stress, dislike ...
- How different you think your challenges (difficulties) in English classes were from your other classes in Persian?
- Did you have any challenges with online classes in terms of time and place?

And then about the opportunities, “What do you think were the good points of online education?” followed by questions such as

- Do you think online classes had any positive effects on your computer knowledge?
- Do you have any positive feelings towards online classes?
- Did you find any positive points in your online English classes that you did not find in your online classes in Persian?
- Did you find any positive points about online classes in terms of the time and place of the classes?

## Appendix 2

### Samples of students' reflection sheets extracted from Excel files

I had bad connection. I want see the record again. LMS is very difficult. I don't like online class. I didn't have microphone and is very expensive. But teacher all time ask me speak in class. I don't have money for buy microphone. I pay a lot of money for internet. I don't speak in all classes and techer think I am absent. all freinds speak and say they were present. I don't like online class and I want go to university and go to class.

My weak internet connection cause many difficulties for me. I can't hear professor well, her voice gets off many times. My laptop doesn't have microphones and I have to all the time use chat box to type my answer and show I am present in class. I am tired with caht box. I think I don't like studying anymore. Many times I think about giving up and starting university again after covid-19. I want to see the university and friends. I want to see teachers and classes. I want to sit in the class. This is funny that I am university studetn but I have't seen my university yet.

My English is good, I have IELTS certificate, and I don't know why I should sit at online classes that get interrupted several times due to the poor internet connection. Yesterday I noticed that the classes are recorded but I don't like to be recorded while I speak in the class. The only good point of online classes is that my mom bought me a brand-new laptop. I totally don't like online classes, but I think at least I learn something in my Chemistry classes, but the English class has no outcomes for me. I think I am wasting my Internet.

# Developmental L2 Learning Epistemology: The Construct and Its Relationship with General Epistemological Beliefs

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## Abstract

There is ample research evidence for the significance of language learners' beliefs for the process and outcome of L2 learning; however, the construct of developmental L2 learning epistemological beliefs (EBs), constituting beliefs about the certainty, simplicity, source, and justification of L2 knowledge, is extremely under-researched. The present study involved (a) the construction and validation of an L2 learning-specific developmental epistemology inventory (LDEI), and (b) the investigation of the relationship between language learners' L2 learning-specific and general EBs. Capitalizing on 17 interview-housed themes and their developmental patterns across maximally variant samples in an earlier qualitative study, 68 belief statements (four on each theme, representing the four EBs' developmental stages of absolute knowing (AK), transitional knowing (TK), independent knowing (IK), and contextual knowing (CK)) were worded and piloted. A higher-order factor analysis and the Schmid-Leiman solution (SLS) on data obtained from a widely variant sample of 571 L2

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learners showed LDEI's construct validity. Analyses unearthed (a) eight primary factors designating AK TK, IK, and CK's items related to the nature of L2 knowledge and the nature of L2 knowing, and (b) four second-order components each representing one of the four developmental stages. Finally, LDEI scores of 123 of the 571 participants in the piloting phase were shown to be significantly, but only moderately, correlated with their scores on a general EBs questionnaire, showing the two constructs' relative distinctiveness. Implications are discussed in light of existing models of epistemology and second language acquisition theories.

**Keywords:** absolute knowing, contextual knowing, developmental epistemology inventory (LDEI), independent knowing, L2 learning transitional knowing

## Introduction

Language learners' beliefs, defined as cognitive and metacognitive theories about what learning entails (Horwitz, 1987), have been widely addressed as significant contributors to proficiency development and learning outcome (see Bernat & Gvozdenko, 2005). Existing conceptualizations have sketched beliefs in relation to language learning aptitude, difficulty, motivation, strategies (Horwitz, 1987), language learning experiences, confidence in study ability, study approach, teachers' role, learners' role, feedback effectiveness (Cotterall, 1995), risk taking, ambiguity avoidance, and analytic language learning (Mori, 1999); moreover, despite the presupposed stability of beliefs in dimensional frameworks and their associated measures (e.g., Horwitz' (1987) Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory (BALLI)), beliefs have been ascribed an inherently dynamic and developmental nature in recent research (e.g., Fazilatfar et al., 2014).

Despite the significance of beliefs about language learning, "language learners' epistemological beliefs" (LLEBs), viz. beliefs about the nature of L2 knowledge and L2 knowing, have not been delineated in a coherent dimensional and developmental framework to date. Dimensionality implies beliefs about L2 knowledge certainty, simplicity, source, and justification, and development implies the move from absolutism to relativism and evaluatism. The need for such a framework can be justified in three respects. Firstly, there is extensive research evidence on the significance of EBs for learning. Domain-general EBs have been shown to mediate text comprehension and academic performance (Ryan, 1984), learning strategy choice and use frequency (Schraw & Olafson, 2003), writing

evaluation criteria development (Moon, 2008), task persistence (Schommer, 1994), and learning effort (Chan & Elliot, 2004). They have also been found to correlate with critical thinking (Kember, 2001) and intra- and interpersonal development potential (Baxter Magolda, 2001). Secondly, research has substantiated the discipline-specificity of EBs, and the differential potential of various disciplines to facilitate epistemological development (e.g., Palmer & Marra, 2004). In this regard, Mori (1999) found L2 learners' domain-general EBs to be distinct from their beliefs about language learning measured through BALLI. Thirdly, the field of second language acquisition (SLA) has undergone an epistemological remolding, wherein the nature of L2 knowledge and knowing has been reconceptualized in accord with the mid 1990s' social turn of the field. This epistemic absolutism-avoidant change is epitomized in Larsen-Freeman's (2015) suggestion for substituting the term SLA with "second language development" (SLD) and in the resetting of the target of L2 learning as "English as a Lingua Franca" (ELF) and "English as an International Language" (EIL) (Sifakis, 2019).

LLEBs have been addressed in a handful of studies (Bagherkazemi, in press; Nikitina & Furuoka, 2018; Rahmani et al., in press; Ziegler, 2015). The only existing study aimed at developing a measure of LLEBs is Nikitina and Furuoka's (2018), involving the development of a 13-item dimensional LLEBs questionnaire. Development, however, was not sketched in this study. Against this background, the present study was designed to (a) capture the dimensional and developmental nature of LLEBs in a quantitative measure, based on an earlier qualitative study (Rahmani et al., in press), and (b) investigate its construct distinctiveness/association with domain-general EBs.

## **Literature Review**

Research has secured EBs a position among individual learner variables implicating in the process and outcome of learning (e.g., Hofer, 2001; Labbas, 2013). Existing frameworks have unitedly charted the core dimensions of EBs as beliefs about (a) the nature of knowledge (i.e., what knowledge is) in terms of its simplicity/integratedness and stability/dynamism, and (b) the nature of knowing, i.e. how one comes to know in terms of the singularity/multiplicity of knowledge source and authority/criticality-based knowledge justification (Hofer & Pintrich, 1997). On

top of these core dimensions, exploratory attempts at conceptualizing EBs have ascribed more specific components to the construct. In her often-cited and used questionnaire, Schommer (1990, 1994) defined EBs in terms of the five categories of certainty, authority, and organization of knowledge, as well as control over and speed of learning. Likewise, Chan and Elliot's (2004) questionnaire targets beliefs about innate ability, learning effort and process, authority to knowledge, as well as certainty of knowledge. Adopting a social constructivist perspective on developmental epistemology, Baxter Magolda (2004) posited beliefs about self and learning to be constituent aspects of one's personal epistemology. She assigned to personal epistemology cognitive, intrapersonal and interpersonal dimensions.

Research has also substantiated the developmental nature of EBs (e.g., Baxter Magolda, 1992, 2004; Perry, 1970). Epistemological development has been essentially envisaged as a movement from absolutist to evaluatist conceptions of knowledge. Absolutism entails viewing knowledge as simple, certain, obtainable from a single authoritative source, and justified on accounts of innateness, inherent difficulty, and direct observation. Evaluatism, on the other hand, implies a belief in knowledge as integrated, context-contingent, obtainable from multiple sources, and justified on accounts of inquiry and criticality (Labbas, 2013). Kember (2001) articulated these two opposing conceptions in educational terms, pointing to absolutism as the foundation of didactic and reproductive education, and evaluatism as the conceptual understructure of facilitative and transformative education. Developmental stages between absolutism and evaluatism have been differentially mapped. Perry (1970) contrived a four-point data-based developmental continuum, encompassing (a) absolute thinking, (b) recognition of multiple perspectives and others' right to dissidence, (c) relativistic thinking, and (d) contextual thinking. These are analogous to Baxter Magolda's (1992, 2004) four-point continuum from absolute knowing at one end to contextual knowing at the other, with transitional and independent knowing as intermediary stages. Along the same lines, Kuhn (1999) posited a single stage (i.e., multiplism) between the two extremes of absolutism and evaluatism. Development-gear research, mainly qualitative, has shown that learners might simultaneously hold differentially developed beliefs for EBs' different dimensions. There is also evidence that learners' move is not always forward-directed (Bendixen & Rule, 2004). The nonlinear development position

involving recourse to earlier beliefs is assumed by Baxter Magolda (2004), Hofer (2001), and King and Kitchener (2004). In addition, different disciplines have been shown to facilitate learners' epistemological development to different extents. For one, in Palmer and Marra's (2004) study, the humanities were shown to induce development on the knowledge source dimension, while science subjects exerted influence on beliefs about knowledge stability. This observation justifies the independent investigation of LLEBs.

Despite the well-evidenced significance of EBs for learning and their discipline-specificity, LLEBs are extremely under-researched. Mori (1999) showed L2 learners' beliefs about language learning measured through BALLI and their domain-general EBs to only moderately correlate. Akbari and Karimi (2013), on the other hand, showed domain-general EBs to predict L2 proficiency levels. Contrary to this positive relationship, Shirzad et al. (2021) found Iranian EFL learners' EBs to negatively correlate with their learning strategy use. This is while more advanced EBs are on a par with more independent learning (Baxter Magolda, 2004). Replicating the study with LLEBs, rather than domain-general EBs, might lead to a more reliable finding. Nevertheless, there is no comprehensive measure of LLEBs that captures both their dimensionality and development. This is not to mention Nikitina and Furuoka's (2018) 13-item inventory of beliefs about the nature of language and language knowledge, knowledge authority (teacher, native speaker, dictionary), and the process of gaining knowledge. Besides other limitations, the theoretical underpinning of the three-factor model is unclear. For one, Schommer-Aikins (2004) subsumed beliefs about authority under beliefs about the nature of knowledge. Accordingly, their distinctiveness as posited by Nikitina and Furuoka (2018) is questionable. There are also two qualitative studies on LLEBs, which can inform this burgeoning strand of research. Bagherkazemi (in press) investigated the epistemic climate of a high school language classroom in Iran. She extracted nine themes related to the four core EBs' dimensions from interviews with the teacher and learners (including beliefs about communicative tasks and nativespeakerist provenance, among others), and found the learners to hold mostly absolutist beliefs in relation to them. In a similar more comprehensive study, Rahmani et al. (in press) extracted 17 themes associated with core EBs' dimensions (i.e., knowledge simplicity (n=4), certainty (n=4), source (n=5), and justification (n=4) from

interviews with a widely varying sample of English Language Teaching (ELT)-major university students (see Table 1 for the themes). Furthermore, focus group interviews with three six-member ELT-major samples (sampled through “critical case sampling,” and differing in terms of proficiency level, language learning experience, degree program and study year) were conducted to chart LLEBs’ possible developmental patterns. Each group’s “groupthinks” on the 17 themes were analyzed in view of existing developmental continua of EBs (i.e., Baxter Magolda, 1992; Perry, 1970; Kuhn, 1999). The results showed a close match with Baxter Magolda’s (1992, 2004) four-point development continuum: AK, TK, IK, and CK; however, the construct distinctiveness of the 17 themes and the developmental nature of the groupthinks were not shown. Based on the results, groupthinks belonging to the first group characterized with the lowest proficiency level and least language learning experience reflected absolutist beliefs (absolute knowing). On the contrary, the group with the highest proficiency level and longest language learning experience showed context-awareness and evaluatist beliefs (contextual knowing). On the other hand, the group with an intermediary proficiency level and experience expressed beliefs indicating either more-moderate-than-absolutist beliefs (TK) or extreme relativism and epistemic doubt (IK).

The present study built on Rahmani et al.’s (in press) study to construct and validate a questionnaire on LLEBs. It was conducted to (a) capture LLEBs’ dimensional and developmental nature, and (b) facilitate the normative (i.e. questionnaire-based) assessment of EFL learners’ epistemological development. It also investigated the relationship between LLEBs as conceptualized in the study and domain-general EBs. This second aim was set to study the two constructs’ relationship, and to provide evidence (or counterevidence) for the necessity of studying LLEBs as a distinct discipline-specific construct.

## **Methods**

### ***Participants***

In order to show the factorial structure of “Language Learners’ Developmental Epistemology Inventory” (LDEI), a higher-order factor analysis was conducted. Data were collected from 571 conveniently sampled male (n=369) and female (n=202) Iranian BA (n=434) and MA (n=137) ELT (n=390) and English



Translation Studies (n=181) students at two branches of Islamic Azad University in Iran. They ranged in age from 18 to 37, with a mean of 26. 391 of the 571 participants had studied English at private institutions for various time lengths, in addition to school. Proficiency level was intentionally not controlled in order to ensure variance. 332 of these were further asked to fill out LDEI's final version (comprising 17 four-option items) for the purpose of cross-validating the developmental nature of the options (see Results for details). Finally, upon LDEI's validation, 127 (78 male and 49 female) of the 332-member sample also completed Chan and Elliot's (2004) Epistemological Beliefs Scale (EBS) to find out if LLEBs and domain-general EBs were related. They were all at the intermediate proficiency level as shown in Oxford Placement Test (OPT) results (see Instruments) and had studied English at private institutions in addition to school.

### ***Instruments***

For the purpose of the present study, LDEI, and Chan and Elliot's (2004) questionnaire on domain-general EBs, namely EBS and OPT were used. Details are provided in this section.

#### **Language Learners' Developmental Epistemology Inventory (LDEI).**

LDEI comprises 17 items on 17 themes related to the four core dimensions of EBs (certainty, simplicity, source, and justification). Each is made up of four developmental belief statements (as a four-point Likert scale) reflecting AK, TK, IK, and CK. The 17 themes, adopted from Rahmani et al. (in press), are presented in Table 1 (For detailed information on themes' extraction and description, see Rahmani et al. (in press)). Respondents are required to select the statement matching their belief from among the four provided on each theme. In LDEI, development is charted as a gradual abstraction away from AK to CK. AK encompasses a belief in L2 as a system of simple and certain knowledge, held by L2 native speakers to be sought from omniscient sources and justified on accounts of innateness and pre-ordained difficulty. On the other hand, CK comprises a belief in L2 as a context-dependent system of integrated and dynamic knowledge underlying communicative, rather than native speaker, competence, to be sought from a variety of sources, and justified on accounts of learners' effort and learning context variables. In between the two ends of the continuum, learners first develop TK, wherein they begin to

question their belief in L2 knowledge certainty and simplicity in a few language areas and doubt the unidimensionality of the L2 knowledge source (e.g., the teacher or the book). Subsequently, epistemic doubt and relativism, devoid of context evaluation, overtakes in the IK phase (see Appendix).

**Table 1***LDEI's 17 dimensional themes*

Core Dimensions	Themes
L2 knowledge certainty	<i>beliefs about general language areas' certainty</i>
	<i>beliefs about L2 dynamicity</i>
	<i>beliefs about building block/cyclic knowledge presentation in syllabi</i>
	<i>beliefs about tasks' clarity and outcome</i>
L2 knowledge simplicity	<i>beliefs about L2 skills/components' distinctiveness/interrelatedness</i>
	<i>beliefs about multiple-choice/open-ended L2 test items and assessment forms</i>
	<i>beliefs about language learning through memorization/knowledge construction</i>
L2 knowledge source	<i>beliefs about L2 skill/component-specific or inclusive materials</i>
	<i>beliefs about L2 teachers' authority to knowledge</i>
	<i>beliefs about language learning strategy source</i>
	<i>beliefs about peers' authority to knowledge</i>
	<i>beliefs about the book's authority to knowledge</i>
L2 knowledge justification	<i>beliefs about native speakers' authority to L2 knowledge</i>
	<i>beliefs about nativespeakerist provenance</i>
	<i>beliefs about innateness/efforts</i>
	<i>beliefs about language learning difficulty</i>
	<i>beliefs about language instruction vitality</i>

LDEI can be completed within a time limit of 60 minutes. For the 127 participants in the second study phase (see Participants), a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .76 showed acceptable reliability.

**Epistemological Beliefs Scale (EBS).** Developed by Chan and Elliott (2004), EBS was used to obtain an indication of the 127 participants' domain-

general EBs. Its 30 five-point Likert-scaled items target innate/fixed ability (n=13), learning effort/process (n=6), authority/expert knowledge (n=6), and certainty of knowledge (n=5). EBS took an average of 22 minutes to complete online (through Google Forms), and an Alpha coefficient of .80 indicated its reliability.

**Oxford Placement Test (OPT).** OPT was used to select intermediate proficiency learners for the study's second purpose. OPT comprises 60 receptive-response reading comprehension, vocabulary, and grammar items, and its results can be reported along Association of Language Testers in Europe (ALTE) levels from "beginner" to "very advanced." The test took 40 minutes to complete online.

### ***Procedure***

LDEI development and validation involved an initial qualitative study (Rahmani et al., in press) aimed at extracting themes related to the nature of L2 knowledge and knowing. Sampling, semi-structured interviews, and manual open coding were iteratively conducted to the point of saturation. Themes were subsequently coded for knowledge certainty, simplicity, source, and justification by both researchers in an axial coding stage. In this study, extracted themes were worded into items such that they would reflect the underpinnings of Baxter Magolda's (1992, 2004) four developmental epistemology stages.

Prior to factor analysis, the items were reviewed by four experts:

- two Applied Linguistics assistant professors for their formal felicity and content compatibility with epistemic beliefs in the field of language education; and
- two Philosophy (Epistemology) assistant professors for their content relevance with reference to the nature of knowledge and knowing.

At this stage, statements marked as either vague, theoretically unjustified, or irrelevant to epistemic beliefs were revised, and double checked with the experts. Subsequently, readability of the 68 belief statements was commented on by three freshman ELT students. In the piloting phase, the 68 belief statements were scrambled and devised into a five-point Likert scale questionnaire. This pilot-phase questionnaire, used only to unearth relationships among belief statements, was then subjected to a higher-order factor analysis and the Schmidt-Leiman Solution (SLS) with data obtained from a 571-member sample. Analyses led to the finalized 17-item

LDEI, with each item comprising four belief statements on AK, TK, IK, and CK. Cross-validation of LDEI's finalized version was subsequently conducted with 332 members of the initial sample. Finally, to meet the study's second aim, 127 intermediate proficiency participants were given EBS to complete, and Pearson correlation was conducted on their LDEI and EBS scores.

## Results

To substantiate LDEI's hierarchical and factorial structure, a higher-order factor analysis (principal component analysis with Promax rotation) was conducted. LDEI's 68 belief statements were subjected to three factor analyses prior to the one reported in this paper with 276-member, 243-member, and 198-member samples (with similar characteristics to the 571-member sample described in the "Participants" section). Owing to the necessity of keeping the four statements on each of the 17 themes, several rounds of revision addressing the statements' wording, comprehensibility, content, and distinctiveness from adjacent statements were applied. The revised version was subjected to an oblique (Direct Oblimin, in this study) factor analysis on data obtained from 571 EFL learners (see Participants) in SPSS. Prior to analysis, (a) the distributional normality of the respondents' scores on LDEI and all its items and (b) the factorability of the items were checked. Ratios of item scores' skewness and kurtosis to their associated standard error values fell within the range of +/-1.96 in all the 68 cases, indicating normality (George & Mallery, 2010). Moreover, no extreme mean scores (near either end of the 5-point Likert scale) were detected, nor did any item show an unusually high degree of variability. The data were also checked for factorability. An inspection of the correlation matrix revealed the presence of many coefficients of .3 and above. Most items possessed cross-loadings (though small) on two factors, which was expected owing to the relatedness of "nature of knowledge" and "nature of knowing" items. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value was .73, exceeding the criterion value of .6, and the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity reached statistical significance ( $p < .05$ ), supporting the factorability of the correlation matrix (Field, 2009).

The initial oblique (Direct Oblimin, in this study) analysis led to an eight-factor solution with eigenvalues greater than one. The factors (68\*8) corresponded to (a) nature of knowledge (certainty + simplicity) and (b) nature of knowing (source

+ justification) for each of the developmental points: AK, TK, IK, and CK. Principal component analysis (PCA) with Promax rotation produced the same 8 factors. The alpha coefficient for the 68-item LDEI was .85. The eight extracted components explained 63.45% of the total variance, and possessed high reliability indices (see Table 2 for item loadings' range in PCA and factors' reliability).

**Table 2**

*Factor loadings' range: First-order factors*

Factor	Number of belief statements	Loadings' range	Coefficient $\alpha$
Factor 5: Absolute Knowing (certainty, simplicity)	8	.49-.64	.78
Factor 6: Absolute Knowing (source, justification)	9	.53-.63	.73
Factor 8: Transitional Knowing (certainty, simplicity)	8	.46-.58	.76
Factor 7: Transitional Knowing (source, justification)	9	.49-.60	.79
Factor 1: Independent Knowing (certainty, simplicity)	8	.49-.84	.82
Factor 2: Independent Knowing (source, justification)	9	.50-.79	.78
Factor 4: Contextual Knowing (certainty, simplicity)	8	.49-.68	.76
Factor 3: Contextual Knowing (source, justification)	9	.59-.70	.82

Subsequent to the substantiation of the eight first-order factors, the inter-factor correlation matrix was probed. Multiple instances of cross-loadings were observed. There were instances of low and moderate negative inter-factor correlations ranging between -.21 and -.53, which both shows and is explicable with an eye to the developmental nature of statements. Negative correlations were higher for distant points on the developmental epistemology continuum; however, there were also cases of positive correlation between distant points, which indicates the

complex and nonlinear nature of epistemological development and the typical progress-regress on route to CK. Positive correlations ranged between .12 and .56. The four conspicuously stronger positive inter-factor correlations between pairs of factors ( $r_{F1-F2}=.45$ ;  $r_{F3-F4}=.50$ ;  $r_{F5-F6}=.49$ ;  $r_{F7-F8}=.56$ ) legitimized the progression of factoring to extract second-order factors. Accordingly, a further PCA with Promax rotation was run on the inter-factor correlation matrix. This led to the extraction of four second-order factors closely matching the four developmental points of AK, TK, IK, and CK (8\*4) (see Table 3). The four second-order factors explained 71.14% of the total variance.

**Table 3**

*LDEI's second-order factors (G1-G4): Correlation matrix*

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G4: Absolute Knowing; Eigenvalue>1	
Factor	Loading
F5: Absolute Knowing (certainty, simplicity)	.68
F6: Absolute Knowing (source, justification)	.63
G2: Transitional Knowing; Eigenvalue>1	
Factor	Loading
F8: Transitional Knowing (certainty, simplicity)	.73
F7: Transitional Knowing (source, justification)	.72
G3: Independent Knowing; Eigenvalue>1	
Factor	Loading
F1: Independent Knowing (certainty, simplicity)	.69
F2: Independent Knowing (source, justification)	.68
G1: Contextual Knowing; Eigenvalue>1	
Factor	Loading
F4: Contextual Knowing (certainty, simplicity)	.75
F3: Contextual Knowing (source, justification)	.72

---

In order to obtain a sketch of the direct relations between second-order

factors and LDEI's 68 belief statements, SLS was run (Wolff & Preising, 2005). In SLS, first-order factor loadings are reduced to part correlations. All the 68 statements had a first-order factor loading above .3. Accordingly, these statements could be taken as a reliable measure of their first-order factors. Moreover, all items had higher loadings on second-order factors than on first-order factors. This indicates that all the statements were better measures of their second-order factor, and thus could be taken as purer measures of their second-order factor than their first-order factor. Finally, an inspection of LDEI's second-order factor correlations (see Table 4) showed negative correlations, which obviated the progression of factoring to extract third-order factors. Regarding development, (a) the strongest negative correlation between G1 and G4 ( $r=-.77$ ) and (b) progressively increasing correlations' strength, though too weak, from G1-G2 ( $r=.14$ ) to G2-G3 ( $r=.23$ ) could indicate the beliefs' developmental nature.

**Table 4**

*LDEI's second-order factor correlations*

	G1	G2	G3	G4
G1	1			
G2	.14	1		
G3	-.43	.23	1	
G4	-.77*	-.41	-.34*	1

\* Correlation is significant at .05 level.

To cross-validate the developmental nature of the four second-order factors against the 17-item LDEI, 332 of the 571 respondents filled out the final version of LDEI. They were divided into four groups based on their mean scores ( $M_{Group1}= 1-1.4$  ( $n=94$ );  $M_{Group2}=1.5-2.4$  ( $n=101$ );  $M_{Group3}=2.5-3.4$  ( $n=81$ );  $M_{Group4}=3.4-4$  ( $n=56$ )). An inspection of their pilot-phase mean scores on the four second-order factors (G1-G4) indicated:

- Group 1's highest mean score on G1, comprising AK statements ( $M_{G1}=3.3$ ;  $M_{G2}=1.1$ ;  $M_{G3}=1.3$ ;  $M_{G4}=1.2$ );
- Group 2's highest means core on G2, comprising TK statements ( $M_{G1}=1.6$ ;  $M_{G2}=3.1$ ;  $M_{G3}=2.4$ ;  $M_{G4}=1.1$ );
- Group 3's highest mean score on G3, comprising IK statements ( $M_{G1}=1.5$ ;  $M_{G2}=2.2$ ;  $M_{G3}=3.7$ ;  $M_{G4}=2.9$ ); and

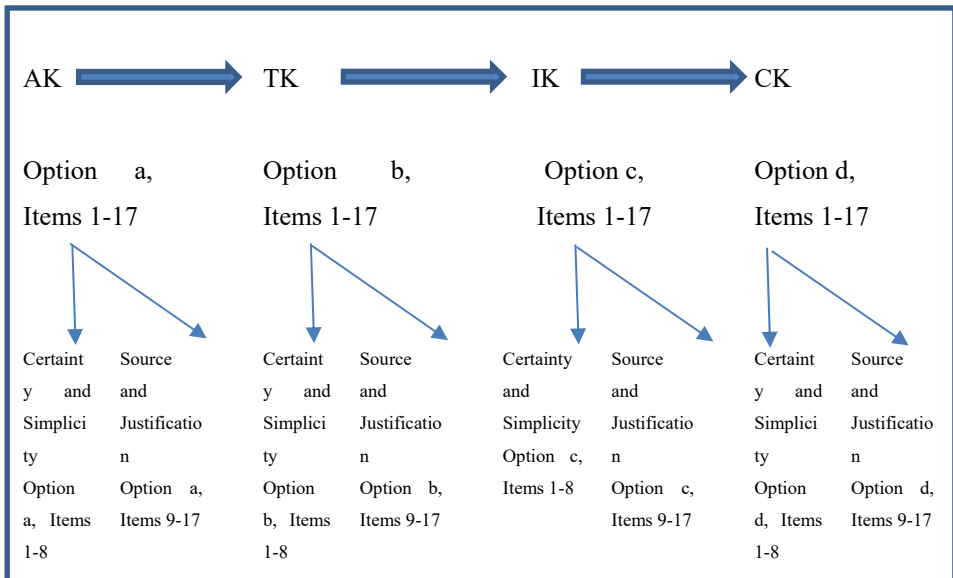
- Group 4’s highest mean score on G4, comprising CK statements ( $M_{G1}=1.3$ ;  $M_{G2}=1.6$ ;  $M_{G3}=2.1$ ;  $M_{G4}=3.9$ ).

Development could also be traced in Baxter Magolda’s (1992) experimental study, and in Rahmani et al.’s (in press) qualitative study with three maximally variant groups. Logically, G3 can be viewed as a step ahead of G2 with an eye to epistemic doubt’s gradual overtake toward relativism. In sum, higher order factor analysis and SLS showed (a) the dimensionality of LLEBs with an eye to the nature of knowledge (rather than its certainty and simplicity, separately) and the nature of knowing (rather than source and justification, separately), and (b) the distinctiveness and developmental nature of AK, TK, IK, and CK (see Figure 1 and Appendix).

Following the validation of LDEI, the second aim of the study was in order. 127 intermediate proficiency learners’ scores on the 17 themes constituting LDEI were correlated with their scores on EBS. Table 5 shows the descriptive statistics of these two score sets. A Pearson correlation coefficient between the two score sets indicated they were significantly, but only moderately, correlated ( $r_{LDEI-EBS}=.36$ ,  $p<.05$ ). Accordingly, the two constructs of LLEBs and domain-general EBs can be said to be distinct, but also moderately related.

**Figure 1**

*Schematic representation of LDEI’s factorial structure*





**Table 5***Descriptive Statistics of LDEI and EBS Scores*

Scale	N	Mean	SD	Skewness		Kurtosis	
				Statistic	SE	Statistic	SE
LDEI	127	2.73	.56	.87	.63	.90	.79
EBS	127	3.43	.71	1.01	.63	1.28	.79

**Discussion**

This study was conducted to construct and validate a language learning specific developmental epistemology inventory, namely LDEI. Principal component analysis along with SLS substantiated LDEI's dimensional and developmental properties. First-order factors indicated the aggregate nature of (a) L2 knowledge structure and stability belief items, representing L2 knowledge nature, and (b) L2 knowledge source and justification belief items, representing L2 knowing nature.

Interwoven L2 knowledge certainty and simplicity beliefs are reflective of the underpinnings of language teaching methods and approaches, partly forming language learners' beliefs (Bernat & Gvozdenko, 2005). In language teaching and SLA research, conceptions of the L2 system imported into the field from linguistics or inspired by cognitive and social theories have always been imbued with beliefs about the significance of context. Traditional instruction (e.g., the audio-lingual method and the cognitive approach (Richards & Rogers, 2001)) represented L2 as an amalgam of pieces, placed a premium on sentence-level instruction, and left no room for the evaluation of its contextual variability. In line with the field's development, however, the integratedness of L2 knowledge and the context-dependent variability of the L2 system were appreciated in the communicative movement of the 1970s and 1980s (Waters, 2012), and Lantolf's (1994) application of "sociocultural theory" to L2 development. In parallel, language teaching approaches (e.g., communicative language teaching and task-based language teaching) placed a premium on both in their incorporation of situations and tasks, and their related context variables as the building blocks of L2 teaching syllabi. Along the same lines, Kumaravadivelu's "postmethod condition" (cited in Kumaravadivelu, 2006) disentangled the field from a preoccupation with methodic conceptions of the L2 system, and recognized context in its delineation of

“principled pragmatism.”

As far as the nature of L2 knowing is concerned, beliefs about L2 knowledge source and justification are separable from, but also related to, beliefs about knowledge certainty and simplicity (as shown in second order factors). That beliefs about L2 knowledge source and justification are more related to one another than to certainty and simplicity beliefs also reflects the extent to which the *modus operandi* of instruction allows for criticality. Waters (2012) refers to the recent “critical theory-based reevaluation of ELT methodology,” which has called into question “nativespeakerist provenance” (p. 442). While omniscient authority was promoted in methodic language teaching, critical language education and such concepts as “English as an International Language” (EIL) have called it into question (Sifakis, 2019). Overall, beliefs about the nature of L2 knowledge and L2 knowing seem to be to a considerable extent inspired by the epistemic undertone of language teaching practices and syllabi.

The dimensionality of applied linguistics-specific epistemological beliefs was also investigated by Nikitina and Furuoka (2018) in their questionnaire, targeting “nature of knowledge,” “authority to knowledge,” and “gaining knowledge;” however, the theoretical underpinning of the three-factor model is unclear. For example, “gaining knowledge” includes items on effort, concentration, and hard work, which together constitute a four-item set in LDEI’s knowledge justification sub-construct. In addition, the often-cited BALLI contains items which resonate with the factors undergirding the construct of EBs; however, they have been worded in first person voice, which runs the risk of yielding self-concept data, rather than beliefs, as pointed out by Schommer-Aikins (2004). To compound the issue, even these few items resonate with absolute thinking; for example, items related to the difficulty of learning language skills presuppose their separability, hence the absolute knowledge structure conception underlying them.

Second-order factors indicated the relatedness of L2 knowledge and knowing beliefs on all the four continual points. Moreover, an investigation of the second-order factor structure matrix showed LDEI’s developmental nature. In addition, SLS results indicated that the belief statements were more representative of development than dimensionality. LDEI’s stages of development can be mapped onto Baxter Magolda’s (1992, 2004) epistemological development continuum. The

neat loading of L2 knowledge and knowing beliefs on each of the developmental points can be partly attributed to the similar wording of dimensional items on the four developmental points. On the other hand, referring to Bendixen and Rule (2004), an early sign of epistemological development is the emergence of epistemic doubt, which features TK, and on a more advanced level IK, in LDEI. The move from emerging epistemic doubt to relativism constitutes the essence of Perry's (1970) and Kuhn's (1999) developmental schemes. CK, as the most advanced stage of EBs, involves an admission of relativistic thinking and a belief in the resolvability of L2 epistemic doubts with reference to context. Accordingly, it can be argued that LLEBs are related to, but distinct from, domain-general EBs in terms of dimensionality and development. This is confirmed by the moderate correlation between LLEBs and domain-general EBs uncovered in this study.

### **Conclusion and Implications**

LLEBs can influence the way learners approach L2 learning, and partly determine the outcome of such learning (Mori 1999). Such beliefs are influenced by the general epistemic climate of the educational setting, and shaped by the epistemological approach adopted by the teacher, students, and the teaching material (Bagherkazemi, in press; Ziegler 2015). There is a conspicuous underrepresentation of this construct in SLA and language learning research. To address this lacuna, this study involved the construction and validation of a normative measure of language learning-specific developmental epistemology, namely LDEI. Data analysis substantiated four stages of development from AK through TK and IK to CK, each comprising belief statements on the nature of L2 knowledge (its structure and stability) and L2 knowing (its source and justification). Owing to its representation of both the dimensions of L2 epistemic beliefs and on a higher scale their development, LDEI can be employed as a useful measure in the area of domain-specific EBs. As for dimensionality, LDEI contains items on what L2 learners believe regarding the simplicity and certainty of L2 knowledge as well as its source and justification. Learners at the AK stage believe in simple and certain L2 knowledge, to be obtained from an omniscient authority, and justified on accounts of innate ability, inherent difficulty of certain language areas, and native speaker proximity. Development to TK is marked by the emergence of a questioning attitude

towards these beliefs, and a movement toward relativism. Relativistic thinking is epitomized at the IK stage and can be resolved via context evaluation at the CK stage. Bendixen and Rule (2004) cogently view epistemological development as generally forward-directed, though marked with frequent progress and regress in an attempt to achieve epistemic equilibrium. Such crisis is resolved in line with a recognition of the context-dependency of all language use and a critical attitude towards L2 knowledge and knowing appropriateness in the face of linguistic and social context variables.

In line with Baxter Magolda (2004), it should be admitted that epistemology and its development can be better investigated through qualitative research, and questionnaires may not yield reliable data. In like manner, Louca et al. (2004) objected to the stage-like conceptualization of epistemic development, and suggest a resource-based approach to the delineation of the construct. Admitting the limitations of questionnaires, Schommer-Aikins (2004) stated that domain-specific epistemological beliefs questionnaires can be more reliable than their domain-general counterparts. He further referred to the benefits of questionnaires for furthering research on this construct and facilitating the study of its relationship with other variables such as academic achievement and strategy use.

Finally, LDEI can be used to unearth the relationship of language learners' L2-specific developmental epistemology (as an aggregate rank or specific ranks in relation to LDEI's "nature of knowledge" and "nature of knowing" sub-constructs) with their gender, language proficiency level, language learning strategy use, critical thinking, and academic assertiveness (see Moon, 2008). LDEI's factorial structure can also be validated in different cultural contexts. Influential factors on language learners' epistemological development, including task types, teachers' domain-specific EBs, and instructional approaches can also be investigated, using LDEI as a normative measure of language learning-specific developmental epistemology. More evidence is also needed to map language learners' development from AK to CK in experimental interventional studies; it remains to see if learners can skip one of the intermediary stages or experience both TK and IK on their developmental path.

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## Language Learners' Developmental Epistemology Inventory (LDEI)

Dear respondent,

For each of the 17 items below, please select the statement that best reflects your belief in relation to the numbered theme:

1. *Your belief about general language areas' certainty:*
  - a. There are straightforward answers to questions I face in most English language areas, including vocabulary, grammar, etc. (Item 27)
  - b. While most language areas have straightforward answers, I face some uncertainties, too, in word meanings, grammar, text comprehension, etc. (Item 38)
  - c. English language learning involves a lot of uncertainties, which cannot be completely resolved. (Item 16)
  - d. Most uncertainties you face in language learning (e.g., about word meanings, text comprehension) can only be resolved in context. (Item 6)
  
2. *Your belief about L2 dynamicity:*
  - a. The L2 system comprises a fixed set of elements (e.g., words, grammar, etc.) which do not change over time. (Item 68)
  - b. While most parts of the L2 system are fixed, a few changes (e.g., new words) occur over time. (Item 19)
  - c. Many aspects of the L2 system undergo change over time, which makes it volatile and difficult to learn. (Item 3)
  - d. Change of the L2 system over time can be understood in relation to its users, social events, and other contextual factors. (Item 67)
  
3. *Your belief about building block/cyclic knowledge presentation in syllabi:*
  - a. It is best to learn all about the lesson's language focus (e.g., a word, grammar structure, etc.) to avoid potential ambiguity in later learning efforts. (Item 46)
  - b. While learning all about a language point in one sitting is most



desirable, some language elements cannot be fully covered or learnt that way. (Item 1)

- c. No language point/element can be learnt completely in one sitting due to L2 system's ultimate dynamicity. (Item 55)
- d. A language/point can be learnt most effectively if revisited several times in different contexts of use. (Item 31)

4. *Your belief about tasks' clarity and outcome:*

- a. Single-outcome and convergent tasks (e.g., jigsaws) are the most effective for language learning. (Item 23)
- b. While single-outcome language learning tasks and activities are the best, variable-outcome tasks can in some cases be effective (e.g., for speaking). (Item 59)
- c. Tasks and activities (e.g., writing and group discussion) with variable outcomes for different individuals and groups are most effective for language learning. (Item 36)
- d. Tasks which involve context-based critical evaluation of information and perspectives (e.g., group problem solving or) are most effective for language learning. (Item 52)

5. *Your belief about L2 skills/components' distinctiveness/interrelatedness:*

- a. Different language areas (e.g., listening, speaking, vocabulary, etc.) are distinct from one another. (Item 43)
- b. While most L2 skills and components are distinct, a few of them are in one way or another interrelated (e.g., listening and speaking). (Item 40)
- c. L2 skills and components are all interrelated in all sorts of contexts. (Item 29)
- d. The inherent interrelationship among different language areas depends of their use context (e.g., the relationship between listening and speaking in interviews, and reading and listening in TOEFL iBT). (Item 18)

6. *Your belief about multiple-choice/open-ended L2 test item and assessment forms:*
  - a. The best language test items are those with options (like multiple-choice, matching, and true/false) as they reflect the simplicity of L2 knowledge. (Item 62)
  - b. Although L2 knowledge can be best tested through multiple-choice items, open-ended items can be effective in only few language areas, like speaking or writing. (Item 11)
  - c. As L2 knowledge is integrated in all its skills and components, only individualized open-ended items and assessment forms, rather than multiple-choice items, can reflect its nature. (Item 48)
  - d. Open-ended items and assessment forms designed in relation to learners' needs and goals and target use contexts are the most effective. (Item 25)
  
7. *Your belief about language learning through memorization/knowledge construction:*
  - a. Language learning involves the memorization of vocabulary, grammar, and other language components. (Item 54)
  - b. While most language learning involves memorization and practice of language components, there are a few areas (e.g., speaking) in which knowledge and skill should gradually be constructed. (Item 2)
  - c. Language learning is primarily a process of knowledge construction and skill development, rather than memorization of bits and pieces of language. (Item 7)
  - d. Language learning is primarily a process of knowledge construction and skill development in relation to specific use contexts. (Item 34)
  
8. *Your belief about L2 skill/component-specific or inclusive materials:*
  - a. Language learning materials with a clear focus on a particular language skill or component (e.g., a grammar or a listening book) are the most effective. (Item 50)

- b. The most effective language learning materials are those which focus on a specific language skill or component, with occasional focus on related language areas. (Item 14)
  - c. Language learning materials which integrate all the language skills and components for all proficiency levels are the most effective. (Item 61)
  - d. Whether to use materials which focus on a specific language area or those which integrate several of them depends on learners' goals, needs, and other contextual factors. (Item 10)
9. *Your belief about L2 teachers' authority to knowledge:*
- a. A language teacher's knowledge about the target language should be taken for granted. (Item 58)
  - b. A language teacher's knowledge about the target language can only in few cases be doubted. (Item 33)
  - c. Language learners should always adopt a questioning attitude toward their teacher's knowledge about the target language. (Item 24)
  - d. Language teachers' knowledge about the target language should be evaluated by learners in relation to their needs and goals, as well as contexts of use. (Item 13)
10. *Your belief about language learning strategy source:*
- a. The teacher-introduced language learning strategies work equally well for all language learners. (Item 53)
  - b. The effectiveness of language learning strategies presented by the teacher can only in few cases be questioned. (Item 4)
  - c. Each language learner must develop his/her independent L2 learning strategies, rather than use those introduced by the teacher. (Item 37)
  - d. Whether or not to use one's own or teacher-introduced language learning strategies depends of the context and the subject of learning (Item 8)
11. *Your belief about peers' authority to knowledge:*

- a. Peers' knowledge about the target language (expressed in peer discussion and groupwork) is unreliable. (Item 66)
- b. Peers' knowledge about the target language (expressed in peer discussion and groupwork) can only in few cases be taken for granted (Item 12)
- c. Peers' knowledge about the target language (expressed in peer discussion and groupwork) is as reliable as one's own L2 knowledge and understanding. (Item 41)
- d. The value of peers' knowledge about the target language lies in its potential to lead to collaborative meaning making and L2 knowledge construction. (Item 49)

12. *Your belief about the book's authority to knowledge:*

- a. Knowledge about the target language presented in the book should be taken for granted. (Item 17)
- b. Knowledge about the target language presented in the book can only in few cases be doubted. (Item 21)
- c. Language learners should always adopt a questioning attitude toward knowledge about the target language presented in the book. (Item 47)
- d. Book-contained knowledge about the target language should be evaluated by learners in relation to their needs and goals, as well as contexts of use. (Item 28)

13. *Your belief about native speakers' authority to L2 knowledge:*

- a. A native speaker's knowledge about the target language should be taken for granted. (Item 65)
- b. A native speaker's knowledge about the target language can only in few cases (e.g., when he/she does not speak standard English) be called into question. (Item 44)
- c. A native speaker's knowledge about the target language should always be questioned as English is now mainly used as an international language in multicultural environments. (Item 56)

- d. Native speakers' knowledge about the target language should be evaluated by learners in relation to the language and culture of their interactants, and other use context variables. (Item 63)

14. *Your belief about nativespeakerist provenance:*

- a. Language learners should aim at reaching nativelike competence in different language areas. (Item 45)
- b. The main goal of language learning is to achieve nativelike competence, but successful (not necessarily nativelike) communication can also be set as the aim of a few use contexts (e.g., informal oral interaction with nonnative speakers). (Item 20)
- c. The main goal of language learning is achieving the ability to effectively communicate in the L2, rather than nativelike competence (e.g., native pronunciation). (Item 51)
- d. Whether to achieve nativelike competence or communicative ability depends on the target context where each learner will use the language (e.g., whether or not he will emigrate to an English-speaking country). (Item 35)

15. *Your belief about innateness/effort:*

- a. The ability to learn an additional language is innate. (Item 64)
- b. While the ability to learn a language is mainly innate, there are some areas (e.g., grammar and vocabulary) which can be best learnt through effort and perseverance. (Item 15)
- c. Language learning is mainly a matter of effort and perseverance, rather than intelligence or aptitude. (Item 32)
- d. Language learning rests on both innateness and effort, depending on the skill/area to be learnt and its learning and use contexts. (Item 39)

16. *Your belief about language learning difficulty:*

- a. Some language skills and components are by nature more difficult to learn than others. (Item 57)

- b. While some language skills/components are inherently more difficult to learn than others, there are few areas (e.g., some grammar points) whose difficulty differs across learners. (Item 26)
- c. The difficulty of learning different L2 skills and components differs across individuals, rather than across language areas. (Item 22)
- d. The difficulty of language learning lies in mapping language use onto its associated contexts. (Item 60)

17. *Your belief about language instruction vitality:*

- a. Languages are best learnt in the language classroom with a knowledgeable teacher. (Item 30)
- b. While language classroom is the best venue for language learning, learners can deepen their knowledge in a few areas through self-study. (Item 9)
- c. Languages are best learnt through self-study, rather than classroom learning, as each learner has a unique “most effective” approach to L2 learning. (Item 42)
- d. Languages are best learnt if classroom learning leads to L2 learners’ autonomy and context awareness. (Item 5)



# Effects of Pre-task Planning, Online Planning, and Combined Pre-task and Online Planning on Young Learners' Oral Production

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## Abstract

Exploring the effects of task planning as an implementational variable on second language (L2) performance has witnessed a noticeable growth over the past years (Ellis, 2005a; Skehan, 2014b). Building on this bulk of research, this study aimed at investigating the effects of three task planning conditions, i.e., pre-task planning (PTP), online planning (OLP), and the combination of pre-task and online planning (PTP+OLP), on young learners' oral complexity, accuracy, and fluency. The participants were 60 EFL learners aged between 10 and 12 who were randomly assigned to one of the four conditions in the study, including the no planning (NP) condition ( $n = 15$  in each group). The participants were asked to watch a short silent video and narrate its story. The results of the statistical analyses indicate that while PTP increases fluency, OLP and OLP+PTP improve both accuracy and syntactic complexity. The findings suggest that

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teachers of young L2 learners should utilize the promising potentials of different task planning conditions to channel learners' language production toward more fluent, accurate, and complex production.

**Keywords:** accuracy, complexity, fluency, narrative tasks, task planning,

## **Introduction**

Various aspects of task-based performance have been the focus of a growing body of research since late 1980s. Among different variables affecting second language (L2) performance, a large number of studies have researched the impacts of task planning on L2 production (see Ellis, 2005a, 2009; Skehan, 2014a). L2 production has been commonly measured in terms of three distinctive areas, including complexity, accuracy, and fluency (CAF) (Skehan, 2009, 2014b; Skehan & Foster, 2008). It is claimed that scrutinizing the changes in interlanguage system through CAF measures can explain how the L2 develops (Norris & Ortega, 2009).

Researching the effects of different planning conditions on L2 learners' oral performance is significant both for theory and practice (Ellis, 2009). Concerning the practical implications, task planning studies can broaden our knowledge of the methodology of task-based teaching (Ellis, 2009). In fact, knowing the influential variables in task-based planning research informs teachers' pedagogic decisions and makes them more effective in assisting learners in their attempts to learn a new language (Skehan & Foster, 2008). On the theoretical side, "it serves to test claims regarding the nature of variability in learner language and the validity of models of speaking such as that of Levelt (1989) as this has been applied to L2 production" (Ellis, 2009, p. 474). Planning studies have been informed by information processing theory (Ellis, 2005b) and their results have been mainly interpreted and discussed within cognitive-based models, such as Levelt's (1989) model of speech production and Skehan's (1998) Limited Attention Capacity model.

In Levelt's (1989) model, different aspects of speech production are processed by components which work autonomously in three main stages, namely conceptualization, formulation, and articulation. The conceptualization of a message begins with deciding on a desired communicative goal. Then, the



speaker produces a nonlinguistic message which is ready to be converted from a pre-verbal message to a linguistic one. In the formulator, the propositionally organized preverbal plan activates the items in the lexicon and the needed lexical items are retrieved to form a planned message both syntactically and phonologically. In the final stage, i.e., the articulation stage, the prepared phonetic plans from the formulator are retrieved, unfolded, and articulated. Within each of these three stages, an inspecting mechanism which works as a sub-system monitors the intended product.

According to Skehan (1998), a major challenge for L2 learners is that since the attentional resources are limited, attending to different aspects of language equally seems to be impossible. This hypothesis, also known as the Trade-off Hypothesis, posits that all areas of language cannot improve simultaneously, and ability enhancement in one area will come at the cost of impairment elsewhere (Skehan, 1998, 2009). Skehan believed that the trade-off effects can be controlled through manipulation of performance conditions (e.g., the availability of planning time) or design features of the tasks (e.g., task structure). Skehan (1998) argued that certain task characteristics, such as task design, can “predispose learners to channel their attention in predictable ways,” (p. 112) and be an effective tool for an equal promotion of language development in the areas of CAF.

### **Review of Literature**

The results of early planning studies (Crookes, 1989; Ellis, 1987) suggested that planning leads to predictable effects. Since then, a good deal of research has investigated the effects of different planning-related constructs on L2 performance, including different lengths of planning time (Li et al., 2015; Mehnert, 1998), various types of planning (Ahmadian, 2012; Ahmadian & Tavakoli, 2011; Kim, 2013; Stroud, 2019; Wang, 2014), and different proficiency levels (Baleghizadeh & Shahri, 2017; Wigglesworth, 1997). The findings generally point to a positive impact of planning on L2 performance. Several studies have shown that planning can increase fluency (Foster & Skehan, 1996; Mehnert, 1998; Ortega, 1999); others have reported

improvements in accuracy although with mixed results (Ellis, 1987; Foster & Skehan, 1999; Mehnert, 1998; Ortega, 1999). Research has also revealed that planning leads to increased complexity (Crookes, 1989; Foster & Skehan, 1996; Mehnert, 1998; Ortega, 1999; Yuan & Ellis, 2003).

Compared to other task-related variables, such as task-based interaction (see Garcia Mayo, 2018 for a comprehensive review), fewer studies have explored the effects of task planning on *young* learners. In one study, Philp, et al. (2006) investigated the effect of planning on the L2 production of two groups of young learners aged 5–7 years, and 11–12 years. They explored the relationship between different amounts of planning time on children’s task-based interactions, linguistic performance in terms of feedback provision and use, and CAF. The participants worked on a two-way, picture description, information gap task. The groups were given either 0, 2, or 5 minutes for pre-task planning time. The results of Philp et al.’s study showed that 2-minute planning time was just partially advantageous to children’s linguistic accuracy and fluency, and 5-minute planning time enhanced their output complexity. The authors reported that when provided with 5 minutes for planning before the task, children produced more complex language. They also concluded that giving the young participants time for planning did not necessarily lead to more learning opportunities as well as more fluent and accurate production.

In another study, taking Skehan’s (1998, 2009) trade-off hypothesis into account, Sample and Michel (2014) explored the effects of task repetition on the interactions among CAF measures. Following Ellis’s (2009) framework, Sample and Michel considered task repetition to be a type of task planning. The participants were six young EFL learners (four girls and two boys) aged 9. They repeated an oral spot-the-difference task 3 times. Sample and Michel reported that task performance was promoted by repetition of the task, although with different impacts on the CAF dimensions and with fluctuations from the first to the second and to the third performances. The obtained mean scores indicated that complexity values decreased over repetitions (except for the number of clauses); that there was no general direction of changes found in accuracy measures; and that fluency steadily increased over the repetitions, particularly

in the second performance.

Despite the bulk of research in the field of task planning, two issues seem to have been overlooked. First, few studies have focused on *young* learners, and it appears that age-related cognitive impacts are being neglected. Research with young and adult L2 learners has shown differences between the learning and cognitive processes of these two groups (Mackey & Sachs, 2012). According to Long (2015), theories of second language acquisition (SLA) are divided into two categories: either asserting that biological maturation poses constraints on language learning through one or more sensitive periods, or denying such limitations. Further, Long claims that only the theories that acknowledge maturational constraints are able to explain the variability of ultimate attainment existing between children and adults. What Long has pointed out clearly indicates the significance of taking the possible effects of age of learner into consideration in teaching, as well as in research. Lack of enough data from well-designed empirical research makes it inappropriate to assume that task planning on adults' production results in similar impacts for young learners (Mackey & Oliver, 2002).

Second, although there is a plethora of research exploring different types of planning (Ahmadian, 2012; Ahmadian & Tavakoli, 2011; Ellis, 2005a; Ortega, 1999; Skehan & Foster, 1999; Stroud, 2019; Tavakoli & Skehan, 2005; Wendel, 1997; Yuan & Ellis, 2003), few studies have examined such effects across various conditions in a single study. Therefore, our understanding of the effects of task planning opportunities mainly comes from separate studies. One of the planning conditions in the current study, which has not been extensively researched, is the availability of pre-task and online planning simultaneously. Earlier, Yuan and Ellis (2003) and Ellis (2009) hypothesized that providing participants with the opportunity to plan both before and while doing a task might solve the problems caused by limited attentional resources leading to improvements in the CAF aspects. This study, therefore, sought to address the above-mentioned lacunas in task planning research by addressing the following questions:

1. What are the effects of pre-task planning, online planning, and

combined pre-task and online planning on the *fluency* of young EFL learners in an oral narrative task?

2. What are the effects of pre-task planning, online planning, and combined pre-task and online planning on the *complexity* of young EFL learners in an oral narrative task?
3. What are the effects of pre-task planning, online planning, and combined pre-task and online planning on the *accuracy* of young EFL learners in an oral narrative task?

## **Method**

The present study had a single-factor, between-participants design with task planning as the independent variable involving four levels: pre-task planning (PTP), online planning (OLP), combined pre-task and online planning (PTP+OLP), and no planning (NP).

## **Participants**

The participants were 60 young EFL learners, 39 girls and 21 boys. They aged between 10 and 12. They all came from the same city, i.e., Tehran and shared the same L1 background—Persian. Thus, it could be assumed that they shared almost the same cultural and educational background. Crookes (1989) has claimed that working with participants with the same L1 and similar cultural background can reduce the varying L1 transfer effects and different conditioned learning styles will no more be considered as threats to validity of the study. The participants all had learned English in a formal context and none had the experience of living in an English-speaking country. In terms of age of onset, the participants were not noticeably different ( $M = 7.90$ ,  $SD = .81$ ) (the information about the participants' age of onset was collected from their parents). Before collecting the data, the participants were told that the tests and the tasks they were going to complete would be only used for research purposes and the results would not have any impact on their term scores. In addition, since the participants were young, we asked parents to sign the written consent forms.

## **Materials**

Several planning studies have used short videos as prompts for narrative tasks (Ahmadian et al., 2015; Skehan & Foster, 1999; Wang & Skehan, 2014). We, too, utilized a video-prompted narrative task, the British stop-motion animated series *Shaun the Sheep*. The main reasons for choosing this animated series were: (a) the episodes are made for children thus they would be appealing to the young participants of this study, (b) they are not lengthy (each episode is nearly 6 minutes), (c) there are no instances of speech which alleviates comprehension problems (Skehan & Foster, 1999), and (d) since the episodes have no speech or conversation, the learners' performance will not be affected by the immediate exposure to authentic language (Ahmadian, 2012; Ahmadian & Tavakoli, 2014). It was also important to select an episode which was not culturally biased (Skehan & Foster, 1999). Thus, the first author, along with three experienced EFL teachers, watched 10 episodes and selected one called *Save the Tree*. The selected episode was pilot tested in terms of comprehensibility and cultural understanding. Fortunately, no one of the participants in the piloting phase had a problem.

## **Procedure**

To select the participants, a version of the Pearson Test of English (PTE) Young Learners: Breakthrough whose reliability was checked and approved (Cronbach's Alpha = .81) was administered to 117 learners studying at A2 level in a private language center located in Tehran, Iran. The participants had three ninety-minute English classes per week. Among those who had scored between one standard deviation below and above the mean, 60 learners were randomly selected and invited to participate in the study. Then, the selected participants were randomly assigned to one of the four conditions (15 in each group). Following previous research (e.g., Ahmadian & Tavakoli, 2011; Yuan & Ellis, 2003), it was also necessary to assure that the participants were not significantly different in terms of their online processing ability across the groups. According to Hale (1989), as cited in Yuan & Ellis (2003), learners process the language in real time when they do a listening task. Therefore,

listening tasks can be considered to be an indication of participants' online processing. To control for the effects of participants' differential online processing ability, the scores from the PTE Young Learners Listening part, including 15 items (30 marks) were marked and calculated separately. Then, the scores were entered into a one-way ANOVA (with the alpha set at 0.05). The results of the ANOVA revealed that the participants' listening scores were not significantly different across the groups,  $F(3, 56) = .993, p = .403$ , leading to the conclusion that the participants were not significantly different in regard to their online processing ability.

To collect the data, the participants were met individually with the first author in a quiet classroom. In order for the participants to feel more comfortable and to avoid any miscomprehensions, the instructions were given in their first language. The video was displayed on a computer screen and the oral narratives were recorded by a small digital voice recorder. Following Wang and Skehan' (2014) procedure, the main characters' photos and their names were printed on separate cards and given to the participants. This could help the participants focus on the narration of the events and not to worry about the characters' names. The audio files were segmented and coded into analysis of speech units (AS-units) (Foster et al., 2000). To ensure that the coding process was conducted reliably, 20% of the data (3 narratives from each group) were segmented, coded, and scored by an independent expert in the field of EFL, against which the data coded and scored by the present researcher was checked. The results of the recoding analyses were subjected to a Pearson product-moment correlation. Intercoder reliability coefficient magnitude turned out to be .92 for AS-units.

### ***Task Conditions***

**No Planning (NP).** In this condition, participants performed the task immediately after watching the video. They were told that they would have only 4 minutes for performing the task. This amount of time was determined by conducting a small pilot study with 12 young learners from the same language center. In the piloting phase, it took 2–4 minutes for the learners to finish the

task. Following Yuan and Ellis's (2003) procedure, the maximum time spent by the participants in the pilot study (i.e., 4 minutes) was established as the time limit. This time limit would put pressure on the participants and prevent them from engaging in online planning. Here are the instructions for the participants in this group:

You will now watch a silent video. This video has a story. Please tell this story in English immediately after the video is finished. Imagine that you are telling the story to someone who has not watched the video and likes to know all the details of the story. Notice that you will have only 4 minutes to narrate the whole story.

**Pre-task Planning (PTP).** PTP was operationalized by providing the participants with 5 minutes for planning prior to performing the task. In most previous planning studies with adult subjects, the time allocated for pre-planning was 10 minutes (e.g., Crookes, 1989; Foster & Skehan, 1996; Ortega, 1999; Skehan & Foster, 1997; Yuan & Ellis, 2003). However, the commonly allocated planning time with adult participants needed to be reconsidered because comparing to adults, children have more limited attention span, and it appears that they can easily get bored or distracted. Thus, following Philp et al. (2006), 5 minutes were given to pre-task planners. They were given pencil and paper to make notes and were told to plan for content and language needed for the task within the given time. The planning sheets were taken away before the participants started narrating. This was done for two reasons: (a) to avoid confound of modality (written and spoken) and (b) to provide the evidence proving that participants engaged in some planning activities (Crookes, 1989; Yuan & Ellis, 2003).

**Online Planning (OLP).** Building on Levelt's (1989) model of speech, Yuan and Ellis (2003) conceptually defined online planning as "the process by which speakers attend carefully to the formulation stage during speech planning and engage in pre-production and post-production monitoring of their speech acts" (p. 6). Clearly, for performers to be able to pay more attention to production and monitor their speech, they need time. Without being under time pressure, it is believed that performers are able to monitor their language and

(re)formulate their production while carrying out the task. To operationalize OLP, we allocated unlimited amount of time to the participants in this group for completing the task. As with the NP condition, the online planners did not have time to engage in pre-task planning. They started the task immediately after they watched the video. The instructions given to the participants in this group were the same as those of the NP group. However, unlike the no-planners, the online planners were told that they were allowed to take as much time as they want for telling the story.

**Combined Pre-task and Online Planning (PTP+OLP).** PTP+OLP is a less examined condition in task-planning studies. The participants in this planning condition were given the chance of engaging in *both* pre-task planning and online planning. This was operationalized by giving the participants 5 minutes for pre-task planning, as well as unlimited time for doing the task to engage in online planning.

### ***Measurement of the Variables***

Following Yuan and Ellis (2003), to ensure that participants in online planning groups engaged in significant online planning, we calculated the length of time taken to fulfill the task and the number of syllables produced by each participant and compared them across all the four conditions. This was done to determine if the participants had performed the tasks in line with the stipulated planning conditions.

#### **Planning: Independent Variables.**

- Length of time: the total number of seconds on task was counted for each participant.
- Total syllables: the number of syllables produced by each participant was counted.
- Meaningful syllables: the total number of syllables excluding the syllables that were repeated, replaced, or reformulated.

**Dependent Variables.** Fluency, accuracy, and complexity of participants' oral production were the dependent variables in the present study. To assess the different dimensions of participants' oral production, we



implemented the following measures which have been used in previous planning studies (Ahmadian, 2011; Ahmadian, 2012; Ahmadian & Tavakoli, 2011, Ahmadian, Tavakoli & Vahid Dastjerdi, 2012; Yuan & Ellis, 2003).

### **Complexity Measures.**

– Syntactic complexity (amount of subordination): the ratio of clauses to the Analysis of Speech Units (AS-units) in the participants' production. AS-unit is defined as "a single speaker's utterance consisting of an *independent clause* or *sub-clausal unit*, together with any *subordinate clause(s)* associated with it" (Foster et al., 2000, p. 365).

– Syntactic variety: the total number of different grammatical verb forms used in participants' performances. In keeping with previous task planning studies (Ahmadian, 2012; Yuan & Ellis, 2003), we used tense (e.g., simple present, simple past, past continuous, etc.) and modality (e.g., should, must, etc.) as the grammatical verb forms.

### **Accuracy Measures.**

– Error-free clauses: the percentage of error-free clauses. All syntactic, morphological and lexical errors were taken into consideration.

– Correct verb forms: the percentage of all verbs that are correctly used in terms of tense, aspect, modality and subject-verb agreement.

### **Fluency Measures.**

– Syllables per minute of speech: the number of syllables within each narrative, divided by the number of seconds used to complete the task and multiplied by 60.

– Meaningful syllables per minute of speech: the number of meaningful syllables (operationalized by taking out the syllables, words, and phrases that were repeated, reformulated, or replaced) within each narrative, divided by the number of seconds taken to complete the task multiplied by 60.

## **Data Analysis**

To analyze the data, a series of one-way ANOVAs were conducted. The

alpha for achieving statistical significance was set at .05. Moreover, the effect sizes for all omnibus  $F$ -tests were obtained by using  $\eta^2$ , calculated as the sum of squares between groups divided by the total sum of squares. To interpret the power of  $\eta^2$  we followed Cohen's criterion according to which .01 = small effect, .06 = moderate effect and .14 = large effect.

## Results

### *Planning: Independent Variables*

The mean scores presented in Table 1 reveal that participants in the groups with online planning opportunities spent more time on task completion. A one-way ANOVA shows that the difference in time taken to do the task is statically significant across the groups. The Tukey test shows that the spotted differences are significant when the NP and the PTP groups are compared with the OLP group or the PTP+OLP group. Moreover, the data in Table 1 indicate that in terms of total number of syllables the groups were significantly different. The Tukey results show that participants in conditions where online planning was available produced significantly more language than the NP group and the PTP group (except for the PTP-OLP comparison which was close to significant  $p = .057$ ). Table 1 also provides interesting information regarding the total number of meaningful syllables which is an indicator of number of reformulations. Although the ANOVA shows a significant difference across groups, the results of the Tukey post hoc test reveals that the number of meaningful syllables is significantly different when the NP group is compared with the OLP or the PTP+OLP groups. On average, while participants in both the OLP and the PTP+OLP conditions reformulated about 23 syllables out of 147 and 149 respectively, no-planners only reformulated 16 syllables out of 126. Thus, the slower rate of speech production and more frequent reformulations by planners in the OLP group and the PTP+OLP group can be taken to argue that, as intended, when online planning is available, young learners monitor their language production more carefully. All in all, based on the data in Table 1, it can be said that the groups performed their tasks in accordance with the specified conditions.

### ***Dependent Variables***

The first research question concerned the effects of task planning on the fluency of young EFL learners' oral production. Descriptive statistics for the fluency measures (see Table 2) reveal that the PTP group produced the greatest number of both total syllables and meaningful syllables per minute. Results of the one-way ANOVA and Tukey post-hoc analysis presented in Table 2 show that there is a significant difference between the NP group and the PTP group regarding both measures of fluency. Also, a significant difference is observed between the PTP group and the OLP group in regard to the production of meaningful syllables per minute. These findings suggest that compared with the NP group, the PTP group performed the task more fluently, and the PTP group were more fluent than the OLP group in terms of producing more meaningful syllables per minute.

The second research question pertained to the effects of task planning on young learners' oral complexity. The descriptive data in Table 3 reveal that regarding syntactic complexity the PTP+OLP and OLP groups have obtained very close mean scores which are higher than those of the NP and PTP groups. Almost the same pattern is observed for syntactic variety. Interestingly, the PTP+OLP and OLP groups have gained the same and highest mean score. In addition, the descriptive data show that in comparison to the NP group, the PTP group have produced slightly more complex sentences. The inferential statistics presented in Table 3 show that the language produced by participants in the groups with on-line planning opportunities, i.e., the OLP and the PTP+OLP groups, was syntactically more significant than the production of the NP and PTP groups (except for the PTP-OLP comparison which was very close to significant ( $p = .053$ )).

**Table 1.***Statistics for length of time, Total Syllables, and meaningful syllables*

	Mean (SD)				<i>F</i> value	Sig.	Location of Significance					
	NP	PTP	OLP	PTP+OLP			NP- PTP	NP- OLP	NP- PTP+ OLP	PTP- OLP	PTP- PTP+OLP	OLP- PTP+OLP
Length of Time (sec.)	158.93 (26.26)	165.79 (28.83)	210.94 (34.26)	203.80 (33.36)	10.895	.000**	.929	.000**	.001*	.001*	.007*	.921
Total Syllables	126.26 (22.79)	143.87 (28.56)	170.40 (27.18)	172.13 (32.63)	9.344	.000**	.323	.000**	.000**	.057	.038*	.998
Meaningful Syllables	110.40 (19.93)	129.00 (26.06)	147.60 (25.88)	149.47 (31.07)	7.419	.000**	.217	.001*	.001*	.217	.149	.997

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .001$

**Table 2.***Descriptive and inferential statistics for the fluency measures*

	Mean (SD)				F value	Sig.	$\eta^2$	Location of Significance					
	NP	PTP	OLP	PTP+OLP				NP- PTP	NP- OLP	NP- PTP+ OLP	PTP- OLP	PTP- PTP+OLP	OLP- PTP+OLP
Syllables per min.	47.76 (4.27)	51.91 (3.55)	48.71 (4.94)	50.55 (3.41)	3.084	.035*	.14	.037*	.920	.254	.154	.801	.610
Meaningful Syllables per min.	41.77 (3.99)	46.54 (3.34)	42.15 (4.80)	43.74 (3.32)	4.594	.006*	.19	.008*	.993	.517	.017*	.218	.683

\* $p < .05$

To answer the third research question which was posed to explore the effects of planning on accuracy, two measures were assessed: error-free clauses and correct verb forms. Descriptive data presented in Table 4 show that the NP group have obtained the lowest mean scores on both measures. Interestingly, similar to the complexity measures, the OLP and PTP+OLP groups have gained high and slightly different mean scores. Results of the Tukey post hoc test (see Table 4) indicate that the OLP and PTP+OLP groups outperformed the NP group in terms of producing both more error-free clauses and more correct verbs. Thus, it can be proposed that OLP and PTP+OLP opportunities significantly increase accuracy.

## **Discussion**

### ***Effects of Pre-task Planning***

Pre-task planning was shown to improve young learners' oral fluency. This parallels the results of previous studies reporting positive effects of PTP on fluency (Bui & Huang, 2018; Foster & Skehan, 1996; Fujita, 2011; Li et al., 2015; Mehnert, 1998; Ortega, 1999). Adopting Levelt's (1989) speech model, it is plausible for us to argue that PTP seems to have provided the participants with reserving more attention from the conceptualization stage for the formulation stage which results in having more capacity for processing the information in the formulation stage. In fact, the process of converting the pre-verbal messages into language through the retrieval of required lexical items from the speakers' mental lexicon is boosted. Therefore, learners are able to produce language more fluently.

**Table 3.***Descriptive and inferential statistics for the complexity measures*

	Mean (SD)				F value	Sig.	$\eta^2$	Location of Significance					
	NP	PTP	OLP	PTP+OLP				NP- PTP	NP- OLP	NP- PTP+ OLP	PTP- OLP	PTP- PTP+OLP	OLP- PTP+OLP
Syntactic complexity	1.18 (.074)	1.20 (.098)	1.33 (.167)	1.34 (.177)	5.946	.001*	.24	.939	.012*	.009*	.053	.041*	1.00
Syntactic variety	4.06 (1.27)	4.20 (1.20)	5.13 (1.45)	5.13 (1.24)	2.980	.039*	.13	.992	.124	.124	.214	.214	1.00

\* $p < .05$

**Table 4.***Descriptive and inferential statistics for the accuracy measures*

	Mean (SD)				F value	Sig.	$\eta^2$	Location of Significance					
	NP	PTP	OLP	PTP+OLP				NP- PTP	NP- OLP	NP- PTP+ OLP	PTP- OLP	PTP- PTP+OLP	OLP- PTP+OLP
Error-free clauses	28.40 (7.56)	32.62 (7.78)	39.21 (9.67)	38.08 (10.36)	4.756	.005*	.20	.571	.008*	.022*	.192	.345	.986
Correct verb forms	35.16 (6.70)	38.32 (7.23)	45.32 (10.11)	45.43 (8.71)	5.771	.002*	.23	.727	.008*	.007*	.108	.100	1.00

\* $p < .05$



However, unlike the general trend reported in previous research with adult learners (Crookes, 1989; Ortega, 1999; Tavakoli & Skehan, 2005; Wang, 2014; Yuan & Ellis, 2003), PTP did not lead to greater complexity. This finding can be of particular interest and requires further interpretation. It is believed that PTP provides learners with an opportunity to plan for the conceptualization of message content and contributes to controlled processing and selective attention to form (Ellis, 2005b). Therefore, by easing the pressure on the conceptualization stage (Levelt, 1989), PTP assists learners to reach and employ their maximal level of lexical and structural knowledge, i.e., “the upper limits of their interlanguage” (Ortega, 1999, p. 138) which in turn can result in more complex speech. However, this is true only if learners can efficiently use their planning time. Working with young participants, Philp et al. (2006) reported that two minutes of planning time did not lead to the production of more complex language probably because children could easily get distracted and could not focus on their planning. Although in this study, unlike Philp et al.’s study, the task was monologic and performed in a quiet room, what they have noted can reflect the nature of differences existing between the way children and adults use their planning time.

Regarding accuracy, it was shown that PTP does not lead to significantly more accurate language. Philp et al. have also reported no significant effects of pre-task planning time on young learners’ accuracy. In adult pre-task planning literature, however, mixed results have been indicated. Whereas some studies reported positive effects of planning on accuracy (although not necessarily on all measures or for all tasks) (Ellis, 1987; Mochizuki & Ortega, 2008; Ortega, 1999; Skehan & Foster, 1997; Tavakoli & Skehan, 2005; Wigglesworth, 1997), other studies (that this work is in parallel with), failed to show any significant effects (Crookes, 1989; Elder & Iwashita, 2005; Ortega, 1999; Wendel, 1997; Yuan & Ellis, 2003). There are two reasons to account for the inconsistencies found here. Philp et al. (2006) have rightly pointed out that the mixed results in accuracy can be attributed to the different ways accuracy has been defined and measured in each study. For instance, while Skehan and Foster (1997) measured accuracy by calculating the

percentage of error-free clauses, Ortega (1999) performed target-like use analysis. The former is considered to be a general measure of accuracy, but the latter is a specific measure. Clearly, since these measures tap into different aspects of linguistic accuracy, the obtained results might vary based on the measurement method the researchers utilized. Another reason for gaining no significant impact on accuracy could have been the pressure caused by the time limit participants had for completing the task. Most of the studies that found positive results for PTP did not acknowledge that they controlled for the possible effects of online planning by setting a time limit. Thus, following Yuan and Ellis (2003) and considering the results of the present study regarding the positive effects of online planning on accuracy, it can be argued that the regulation of online planning could have affected the findings of the studies that observed improvements in accuracy as a result of PTP (Yuan & Ellis, 2003).

### ***Effects of Online Planning***

The results showed that OLP does not significantly improve young learners' oral fluency. The same result has been found in previous studies (Ahmadian & Tavakoli, 2011; Ellis & Yuan, 2005; Fujita, 2011; Yuan & Ellis, 2003). However, it was shown that OLP improves learners' language in terms of syntactic complexity as well as accuracy. The positive effect of online planning on syntactic complexity found here is in line with the results of Ahmadian and Tavakoli (2011). Research with adult learners has also reported more accurate production as a result of OLP (Ahmadian & Tavakoli, 2014; Ellis, 1987; Ellis & Yuan, 2005; Li & Fu, 2016; Yuan & Ellis, 2003).

According to Van Patten (1990), accuracy and/or complexity demand conscious attention to form, whereas fluency requires conscious attention to meaning. Therefore, there exists a competition between allocation of attention either to form or to meaning. It can be argued that when task performers are given ample time to complete a task, as it was with the participants in the OLP condition, they spend more time on attending to form in the formulation phase (Levelt, 1989). This attention to form, however, can be detrimental to fluency (Ellis & Yuan, 2005). In Ellis's (2005b) framework, a distinction has been made

between two types of online planning: pressured online planning in which learners are asked to perform a task within a time limit, and unpressured or careful online planning where no time limit is set. Similar to our findings, comparing the effects of these two types of online planning on fluency, Ellis and Yuan (2005) reported that unpressured online planning resulted in slower production in terms of number of produced syllables per minute. Yuan and Ellis attributed such dysfluency to limitations in the participants' procedural knowledge. Ahmadian and Tavakoli (2011) explained the slower language production by learners in the unpressured online planning condition in lights of Skehan' (1998) dual-mode system framework. According to Skehan, time restriction makes learners use their exemplar-based system, which in turn, may lead to more fluent production. On the other hand, since the rule-based system is supposed to be "parsimoniously and elegantly organized, with rules being compactly structured" (p. 89), it demands more time and attention. The obtained results from the PTP group and the OLP group in the current study provide more evidence to lend support to Skehan's argument.

### ***Effects of Combined Pre-task and Online Planning***

Yuan and Ellis (2003) and Ellis (2009) hypothesized that learners might be able to overcome problems resulting from limitations in their attentional resources if they have the opportunity to prepare themselves before the task as well as enough time to engage in planning their output online. Our data supports this hypothesis to some extent. It was shown that PTP+OLP helps learners to produce more complex and accurate language. However, PTP+OLP failed to show significant improvements on fluency.

The results of our study showed that PTP alone can significantly boost fluency. On the other hand, it was found that OLP results in slower language production. Considering these findings along with the lack of significant impact of PTP+OLP on fluency, it seems that providing the learners with ample time to conduct the task (OLP) has overshadowed the positive impacts of PTP on fluency. In line with the results of previous studies (Ahmadian & Tavakoli, 2011; Ellis & Yuan, 2005; Fujita, 2011; Yuan and Ellis, 2003), lack of more fluent

language production in PTP+OLP can be attributed to the lack of time pressure during task performance in the PTP+OLP condition.

We also found that PTP+OLP can improve young learners' oral language in terms of complexity and accuracy. Interestingly, whereas PTP alone did not result in neither more complex nor accurate production, OLP improved both. Therefore, it can be suggested that it is the presence of OLP that can improve young learners' linguistic complexity. This finding provides further support for Levelt's (1989) speech production model in that providing young learners with ample time to perform a narrative task can benefit the formulation stage. As a result, they will have more opportunities to access syntactic information, as well as enough time to spend on the controlled processing required for monitoring the language being produced in terms of grammatical complexity (Ellis, 2009). Moreover, in regard to the proposal suggested by Ellis and Yuan (2005), OLP can induce learners to engage in more extensive micro-planning of the pre-verbal message which leads to elaborate propositions and more complex and accurate formulations. On the other hand, what this finding implies is that time restriction in the NP group did not allow learners to attempt their cutting-edge language as it taxes their working memory (Ahmadian & Tavakoli, 2011).

## **Conclusion**

The fundamental aim of researchers who work in the field of instructed SLA is "to understand phenomena that make a difference in teaching and learning, first and foremost" (Norris & Ortega, 2009, p.557). It is proposed that in comparison to native speakers, L2 learners lack parallel processing ability and undergo serial processing in speech production, which can lead to a major challenge in L2 production (Skehan, 2014b). In terms of pedagogy, therefore, the necessity of providing opportunities to facilitate L2 learners' production should be taken into account.

This study was designed to investigate the effects of planning on young learners' oral narrative performance. Inevitably, like any other scientific enquiry, the current research faced a number of limitations which have to be

taken into consideration before attempting to generalize the findings. The results are to be seen as modest and suggestive rather than conclusive. Firstly, the current research was a cross-sectional study which aimed at investigating production and not learning. Although there have been some arguments regarding increases in language complexity, production, or deployment of forms, in agreement with Philp et al. (2006), equating such improvements with linguistic development does not seem to be right. Additionally, this study was mainly, to use Ortega's (1999, 2005) term, product-oriented, that is, its major focus was on the impact of planning on performance. Therefore, any interpretations of the findings in regard to developing the young learners' interlanguage should be done cautiously. Secondly, previous task-based research has shown task type to be an influential variable on learners' language quality (e.g., Bygate, 2001; Foster & Skehan, 1996; Skehan & Foster, 1997). Since the effects of the planning conditions were investigated on the learners' language elicited through a video-prompted narrative task in this study, the results will not necessarily hold for other task types.

The major contribution that this study makes to the existing literature is the discovery that while pre-task planning time improves young learners' oral fluency, online planning and combination of online planning and pre-task planning result in more accurate and syntactically complex structure. These findings further our understanding how task planning, as implementational variables, can cause systematic changes in different performance areas, such as language complexity, accuracy, and fluency. Hence, if EFL teachers wish to improve one of the above-mentioned language aspects, then results such as those reported in the present research as well as other task planning studies should make a contribution. For instance, as shown in this study, if teachers wish to improve young learners' language fluency, they should provide learners with pre-task planning opportunities. Another example of the practicality of the results for language teachers is that if they implement a given narrative task without setting a time limit, the learners' attention will be oriented toward form, which, in turns, will lead to more accurate and complex language production.

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# Flipped Learning in a General English Course: Learner Performance across Personality Traits, Ambiguity Tolerance, and Willingness to Communicate

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## Abstract

Flipped learning is one of the recent teaching methods in which teaching takes place outside the classroom, and class time is reserved for practicing and consolidating learning under the supervision of the teacher. Various studies in the world and Iran have examined the effectiveness of flipped learning in teaching English, but these studies have been conducted either in the context of schools and private language institutes, or with English language college students. This study examines the performance of 182 general English students at Farhangian University of Mashhad. Based on the results of paired and independent t-tests and repeated measures multivariate analysis of variance, flipped learning improves students' learning in a general English course. In addition, personality traits and tolerance of ambiguity do not affect the effectiveness of flipped learning. Moreover, the willingness to communicate, although statistically significant, does not meaningfully influence the effectiveness of flipped learning due to the small

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effect size which is around 3%. The findings imply that flipped learning can be one of the ways to increase the effectiveness of general language teaching regardless of learner characteristics such as personality, ambiguity tolerance, and willingness to communicate.

**Keywords:** ambiguity tolerance, effectiveness, flipped learning, general English, personality, university, willingness to communicate

## **Introduction**

Quality education is the ultimate goal of all those involved in this process, and in recent decades with the advent and availability of technology to the public, educationists and technologists have attempted to take more advantage of the possibilities technology can offer to improve education (Jensen et al., 2015). In addition to the effect information technology has exerted on mainstream education, it has also provided new patterns and models of education for language teaching, which have provided unique and wonderful opportunities to improve language learning (Alemi & Khatooni, 2021).

One common problem that almost all teachers have is the time management to achieve an effective balance between lecturing and active learning strategies (Kim et al., 2018). Flipped classroom model is an attempt to respond to such challenges by devoting more time to active learning in the classroom using a blended learning approach (Hung, 2015; Strayer, 2012). In flipped classroom model, the direct teaching presented to the whole class changes into interactive personalized teaching which occurs outside the classroom, and hence the classroom becomes a dynamic and interactive learning environment to consolidate learning (Kaviani et al., 2018). As Jiang et al. (2020) maintain, flipped classroom due to its great potentials has gained great momentum in language teaching especially in foreign and second language teaching contexts.

## **Review of the Related Literature**

The theoretical underpinnings of flipped learning and changing the traditional role of home and the school can be attributed to active learning,

peer learning, collaborative learning, problem-based learning, and cooperative learning (Izadi et al., 2020; Kaviani et al., 2018; Kheirābādi, 2017). Bergmann and Sams (2012) are known as two chemistry teachers who promoted flipped learning internationally after they flipped their classroom in response to the request of some students who had skipped a class in 2007. Although they flipped their chemistry class, they believe that flipped learning can meet the needs of learners in different classes and subject matters, such as math, science, social studies, foreign languages, and physical education. Leis et al. (2015), however, believe that the founder of flipped learning, who first used the term "flip" is Baker (2000). At the same time when Baker was flipping his graphic design class in Cedarville College, Lodge also was following the same procedure in his economics class at the University of Miami, but he called his technique "inverted classroom" (Lage et al., 2000).

In the flipped or inverted classroom, the lesson arrangements are reversed. In traditional classrooms, the teacher provides the instruction in the classroom, and students do exercises outside the classroom to consolidate learning. In the flipped classroom, the teacher provides the students with the educational content in the form of text, PowerPoint slides, or educational clips and videos before the class is held, and in the class, students do tasks and exercises to consolidate the learning under the supervision of the teacher (Hung, 2015; Reidsema et al., 2017; Zou et al., 2020). In such an atmosphere, the role of the teacher changes from a sage on the stage to a guide by the side (Baker, 2000; Muzyka & Luker, 2016) who helps to motivate learners, offers guidance, and gives feedback on learners' performance (Zou et al., 2020). It is worth noting that although in recent years, with the widespread availability of technology for teachers, technology is generally considered as part of flipped learning, as Bergmann and Sams (2012) and Moffett (2015) argue, flipped learning is not limited to technology use, and even if students are asked to read a chapter of a book before coming to class, the class can be flipped.

### ***Advantages and Challenges of the Flipped Classroom***

The first advantage of flipped learning is that it personalizes the

learning experience, and allows learners to learn at their own pace at a convenient time and place (Afrilyasanti et al., 2016; Chen Hsieh et al., 2017). This is an advantage because it is difficult to personalize the education in a traditional classroom without technology and computers, and one of the important benefits of the technology-supported flipped classroom is the opportunity to provide individual feedback and to personalize education (Davies et al., 2013).

Another advantage of flipped learning in foreign language teaching is that it moves the classroom from a teacher-centered to a learner-centered one, and makes it possible for the teacher to implement a communicative approach. Moreover, the flipped classroom allows the implementation of cooperative methods of language teaching, and different styles of the learners can be taken into account (Afrilyasanti et al., 2016; Egbert et al., 2014; Herreid & Schiller, 2013; Mehring, 2015).

Flipped learning also helps learners' thinking processes before class by providing opportunities for lower-level thinking skills, such as knowledge and comprehension, and provides the opportunity for learners to improve higher-order thinking skills in the classroom through activities that require cognitive processes such as application and analysis (Hung, 2015; Mehring, 2015; Moffett, 2015).

Learners' autonomy and their active participation in learning are two other advantages of the flipped classroom. However, a highly motivated teacher who is willing to spend a lot of time preparing materials, and able to encourage learners to take responsibility for learning is an important prerequisite for flipped classroom success (Kim et al., 2018; Moffett, 2015).

Another challenge of the flipped classroom, which is perhaps the most important challenge for the teacher, is that preparing the videos is a time-consuming process and it may be hard to encourage learners to prepare in advance (Afrilyasanti et al., 2016; Bergmann & Sams, 2012; Herreid & Schiller, 2013; Jiang et al., 2020; Leis et al., 2015). Related to teachers' concern about students' preparation before the class meeting, (Mehring, 2015) recommends that teachers prepare interactive videos so that learners need to answer

questions at unpredictable points on the video, and send the answers to the teacher prior to the class as evidence of watching the video. Kaviani et al. (2018) have also suggested sing short quizzes at the beginning of the class to encourage learners to watch videos or study the content that has already been provided to them before coming to the class. All in all, despite these challenges, the benefits of flipped classrooms outweigh its difficulties (Leis et al., 2015).

Jiang et al. (2020) refer to the lack of a systematic pedagogical approach as another challenge for the flipped classroom. They believe the theoretical foundation of the flipped classroom is mainly anecdotal, and although the flipped classroom is claimed to pave the way for developing learners' higher-order thinking skills through in-class activities, it is conceptualized mainly on the knowledge transmission paradigm.

### ***Empirical Background of the Research***

**Research on the Effectiveness of Flipped Learning.** A number of studies in Iran and the world have examined the implementation and effect of flipped learning. In the field of English language teaching, Kheirābādi (2017) in a study with tenth- graders that examined the effect of the flipped classroom on learning grammar found no significant difference between the performance of learners in the traditional and flipped classrooms. However, he reported more positive students' perceptions and higher levels of motivation in the flipped classroom. Afzali and Izadpanah (2021) have also shown the positive effect of the flipped classroom on the motivation and participation of intermediate and upper-intermediate language learners in a grammar class.

Abdullah et al. (2021) have also reported that the flipped classroom improved students' motivation in a speaking class with Omani English students. The study of Sahragard et al. (2020) also showed that the flipped classroom had a positive effect on the writing skill of IELTS candidates. In another study conducted with Japanese English students (Leis et al., 2015), the results showed a positive effect of flipped learning on students' writing skills. The participants in that study spent more hours writing, and they both produced longer compositions and made better progress compared to the pre-test. Other studies

in other contexts and countries have shown the effectiveness of flipped learning on writing performance (Afrilyasanti et al., 2016; Ekmekci, 2017).

Studies have also shown the positive effect of flipped learning on listening comprehension in English language classes (Ahmed, 2016). Farsi et al. (2020) also studied the effect of flipped learning on reading comprehension of a group of intermediate and upper-intermediate language learners and found that the flipped learning class students, regardless of their language proficiency level, surpassed traditional teaching class students in reading comprehension.

Chen Hsieh et al. (2017) also reported the positive effect of the flipped classroom on the learning of English idioms by Taiwanese students. As they maintain, flipped learning also improved students' motivation and activity in the classroom. In a study by Hung (2015), Taiwanese English students also performed better in the English communication skills flipped classroom, and had a higher participation rate in the class. Moreover, in examining the effect of flipped learning in an undergraduate testing course with English language teaching students, Eghtesadi Roudi (2020) has also reported the positive effect of the flipped classroom on students' performance on questions that require higher-order thinking skills.

Eghtesadi Roudi (2020) also examined the role of personality traits and successful intelligence in the flipped classroom and reported no significant effect of personality traits. Kim (2017) also studied the relationships between personality traits and Korean students' performance in a flipped classroom and found no significant relationship. In another study with elementary Jordan fifth-graders, Hussain et al. (2017) found no significant relationship either. Kim et al. (2018), however, in a study with Korean college students found a positive effect of thinking personality style on students' performance in the flipped classroom.

Due to the lack of studies on the effectiveness of reverse education at the university level and due to the fact that teaching general English to students of other majors who often lack a good English background is one of the challenges of teaching English in universities, and since class time for general English courses is not often enough to pay attention to all students, this study



examined the effectiveness of flipped learning in a general English course at Farhangian University of Mashhad. Moreover, since the results of previous research on the effect of personality traits are conflicting, and theoretically, at least, it is expected that students with some personality traits such as extroversion may prefer learning in the class environment among friends and classmates, this study also intended to assess the effect of personality on flipped learnings. In addition, Willingness To Communicate (WTC) is another personality factor that has been found to influence success in second language learning (Brown, 2014). In the case of flipped learning, it is also speculated that since learners need to be active in the class and communicate with peers and the teacher, their WTC might play a role. The relationships between the flipped classroom and WTC have received other researchers' attention too, but the previous research has focused on the effect of flipped learning on learners' WTC (Chang & Lin, 2019; Hung, 2017; Khosravani et al., 2020; Mohammadi et al., 2019; Zarrinabadi et al., 2021), and have reported inconsistent results. Therefore, this study will examine the effect of learners' WTC on the effectiveness of flipped learning.

Another feature of flipped learning is that learners receive the educational materials a week before the class and watch or read them individually. In case there are any problems or ambiguities, they need to wait for the class meeting to ask their questions and resolve the ambiguities. Therefore, another cognitive style (Brown, 2014) that seems to be important in the effectiveness of flipped learning is ambiguity tolerance, which is defined as "the tendency to perceive ambiguous situations as desirable" (Budner, 1962, p.29). Benjamin et al. (1996) define an ambiguous situation as one in which the individual is provided with information that is too complex, inadequate, or apparently contradictory. The relationship between ambiguity tolerance and flipped classroom has not been dealt with in previous research (Jiang et al., 2020; Zou et al., 2020). Therefore, this study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. Is flipped learning more effective than traditional teaching in general English classrooms?

2. Does the time of presenting flipped learning (at the beginning/end of the semester) influence its effectiveness?
3. Is there a relationship between students' personality traits, ambiguity tolerance style, willingness to communicate, and their performance in flipped and traditional classrooms?

## **Method**

### ***Participants***

In this study, which was conducted in the second semester of the 2018-2019 academic year, five undergraduate general English classes in the two campuses of Shahid Beheshti and Shahid Hasheminejad of Farhangian University of Mashhad were selected through cluster sampling to participate in the research. These classes included 182 students, 49% of whom were males (N = 89). In terms of field of study, 54% of the participants (N = 98) were studying math or sciences and the rest were students of humanities. The age of students ranged from 19 to 21 years.

To conduct this study, 3 instructors of Farhangian University, comprising two men and one woman, collaborated with the researchers. All collaborating instructors had Ph.D. degrees in English Language Teaching and had 20 to 30 years of English language teaching experience.

### ***Instruments***

In the research, two achievement tests, a mid-term test, and a final test were used to assess the performance of the participants. Each of the tests consisted of 50 different forms of questions including multiple-choice, short-answer, and essay questions that assessed the knowledge of the meaning of words and collocations, grammar, and reading comprehension. Each of the researchers constructed one of the two tests, and then the test was reviewed by the other researcher. It was then given to three fellow instructors to confirm the form and content of the test and its compliance with the concepts taught (content validity) and the principles of test construction.

In addition to these tests, three questionnaires were also administered

to the participants. The questionnaires include Eysenck's (1964) Personality Inventory, Ambiguity Tolerance Scale (Budner, 1962), and Willingness To Communicate Scale (Baghaei, 2013). The Eysenck's Personality Inventory includes 57 yes-no items which measure two independent personality dimensions of extroversion-introversion (24 items) and neuroticism-stability (24 items). Nine items on the inventory are also falsification items which show the social desirability in completing the inventory. Baraheni (1976) reported the Cronbach's alpha reliability of the three components of the Persian inventory to be 0.69 for neuroticism, 0.77 for extroversion, and 0.47 for lie items. The Cronbach's alpha reliability of the overall Eysenck's Personality Inventory in this study was 0.68, and the reliability indices of neuroticism and extroversion were 0.84, and 0.71, respectively.

The ambiguity Tolerance Scale (Budner, 1962) has 16 items on a 7-point Likert scale which measures the tendency to perceive ambiguous situations as desirable. The Cronbach's alpha reliability of the scale as reported by Budner (1962) was 0.62. For the purpose of this study, the Persian version of the scale was used. In the manual, the reliability of the Persian scale is 0.84. In this study, the reliability of the total Ambiguity Tolerance Scale was 0.69.

The Willingness To Communicate Scale was developed and validated by (Baghaei, 2013). The scale includes 22 items on a 5-point scale. In addition to the total score, the scale also measures three components of willingness to communicate with native English speakers, willingness to communicate with non-native foreigners, and willingness to communicate in the classroom. The reliability of the total scale was reported to be 0.98 (Baghaei, 2013). In this study, the reliability of the total WTC Scale was 0.95.

### ***Procedure***

After random selection of the classes to participate in the study, the instructors were informed of the purpose of the study and were invited to cooperate in the project. Since, as already stated, flipping the classroom can be a time-consuming challenge for both teachers and learners, and many teachers may prefer to flip only some sessions of their classes, and even many of the

studies on flipped classrooms even flipped part of the course (Afzali & Izadpanah, 2021; Chen Hsieh et al., 2017; Fazlali et al., 2018; Liu, 2017), it was decided to study the effect of the time of flipping the classes, and therefore the classes were divided into two groups. Group 1 which included 3 classes were taught through flipped learning techniques from the onset of the term up to the mid-term exam, and then there were taught traditionally up to the end of the term. For Group 2, the order was reversed, i.e., they were first taught through traditional methods and then through flipped techniques.

To implement the flipped learning, since as Zou et al. (2020) maintain untrained instructors and poor video quality can reduce the effectiveness of the flipped approach, the first researcher in the study prepared instructional videos for each session and handed them to the instructors a week before the class. This also intended to make it possible to compare the performance of different classes. In addition, the instructors were trained on what they needed to do in the class after students watched the videos and did the outside-class activities. Students were required to watch the videos outside the classroom. According to the recommendations of researchers in this field (Liu, 2017; Talbert, 2017; Zainuddin & Attaran, 2016), the length of educational videos was short and between 15 and 20 minutes. In preparing the videos, words and vocabulary were first taught based on the principles of vocabulary teaching. Then, depending on the type of lesson in that session, one of the skills of reading or a grammatical point was taught or the text of the lesson was taught and analyzed step by step. In the instructional videos, when students needed to think or do something, for example, if students were asked to find a pronoun reference in the text or identify the topic sentence or the main idea of a paragraph, they were asked to stop the video and find the answer or do the activity and then watch the rest of the video. They were then asked to do the exercises before attending the class.

In the classroom, students first asked their questions and possible problems, and then students were given a short written or oral quiz to ensure they were watching the videos. Students were then grouped and asked to review the answers to the exercises with their classmates and to discuss their

answers. If there was disagreement among the students in a group about the answer to a question, the whole class was asked to comment on it, and finally, if necessary, the instructor would provide the necessary explanations. Most of the class time was devoted to various exercises to consolidate learning. For example, students were asked to form new sentences individually using the words they had learned and share them with other classmates in the group and check their accuracy, or if the grammatical point of that session was about the use of one of the English tenses, students were asked to write sentences about themselves using that tense and review them in the same way in the group. The instructor also helped the groups and students to solve problems in the group that they could not solve alone. Instructors were asked to keep the teaching method and classroom activities as similar as possible.

In traditional classes, each instructor taught vocabulary, grammar, and reading comprehension skills in the classroom, and students were required to do exercises outside the classroom.

## Results

Prior to analyzing the data to answer the research questions, since three professors taught the classes, an ANOVA test was run to check the effect of professors. According to the results of the analysis of variance test, professors had no significant role ( $p > 0.05$ ) in flipped learning results (Table 1), and therefore the data could be analyzed with no concern for professors as an intervening variable.

**Table 1**

*ANOVA for the role of instructors*

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Flipped Learning	160.42	2	80.21	1.16	0.35

To answer the first research question about the effectiveness of flipped learning, first, descriptive statistics of the scores resulting from flipped and traditional classrooms were calculated and the normality of the distribution of

scores was examined (Table 2).

**Table 2**

*Descriptive statistics of flipped and traditional classes*

	No	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
Flipped -Total	182	43.88	8.31	0.01-	0.06
Traditional-Total	182	41.24	8.62	0.54-	0.1-
Flipped-Midterm	127	45.36	7.94	-0.50	-0.17
Flipped-Final	55	43.85	8.45	0.17	0.31
Traditional-Midterm	127	44.45	7.29	-0.65	0.24
Traditional-Final	55	39.85	8.80	-0.45	-0.11

Due to the values of skewness and kurtosis ( $<1$ ), and the large sample size, the distribution of scores was close to normality and therefore a paired t-test was run to examine the effectiveness of flipped learning (Table 3).

**Table 3**

*Paired samples and independent samples t-tests to compare flipped and traditional scores*

Paired samples t-test to compare flipped and traditional scores						
	Paired differences			t	df	p
	Mean	SD	SE of Means			
Flipped-Traditional Total	2.67	8.03	0.59	4.42	181	0.00
Independent t-tests to compare independent groups						
	F	p	t	df	Mean difference	p
Midterm flipped-traditional	2.11	0.14	-0.84	179	1.10	0.14
Final flipped-traditional	0.37	0.53	3.79	179	5.25	0.00
Flipped midterm-final	0.40	0.52	-1.23	180	-1.65	0.22
Traditional midterm-final	1.88	0.17	-3.39	180	-4.59	0.00

According to the results of the paired samples t-test in Table 3 ( $t = 4.42$ ,  $df = 181$ ,  $p < 0.5$ ), the difference between the means of the two types of teaching methods is significant, and referring to Table 2, it appears that flipped learning with a difference of 2.64 points was more effective than traditional teaching.

Since in this study a counterbalanced design was used (Figure 1), to answer the second research question on the effect of time order on flipped learning effectiveness, four independent t-tests were run.

**Figure 1**

*Counterbalanced design of the study*



Before performing the test, the normality of the data distribution was checked, which was confirmed based on the magnitudes of skewness and kurtosis and the large size (Table 2).

As Table 2 indicates, the highest mean belongs to the midterm flipped learning. That is, the group that was taught in flipped learning from the beginning to the middle of the semester had the highest performance, followed by the group that was taught traditionally from the beginning of the semester to the middle of the semester. The results of independent samples t-tests in Table 3 also show that on the midterm exam there is no significant difference between the flipped and traditional groups, while on the final exam, there is a significant difference between the two groups. In other words, flipped learning is more effective than traditional teaching only if it is offered in the second half of the semester.

In order to answer the third research question about the role of personality traits, cognitive style of ambiguity tolerance, and willingness to communicate in the performance of learners in flipped and traditional classes, since flipped and traditional scores were obtained from the same group and there were three independent variables, a repeated measures multivariate analysis of variance was run.

The results of repeated measures MANOVA (Table 4) showed that the type of teaching method had a significant effect on the performance of the students on tests (Wilks' Lambda = 0.88,  $p < 0.05$ ;  $F = 18.09$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). But the

interaction of the teaching method with none of the independent variables was significant. The effect size also shows that 11% of the difference between the two sets of scores is due to the teaching method.

**Table 4**

*The results of repeated measures MANOVA*

<i>Multivariate Test Results</i>							
Effect		Value	F	H df	Error df	p	Effect Size
Method	Wilks' Lambda	.88	18.09	1	134	.000	.11
Method*WTC	Wilks' Lambda	.99	.21	1	134	.64	
Method*AT	Wilks' Lambda	1.00	.05	1	134	.81	
Method*Personality	Wilks' Lambda	.98	.68	3	134	.56	
<i>Between-Group Tests</i>							
Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p	Effect Size	
Willingness to communicate	695.85	1	695.85	6.07	.01	.04	
Ambiguity tolerance	22.81	1	22.81	.19	.65		
Personality traits	243.84	3	81.28	.70	.54		

Finally, the test of between-group effects (Table 4) shows that only the independent variable of willingness to communicate has a statistically significant effect on students' performance in traditional and flipped learning classes ( $F = 6.07$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). But the effect size of the WTC is 0.04, i.e., only 4% of the variance in the flipped and traditional scores can be counted for by this variable, which is considered a weak effect size (Pallant, 2010).

To ensure that despite its statistical significance, willingness to communicate does not have a logically meaningful relationship with flipped and traditional scores, a Pearson correlation test was run (Table 5).



**Table 5***Correlation between willingness to communicate and flipped and traditional Scores*

		Flipped	Traditional
Willingness to communicate	Pearson Correlation	.183*	.095
	p	.019	.225
	N	164	164

As shown in Table 5, only the correlation between WTC and flipped learning was significant ( $p < 0.05$ ). However, the magnitude of the correlation coefficient is very low ( $R = 0.18$ ) and the square of the correlation coefficient is 0.03, i.e., WTC and flipped scores have only 3% of common variance, which confirms the results of low effect size. In other words, although this relationship is statistically significant, logically it is not meaningful.

## Discussion

This study provided several findings which demand an explanation. According to the results of this study, flipped learning is effective in improving general English learning. This finding is consistent with theoretical discussions about the effectiveness of the flipped classroom (Baker, 2000; Bergmann & Sams, 2012; Kim et al., 2018; Lage et al., 2000; Strayer, 2012). Students' better performance on tests based on the flipped classroom is also consistent with the results of other studies conducted in the field of English language teaching and flipped learning (Ahmed, 2016; Chen Hsieh et al., 2017; Ekmekci, 2017; Farsi et al., 2020; Leis et al., 2015; Sahragard et al., 2020). However, it should be noted that previous studies on the effectiveness of flipped learning were done either with English language college students or with students of private language schools who are usually more motivated to enroll in foreign language classes and therefore the findings of this study on the effectiveness of flipped learning in general English class at the university level is a new finding. The results of this study also confirm the results of previous studies conducted in the university environment to learn other English courses, such as the study by Eghtesadi Roudi (2020).

Findings of the study on the effectiveness of flipped learning and

students' better performance are also with the findings of other studies conducted in the academic context in Iran with college students of other disciplines (Golzari & Attaran, 2016; Kaviani et al., 2018; Toofaninejad et al., 2019), and also with the results of studies conducted in Iran and with the pupil population (Badeleh et al., 2019; Esmaeilifar et al., 2006; Pourghaz et al., 2020). However, the findings are not consistent with the finding of Kheirābādi (2017) that flipped learning was not effective in an English grammar class at the school level.

The effectiveness and superiority of flipped learning over traditional teaching found in this study and other studies may be due to the benefits of this method mentioned earlier in this paper and confirms the Leis et al.'s (2015) view that the benefits of flipped learning outweigh the challenges the implementation of this method provides for the teacher.

Another finding of this study is that flipped learning is effective if it is implemented in the second half of the semester. This is also a new finding because in previous studies the variable of time of implementation has not been considered. Even though the counterbalanced design was used by Chen Hsieh et al. (2017), they did not examine the effect of the design. This finding may be because students may become more sensitive to learning as they approach the end of the term and exam time, and may therefore watch the videos more carefully or more frequently outside the classroom, and in the classroom also they may pay more attention to the activities.

The final finding of the study is that personality traits, ambiguity tolerance, and willingness to communicate do not play a role in the effectiveness of flipped learning. Ambiguity tolerance and willingness to communicate have not been studied in previous studies (Jiang et al., 2020; Zou et al., 2020), and therefore the findings of this study are new. But Eghtesadi Roudi (2020) examined the role of personality in the effectiveness of flipped learning and reports that personality has no effect on the effectiveness of flipped learning, which is consistent with the findings of this study. Hussain et al. (2017), who examined the role of personality in the effectiveness of flipped learning with the same questionnaire used in this study, also did not report a

role for personality traits. Kim (2017) also examined the role of personality traits in the flipped classroom and did not report any relationship. Kim et al. (2018) examined the role of personality factors in the performance of Korean students and found that thoughtful students performed better. Of course, the personality questionnaire they used was different from the questionnaire used in this study.

The finding that the majority of the studies report no significant relationships between personality traits of learners and the effectiveness of flipped learning in English language teaching classes indicates that flipped learning can be practiced with different groups of learners with different personality characteristics.

The finding of no effect of WTC and ambiguity tolerance on flipped learning may indicate that the flipped classroom can be used for different groups of learners irrespective of their WTC and ambiguity tolerance. The conflicting reports of previous research on the effect of the flipped classroom on WTC may indicate that the flipped classroom can even be used to improve learners' WTC. However, since this study investigated the role of ambiguity tolerance and WTC in flipped learning for the first time, the finding of no relationships, needs to be interpreted more cautiously, and more research should shed light on such relationships.

## **Conclusion**

To summarize, in this study, different classes taught by different professors were examined. However, the instructional videos were made by one person to be the same for all classes, and different instructors were asked and instructed to follow the same procedure in the face-to-face part of the flipped classroom, and hold the same traditional classes as much as possible. The results of the comparison of instructors showed that the instructors had no role in the effectiveness of the flipped classroom. Though the rather large sample size is among the strength of this study (Jiang et al., 2020), to be more confident about the results, future studies can compare the flipped and traditional methods in different classes taught by one teacher.

The results of this study indicate important suggestions for general English instructors. Given the effectiveness of flipped learning, this method can be a good alternative to traditional teaching methods where the whole teaching process and to a large extent the learning takes place in the classroom. Due to the limited hours of general English classes, the large classes of this course, and the relatively weak base of many students in English, which makes it impossible for the teacher to pay individual attention to each student in the class, flipped learning can be used to personalize education because it allows students with different backgrounds to watch instructional videos as many times as need and use the class time for problem-solving and consolidating learning.

The results of the study also reassure teachers that they can use flipped learning in different general English classes, regardless of the personality traits and perhaps other individual characteristics of students such as tolerance of ambiguity and willingness to communicate.

There are also implications for further research. In this study, to control the effect of time of presenting flipped instruction, different groups were taught both in flipped and traditional methods using a counterbalanced experimental design, which is an outcome-based approach. Future studies, as Jiang et al. (2020) also noted, can use qualitative designs to study the process of learning in detail. In addition, the effectiveness of flipped learning can be compared with other active teaching methods such as cooperative learning.

Future studies could also examine the role of time spent on learning on results. For example, in future studies, each session a quiz can be given to traditional or other teaching groups based on the things taught in previous sessions, so that students can devote time to learning. This way, it can be found whether the amount of time spent in the flipped classroom is the influencing factor or the quality and the way time is spent is also important.

Another suggestion for future studies is to examine the role of flipped learning in the ability of general English students to answer questions at different cognitive levels. Other individual characteristics of students such as learning styles can also be studied.

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# **The Impact of Reflective Reciprocal Teaching on Iranian Intermediate EFL Learners' Academic Self-Concept**

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## **Abstract**

The present research sets out to examine the impact of reflective reciprocal teaching (RRT) as a mode of instruction on the academic self-concept of Iranian English as a foreign language (EFL) learners. To this end, three classes comprising 100 EFL learners majoring in English teaching were selected according to convenience sampling and designated as the reciprocal teaching (RT) group, the reflective reciprocal teaching (RRT) group, and the control group. A mixed-method approach and a quasi-experimental design with a pretest, treatment, and posttest paradigm were utilized in the present study. In the quantitative phase, the data were gathered via the academic self-concept inventory. The descriptive statistics and ANOVA results indicated the significant impact of the RRT on the learners' academic self-concept. Also, qualitative investigation of the learners' perceptions via semi-structured interviews and content analysis revealed their positive perceptions regarding this mode of instruction. Taken together, it appears that the significant others (teacher and peers) role and instruction have the main contribution to the learners' self-beliefs. The results of the intervention

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program, in turn, generate a new outlook on all teaching, learning, and assessment processes. They also provide suitable grounds for improving psychoeducational constructs besides learners' cognitive and regulatory skills.

**Keywords:** cognitive apprenticeship, cooperative learning, learners' perception, reciprocal teaching, reflection

## **Introduction**

Over the past 40 years, the paradigm shift has made drastic alterations in second language education (Jacobs & Farrell, 2001). In the same vein, educational practices will most likely be improved when the educational system is redesigned with prioritizing individuality (Wangid, 2014) by focusing mainly on training self-directed and self-regulated learners (Akerlind, 2007). The concept of self-regulated learning (SRL), being quietly relevant to the notion of learner-centeredness (Bown & White, 2010), includes all cognitive, metacognitive, and affective factors (Wangid, 2014). Within the context of education, teachers have a significant role in cultivating all of these dimensions. This accomplishment can be fulfilled via teaching explicit instructional strategies, familiarizing learners with the concept of autonomy, providing a constructivist learning environment (Kirschner et al., 2006), and "constructing a positive self-efficacy perspective about their power of self-regulated learning processes" (Zhao, 2016, p.173). Several instructions and practices provide the foundation for reaching these objectives. Reciprocal teaching could be introduced as one of them, helping learners strengthen this process's cognitive and metacognitive elements (Delett et al., 2001). This instruction deals with scaffolding, modeling, and social interaction by making learners involved in cooperation as doers and observers (Rahimi & Sadeghi, 2015). In addition, reflection is highly valued in the self-regulation process (Zimmerman, 2000), and reflective practices introduce learners as key agents who construct their understanding (Osterman, 1998). However, to become self-regulated, the affective dimension related to the learners' emotions, attitudes, and beliefs (Zulkarnaen, 2019) should also be considered critical. Academic self-concept, attributed to the mentioned beliefs and attitudes, has been regarded as an entity having a significant contribution to the learners' SRL and academic

performance (Green et al., 2012). This psycho-educational construct deals with the overall belief of self-worth connected to the learners' perceived academic competence (McCoach & Siegel, 2003). Many investigations, including the one conducted by Asadi Piran (2014), have confirmed the vital role of affective factors such as self-related issues in language learning. However, it seems that the contribution of self-related factors, especially self-concept, to this process has been largely overlooked in EFL contexts. In other words, the dominant educational paradigm of these contexts neglect learners' interests, beliefs, and sense of self (e.g., self-regard/self-worth) by preventing their voices from being heard (Fandiño Parra, 2008). In these contexts, Iran is a good example; there is a scarcity of effective learner-centered instructions that empower learners by making them self-directed and engaged (Motallebzadeh, 2009). Among a plethora of studies indicating the importance of the academic self-concept to learning achievement (e.g., Ghazvini, 2011; Rodriguez, 2009), few have explained the practical significance of encouraging self-growth and the most effective ways of fulfilling this accomplishment in foreign language classrooms. Notwithstanding the great relevance of deep learning strategies, self-reflection, and strategic learning approaches to the development of learners' self-concept (Rodriguez, 2009), there has been little empirical research examining the impact of instructions addressing all of these issues on Iranian EFL students' self-issues, primarily academic self-concept. Therefore, this study attempts to introduce a new mode of scaffolding strategy-based instruction, reflective reciprocal teaching, integrating cognitive apprenticeship principles into collaborative learning to provide external and internal input resources. It also focuses on reflection as a personal process (Schon, 1987) and a social activity (Osterman & Kotkamp, 2004). To put it another way, it aims to improve academic self-concept formation, the most important contributor to SRL's affective motivation dimension (McCombs, 1989), by combining introspective and retrospective reflective practices and working on four reading strategies: predicting, questioning, clarifying, and summarizing, all of which are explicitly taught before being practiced through cooperative learning techniques. The following research questions have been designed to achieve this goal:

**Q1.** Are there any significant differences among the three modes of instruction (reflective reciprocal teaching, reciprocal teaching, and non-reflective/reciprocal teaching) in terms of their effects on Iranian EFL learners' academic self-concept?

**Q2.** How do Iranian EFL learners perceive reflective reciprocal teaching mode of instruction?

### **Literature review**

Students' active engagement in learning is emphasized in recent approaches by their empowerment in decision making processes (Spiller, 2012). Boosting active learning in classrooms could be fulfilled via learner-centered instructional strategies (Er et al., 2012), assisting learners to become more responsible and gain positive self-worth and self-regard (Arnold & Brown, 1999). As can be traced in most active learning theories concentrating on the social dimensions of learning, participating in these activities gives them the best opportunity to learn cooperatively, think critically, and act creatively (Niemi, 2012). Beside behavioral, cognitive, and social dimensions of active learning (Watkins et al., 2007), affect has also made a prominent contribution to this process (Drew & Mackie, 2011). Among affective factors, self and self-related issues play an essential role concerning the learners' academic performance (Green et al., 2006). In this regard, Naouel (2015) claimed that the self is a central part of individuals' personalities, which has a significant contribution to their judgment. It is also considered a substantial entity in self-regulated learning (Zimmerman, 2008). Accordingly, "for self-regulated learning processes to be engaged, students must possess positive beliefs and perceptions of competency and control in particular learning situations" (McCombs, 1986, p. 314). Self-concept is an exclusive active cluster of such beliefs dealing with self-controlling of individuals' behaviors, considered a byproduct of the constellation of individuals' self-perceptions resulting from their interactions with the environment and evaluations done by significant others (Schunk, 1987). Developing learners' academic self-concept as a self-regulated capacity activates their ability to be flexible in the learning process

(Entwistle & Wilson, 1977) and paves the way for them to adopt a deep approach to learning (Evans et al., 2003). Many investigations have confirmed the affective factors' vital role, such as self-related issues, in language learning (Asadi Piran, 2014; Wang & Wu, 2020). However, the remaining question, which has not been investigated thoroughly up to now, is what role, if any, educational contexts can play in developing these constructs. In other words, there is inadequate empirical evidence revealing the importance of the causal role of various interventions regarding forming and improving these issues (Shavelson et al., 1976). Therefore, this study, considering learners' psychological states (academic self-concept) formation "resulting from a joint product of individuals' cognition and the social milieu" (Heidari-Shahreza, 2014, p. 89), aimed at investigating the impact of the reflective reciprocal teaching (RRT) mode of instruction on Iranian EFL learners' academic self-concept, and as a result, paving the way for preparing the prerequisites of developing the affective dimension of self-regulated learning. RRT, as depicted in figure 1, is a scaffolding strategy-based instruction representing many cognitive apprenticeship model features such as direct instruction, modeling, coaching, and scaffolding implemented in a reciprocal teaching/learning system. It increases learners' autonomy by including them in reflective practices such as portfolio creation, which is advised as a practical strategy for self-exploration, self-discovery, and self-disclosure (Paris & Winograd, 2003).

**Figure 1**

*The reflective reciprocal teaching mode of instruction*



The significance of this study lies in discovering a suitable instructional method to help EFL learners develop a psychological factor contributing to the SRL besides their academic abilities. Considering the importance and contribution of self and self-related issues to individual learners' lives makes it clear that educational goals should not be restricted only to developing academic competence and achievement. However, they should suppress this area by providing contexts for fully functioning individuals who pursue their morally acceptable self. In other words, individual learners' self-beliefs should be considered as crucial as their academic achievement.

## **Method**

### ***Participants***

The study included 100 first-year EFL students from the Binaloud Institute of Higher Education in Mashhad, Iran, majoring in English language teaching. They were chosen via convenience sampling, but they were divided



into three groups using random selection. Each group included 31 to 38 EFL students in it. The Oxford Quick Placement Test was used to establish how homogeneous they were.

### ***Instrumentation***

Two tools were used to answer the research questions: an academic self-concept inventory and a semi-structured interview. The data were collected quantitatively using a translated version of the academic self-concept inventory, initially designed and developed by Ordaz-Villegas et al. (2013). This measure has 16 items, each having a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 5 (never) to 1 (always). It reports four task-oriented domains of self-regulation estimating learners' positive attitude regarding the acquisition of knowledge and the learning process, general intellectual ability focusing on their competencies to process, analyses, and synthesize information to be matched with new situations, motivation evaluating the degree of learners' inclination to do a particular task, and creativity measuring their degree of awareness regarding learning deficiencies to find solutions and make decisions strategically (Whillier et al., 2017). Also, semi-structured interviews were conducted to acquire qualitative data on the learners' perceptions of the efficacy of the intervention. According to the fact that academic self-concept is characterized by two elements of descriptive aspects of self-perception and evaluative ones (Marsh & Craven, 2002), all of the interview questions should measure learners' perception and evaluation of their self, dealing with academic domains such as self-regulation, creativity, motivation, and general intellectual abilities (Ordaz-Villegaz et al., 2013). The interview's descriptive questions were created using a quintamensional methodology to determine the strength of a respondent's beliefs and attitudes (Harrell & Bradley, 2009).

### ***Procedure***

The impact of the RRT mode of instruction on Iranian EFL learners' academic self-concept was studied in two major quantitative and qualitative phases ending for an academic year from September 22th, 2018, to May 31st,

2019 (34 sessions). The first phase was started with a pilot study done on a group of learners being similar to the participants of the actual investigation. The translated version of the academic self-concept inventory was field-tested before implementing the research project. Following the implementation of the pilot study and the use of the Oxford Quick Placement Test to determine the learners' degree of competence homogeneity, three already formed classes were randomly assigned to two experimental groups (RRT and RT) and one control group received a non-reflective and non-reciprocal teaching instruction. Each of the three groups went through identical steps. However, what set them apart was the level of responsibility given to the teacher and students in terms of teaching, learning, and assessment approaches, as well as the importance of reflection and reflective practices in the learning process. First, in the pretesting stage, the teacher asked all three groups to fill out a questionnaire as the pre-assessment of academic self-concept. One of the experimental groups was exposed to the "reciprocal teaching instruction" focusing on scaffolding provided through explicit instruction, modeling, and collaboration. To introduce this intervention to the RT experimental group, first, the teacher explained the cognitive strategies (predicting, clarifying, questioning, and summarizing) explicitly and modeled how to apply them. Then, she randomly chose groups of four or five learners and assigned each group member a role dealing with the mentioned strategies. Next, the students must cooperate in pairs or groups to implement reciprocal learning practices by providing and receiving acceptable performance-related feedback. The fundamental objective of this form of social education technique is cooperation (Liu & Bu, 2016). On the other hand, the instructor in the second experimental group, the RRT group, went over all the relevant criteria regarding the purposes, instructional objectives, tasks, and procedures in the first two sessions. Following that, participants in the RRT group received a six-stage treatment that followed the principles of the cognitive apprenticeship method (Collins et al., 1988). Using a thinking aloud strategy, participating in conferencing sessions, and collecting portfolios provided them many chances to reflect introspectively and retrospectively on their learning experiences. During the first stage of this

mode of instruction, the teacher explicitly taught all the reciprocal teaching strategies before modeling them. In the second stage, she demonstrated how and when the learners could use the practiced strategies via modeling. After that, throughout the third and fourth stages, the learners were asked to work cooperatively on the four strategies mentioned above while being coached and scaffolded to increase their positive interdependence, individual accountability, and equal participation (Kagan, 1989). The instructor observed and monitored the learners' activities through the coaching stage, provided explicit feedback on their performances, assisted them whenever necessary, and guided them to become meta-cognitively aware and reflective in their strategy use. Subsequently, through the scaffolding stage, the instructor using different scaffold supports, gradually withdrew the process and let them cope with the task situation and manage the process independently (Enkenberg, 2001, p. 503). In the fifth stage of this intervention, the learners could articulate their strategies and think how and when to use them via the thinking aloud technique. In this phase, introduced as the articulation phase, they could share their ideas and receive different feedbacks from their teacher and peers regarding their performances. Subsequently, by collecting their portfolio as reflective practice and a self-assessment tool, the learners went through the sixth stage of this intervention program, the retrospective reflective stage. Through this time, they could monitor their strategy use, evaluate their progress over time, and reflect on various learning challenges. Generally, by receiving teachers' metalinguistic feedback, they had another chance to gain more independent self-control regarding their language learning ability. In other words, after doing each assignment, they received some teacher's feedback (elicitation and metalinguistic clues) and did suitable corrections. Then, they had to answer some reflective questions to become aware of their process.

Furthermore, the teacher required each group to participate in a conference discussion every four weeks, providing them with another opportunity to assess their progress, diagnose problems, and evaluate different components of their portfolios based on the competencies and strategies that

had to be achieved within the reflective reciprocal teaching instruction. The recorded notes, given in a joint decision between the teacher and the learners, were kept in their portfolios. After that, during the study's second phase, the qualitative phase, semi-structured interviews on the RRT learners' impressions (descriptive and evaluative) of the RRT mode of instruction were also designed and conducted. Finally, the teacher requested that all the students complete the academic self-concept questionnaire that they had completed earlier.

## **Results**

Based on the first research question, ANOVA analyses were applied to investigate the impact of the RT and the RRT modes of instruction on learners' academic self-concept. However, because the inventory used to analyze the learners' academic self-concept was translated, the questionnaire was first validated through a pilot study. A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) utilizing the LISREL 8.50 statistical package was performed, determining the scale's validity (see Appendix B). The recommended instruction consisted of four dimensions: self-regulation, intellectual ability, motivation, and creativity. Each of these constructs is composed of four items. In this regard, several fit indices were examined to evaluate the model fit. The results indicated that the proposed model fitted well with the empirical data and that all items had accepted factor loading.

### ***Quantitative Phase***

The first research question looked at the impact of the RRT and RT modes of instruction on the students' academic self-concept. A one-way ANOVA comparing RRT, RT, and control group's means were used to verify that all groups were homogeneous regarding their academic self-concept prior to administering the intervention program. Before diving into the results of the one-way ANOVA on the academic self-concept pretest, it's important to note that the variances of the groups were not assumed to be homogenous. The significant findings of the Levene's test ( $F(2, 97) = 6.60, p.05$ ) showed that the assumption of homogeneity of variances was violated on the pretest of

academic self-concept, as shown in Table 1. There is no need to worry about the violation of this assumption because the ANOVA table can be replaced with the robust Welch results (Table 3).

**Table 1**

*Pretest of academic self-concept by groups; homogeneity of variances test*

		Levene' Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Pretest	Based on Mean	6.614	2	97	.002
	Based on Median	6.602	2	97	.002
Academic	Based on Median and with adjusted df	6.602	2	71.848	.002
Self-Concept	Based on trimmed mean	6.594	2	97	.002

Table 2 provides the descriptive statistics for the three groups on the academic self-concept pretest. The RRT (M = 57.13, SD = 10.63), RT (M = 55.54, SD = 5.77), and control (M = 56.54, SD = 6.32) groups showed very comparable means on the pretest of academic self-concept.

**Table 2**

*Descriptive statistics; pretest of academic self-concept by groups*

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
RRT	38	57.1316	10.63185	1.72471	53.6370	60.6262
RT	31	55.5484	5.77834	1.03782	53.4289	57.6679
Control	31	56.5484	6.32371	1.13577	54.2288	58.8679
Total	100	56.4600	8.05714	.80571	54.8613	58.0587

The major findings of the robust Welch test are shown in Table 3. The results revealed that there were no significant variations between the three groups' averages on the pretest of academic self-concept ( $F(2, 82.88) = .357, p$

>.05). As a result, we can deduce that before the treatment, the three groups were homogeneous concerning their academic self-concept.

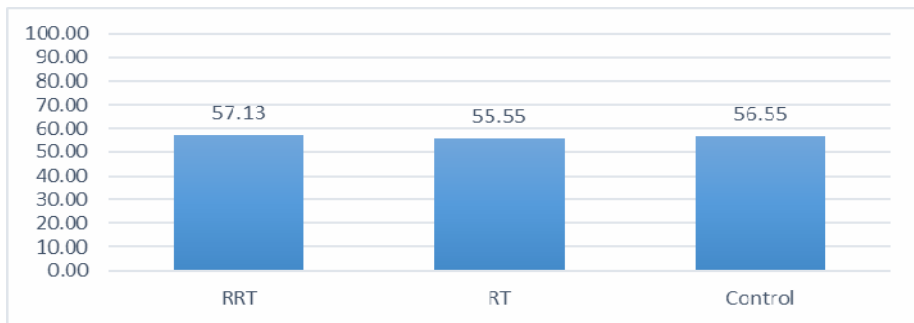
**Table 3**

*Robust tests of equality of means pretest of academic self-concept by groups*

	Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Brown-Forsythe	.357	2	82.881	.701

**Figure 2**

*Means on pretest of academic self-concept by groups*



On the posttest of academic self-concept, another one-way ANOVA was used to compare the means of the RRT, RT, and control groups. However, before doing an in-depth analysis of the results, keep in mind that the variances of the groups were kept homogeneous. Table 4 shows that the three groups had similar variances on the posttest of academic self-concept, as demonstrated by the non-significant results of the Levene's test ( $F(2, 97) = 2.14, p >.05$ ).

**Table 4**

*Test of homogeneity of variances; posttest of academic self-concept by groups*

		Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Academic Self- Concept	Posttest Based on Mean	2.125	2	97	.125
	Based on Median	2.147	2	97	.122
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	2.147	2	90.420	.123
	Based on trimmed mean	2.050	2	97	.134

As depicted in Table 5, on the posttest of academic self-concept, the RRT group had the highest mean ( $M = 102.07$ ,  $SD = 9.19$ ). Following that were the RT ( $M = 86.32$ ,  $SD = 9.99$ ) and control ( $M = 77.87$ ,  $SD = 6.43$ ) groups.

**Table 5**

*Descriptive statistics; posttest of academic self-concept by groups*

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
RRT	38	102.0789	9.19571	1.49174	99.0564	105.1015
RT	31	86.3226	9.99129	1.79449	82.6577	89.9874
Control	31	77.8710	6.43813	1.15632	75.5094	80.2325
Total	100	89.6900	13.43950	1.34395	87.0233	92.3567

As represented in Table 6, there were significant differences between the three groups' averages on the posttest of academic self-concept ( $F(2, 97) = 69.22$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $\eta^2 = .588$  reflecting a large effect size). As a result, the null hypothesis was shown to be false.

**Table 6**

*One-way ANOVA; posttest of academic self-concept by groups*

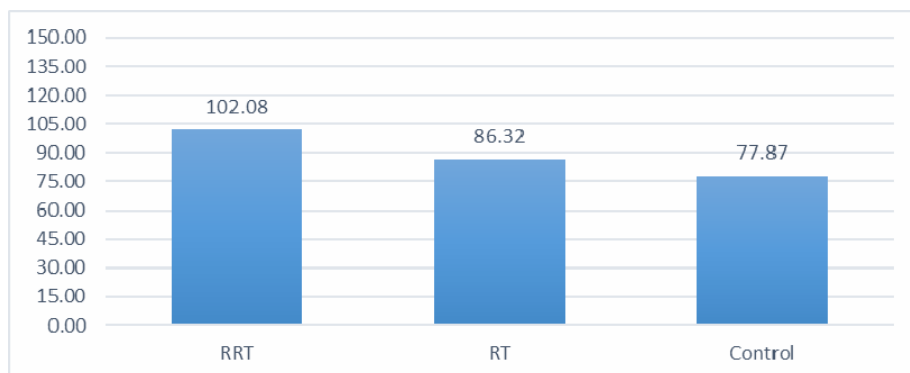
	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	10514.369	2	5257.184	69.220	.000
Within Groups	7367.021	97	75.949		
Total	17881.390	99			

The results of post-hoc Scheffe's tests are shown in Table 7. These findings and descriptive data provided in Table 5 indicate that the RRT group ( $M = 102.07$ ) considerably outperformed both the RT group ( $M = 86.32$ ) ( $MD = 15.75$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and the control group ( $M = 77.87$ ) ( $MD = 24.20$ ,  $p < .05$ ) on the posttest of academic self-concept.

**Table 7***Post-hoc Scheffe's Tests; posttest of academic self-concept by groups*

(I) Group	(J) Group	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
RT	Control	8.45161*	2.21358	.001	2.9486	13.9546
RRT	RT	15.75637*	2.10917	.000	10.5129	20.9998
	Control	24.20798*	2.10917	.000	18.9645	29.4515

\*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

**Figure 3***Means on posttest of academic self-concept by groups***Qualitative Phase**

The current study additionally investigated EFL learners' perceptions of the RRT technique by concentrating on the following research question:

**Q2.** How do Iranian EFL learners perceive reflective reciprocal teaching mode of instruction?

The quantitative phase's findings revealed that, while both the RT and RRT groups beat the control group in terms of their participants' academic self-concept, the RRT group's learners made significant development in this area when compared to the RT group. A semi-structured interview was designed and conducted during the qualitative phase of this study to support the hypothesis that the RRT group learners' self-involvement was developed more than the RT group members. Due to this aim, the learners' were asked about their feelings, attitudes, and beliefs regarding the introduced mode of



instruction. Following that, their responses to the interview questions were audio-recorded, written down, and examined. This study's coding technique yielded positive and negative views, including three general themes and eight subthemes. The emerging themes were divided into three categories: the sense of value, self-regulated learning, and learning frustration. The data's three emerging themes and eight subthemes are illustrated in figure 5 (Appendix B). The results were also depicted in figure 6, created by MAXQDA software (Appendix C). Table 8 shows the proportion of features perceived by the learners as a result of the RRT mode of instruction.

**Table 8**

*Percentage of categories deduced from the learners' perception*

		Themes	Subthemes
RRT G	Positive perceptions 95%	Sense of value 51%	Confidence 27%
			Intrinsic motivation 24%
		Self-regulated 44%	Autonomy 21%
			Perceived competence 7%
	Metacognitive awareness 4%		
	Creativity 12%		
	Negative perceptions 5	Learning frustration	Time consuming 2%
			Anxiety provoking 3%

As depicted in table 8, sense of value, the first theme, was then subdivided into two subthemes: intrinsic motivation and confidence. Encouragement, value/utility, attention-keeping, and interest/enjoyment were among the latter. These aspects, highlighted by 51% of the participants, were linked to the teacher's supporting role and the technique itself.

**Confidence.** As seen in Table 8, 27% of the learners felt that participating in various activities throughout the mentioned instruction offered them a sense of value in coping with their confidence. This claim was echoed by

a student who remarked,

- (1) *"Gaining self-control over my thoughts, feelings, and social acceptance were the positive consequences of this model. Taking part in different activities through this course made me think that my success depends on both my peers' contributions and my effort and abilities."*

**Intrinsic Motivation.** Increased intrinsic motivation was another positive consequence of the teaching intervention. The findings indicated that 24% of the learners experienced great excitement and anticipation regarding the activities they were engaged in and the teacher's facilitative role. Concerning this matter, one of the learners remarked,

- (2) *"The teacher provided the most effective encouragement this semester in her reactions to our errors and problems in class. Indeed, her encouraging rather than punitive responses were based on our abilities, not beyond them, to keep us motivated. Both in class and at home, we were encouraged to practice more activities, and the good thing was that we didn't go through a new lesson until we got to the previous unit."*

Also, sustained attention during learning activities and increased learners' interest were **highlighted** by examining their perceptions precisely. Concerning this matter, some of the participants admitted that they could keep track of their thoughts using various techniques and appreciated the learning process, which they described as novel to them. One of them phrased it this way:

- (3) *"Teaching strategies explicitly, the teacher helped us not be distracted from the main points because of providing effective feedback regarding whys and hows of using them. I had a satisfying and enjoyable class, primarily working on worksheets and teacher reviews that were so innovative. It was such a way to persuade me to study before each class."*

Results also showed that 44% of students became self-regulated due to their optimistic self-image about their academic capabilities and skills. This theme was categorized into the learners' autonomy, metacognitive awareness,

creativity, and perceived competence.

**Autonomy.** As indicated in table 8, 21% of the RRT group members confessed that because of the multiple chances they had to establish their learning objectives, self-evaluate their successes, and reflect on their accomplishments, by the end of the course, they had become independent and felt autonomous. On this subject, one of the interviewees remarked,

(4) *"In this class, we were responsible for our learning even in terms of timing, dealing with and analyzing the text, and using the techniques. Compared to previous classes, there was a kind of control and purposefulness at all stages. However, this control was more through the person himself than the teacher."*

**Perceived Competence.** Another subtheme contributing 7% of the learners' perceptions of the mentioned instruction was perceived competence. As believed by Reynolds et al. (2009), this category deals with one's confidence in his/her ability to do a task efficiently. Concerning this matter, one of the learners believed,

(5) *"Participating in reciprocal teaching and learning activities made me more active, boosted my confidence in my ability to set, pursue, and attain my goals, and increased my learning resource use. This effort also improved my ambiguity tolerance when confronted with complex or unexpected circumstances"*.

**Metacognitive Awareness.** Due to the learners' perspective, metacognitive awareness was another milestone achieved by this mode of instruction. In other words, 4% of the students stated that RT strategies and reflective practices enabled them to define personal learning goals, assess the quality of their work, and regularly track their progress. In this regard, one of them asserted,

(6) *"Using reciprocal teaching strategies helped me think continuously about what I learned, check my understanding, and plan what I wanted to do next. The Portfolio activity was the best way to practice and re-examine my knowledge during this period."*

**Creativity.** Finally, as 12% of the learners mentioned, their creativity

was fostered by cooperative learning, their teacher's facilitative role, and reflective practices. As noted by one of the learners,

(7) *"Multiple foci on details done via group work followed by reflective practices paved the way for me to envision issues from different dimensions and made me more critical regarding my learning process."*

Despite many potential benefits of this mode of instruction, some students (5%) pointed to the frustration they experienced due to its anxiety-provoking and time-consuming activities. For instance, working in groups was the most strenuous activity because they had to digest and absorb the other's opinions in addition to theirs themselves. Also, the assessment and reflective activities they dealt with while gathering their portfolio were demanding and challenging.

In a nutshell, the findings reiterated that this psychoeducational intervention was highly appreciated by the RRT group learners. Engaging learners in cooperative learning, thinking aloud protocols, reflective practices (introspective and retrospective), and self-assessment procedures while gathering their portfolios increased their autonomy, self-involvement, confidence, motivation, and accountability, and accordingly made them aware of the development of their positive self-perception of competence. In other words, these findings signify that increasing learners' positive self-perception about their competence dealing specifically with their creativity, intellectual ability, self-regulation, and intrinsic motivation could be fulfilled under special programs considering them as agentive figures with respected abilities when working cooperatively with significant others. Eventually, the quantitative and qualitative findings demonstrated that the RRT significantly impacted EFL learners' academic self-concept.

## **Discussion**

This study sought to investigate the impact of a mode of instruction following the constructivist philosophy of teaching (Brown, 2008) on EFL learners' academic self-concept by focusing on democratic education, higher-order thinking skills, individual differences, cognitive and metacognitive

factors, cooperative learning, teacher scaffolding, and using authentic tasks (Wangid, 2014). It also tried to elucidate the best ways to promote self-regulated learning skills dealing with the individuals' competence beliefs regarding a task (Alexiou & Paraskeva, 2010). The study results indicated that both RT and RRT instructions had a significant role in developing learners' academic self-concept. However, the RRT group outperformed the RT group regarding this aspect. This conclusion could be justified by focusing on some distinguishing features of the RRT instruction.

The reflective dimension of this study, providing the internal sources of input, makes RRT instruction distinct from other similar instructions. Therefore, reflective practices can be considered effective in increasing learners' academic self-concept, especially its metacognitive dimension. This finding accords with the study results indicating that creating an e-portfolio could increase learners' sense of self. By doing this activity, learners were dealt with a process of reflection on their learning (Rowley & Munday, 2014).

Moreover, explicit teaching is considered the other distinguishing feature of the RRT that could be contributed to the concluded results. In pursuit of increasing learners' academic growth, explicit instruction is introduced as a useful tool used by educators (Archer & Hughes, 2010). Many experimental investigations supported the necessity of explicit teaching strategies besides teacher modeling to increase self-regulatory skills (Cleary & Zimmerman, 2004; Schraw, 1998).

Also, by considering sociocultural theories of the zone of proximal development and expert scaffolding as the theoretical frameworks of the introduced mode of instruction, it can be concluded that both significant others (teacher and peers) and language learning experiences, as the external input sources (Shavelson et al., 1976), had the main contribution to the development of the learners' academic self-concept. Concerning this matter, it is believed that there is a reciprocal relationship between learners' self-system and social and learning environment, guaranteeing the existence and growth of L2 self-concept (Kehrwald, 2014). Cooperative learning, through which learners could perceive themselves as members of a group (Nawaz & Javed, 2014), can be

assumed as a logical instruction providing the best opportunities to develop this sense. This result can be substantiated by some of the previous investigations which admitted the effectiveness of cooperative learning strategy regarding the formation of positive perceptions in learners performances compared to their peers and concluded that the learners' self-concept does not have a congenital essence. Instead, it is highly affected by its surroundings, and its growth proceeds while individuals gain new experiences and interact with significant others (Burns, 1982; Feldman, 2019).

Subsequently, discussing learners' perceptions regarding the impact of the RRT mode of instruction on their academic self-concept provided the researcher with the confidence to claim that the intervention program has been successful and effective. The results of the qualitative phase indicated that both metacognitive and affective dimensions of the learners' academic self-concept were enhanced due to the RRT instruction. Cooperative learning was considered as one of the major causes of shaping learners' positive beliefs and attitudes due to the impact of this instruction. According to the learners' claims, this technique gave them plenty of chances to try different strategies and negotiate with others, boosting their self-confidence and intrinsic motivation. These results are consistent with a prior study's finding, which found that cooperative learning substantially impacted learners' judgments of their language learning ability (Zohrabi & Yousefi, 2016). Scrutinizing the learners' viewpoints also disclosed the value of reflective practices concerning their motivation, one of the academic self-concept categories (López et al., 2011). Other studies, such as the one examining the effect of reflective practices on advanced EFL students' intrinsic motivation and readiness to speak (Zohrabi & Yousefi, 2016), support this conclusion.

The second theme, self-regulated learning, deals with learners' autonomy, metacognitive awareness, and perceived competence. It also addresses their creativity. The majority of the learners who received the RRT mode of instruction claimed that they were autonomous by the conclusion of the semester. Most of them using portfolios as self-reflective and self-monitoring tools claimed that collecting, revising, and assessing their work

made them aware of their strengths, weaknesses, and ultimate accomplishments. These activities also helped them build a positive attitude toward their learning agency and autonomy. Previous research has demonstrated the effectiveness of using the portfolio as a reflective teaching technique for these challenges (Nunes, 2004; Pollari, 2000).

The major contribution of significant others and the environmental reinforcements to the learners' self-concept is undisputable (Shavelson et al., 1976). However, metacognition could also shape this issue (Veenman et al., 2006). In this regard, it is mentioned that besides external input resources, learners' self-perceptions are highly influenced and formed by internal sources of input (metacognition). In other words, their internally generated view of self is shaped via metacognitive evaluations (Mandelman et al., 2010). Engaging learners to reflect and evaluate the quality of their performance might help them become more metacognitively aware of what they're doing and improve their monitoring abilities while learning. This aim can also be accomplished by helping them diagnose their actual weaknesses and strengths and making them aware of the extent to which they achieved the determined objectives during a course (Andrade & Du, 2007).

Another subtheme derived from learners' perceptions was perceived competence. That's to say, according to their beliefs and attitudes, both reciprocal teaching activities and reflective practices that incorporated unique evaluation approaches helped them establish a positive self-image regarding their academic abilities. This endeavor also improved their tolerance for uncertainty when confronted with complex or unexpected problems. They were also satisfied with their teacher or classmates' revisions, modifications, and comments. They also indicated that receiving constructive feedback and indirect responses to their errors gave them another chance to examine their capabilities and weaknesses, inspiring them to try their best to attain their goals.

Additionally, the findings revealed that cooperative learning and reflective practices boosted learners' creativity by increasing their multiple-perspective thinking ability throughout the learning process. The teacher's

engagement in providing practical challenges and encouraging students to share leadership roles was incredibly inspiring. According to learners' assertions, it inspired them to follow their intuition, take other chances, and examine their hypotheses. This inference accords with the investigation considering the importance and the effect of close teacher/student relationships on learners' creativity (Lilly & Bramwell-Resjskind, 2004).

It is also worth mentioning that, while most of the RRT group's participants were optimistic about the stated training, a few were irritated and concerned when they came across a new technique with some identifiable characteristics. However, it should be noted that the mentioned problems were subsequently alleviated while collecting their portfolios. Another research showed portfolio evaluation to effectively lower learners' anxiety, which may support this result (Huang, 2012).

In conclusion, these findings suggest that engaging learners in cooperative learning, reflective practices (introspective and retrospective), and self-assessment, and emphasizing the vital role of significant others (teachers and peers) through the process of learning could improve their attitudes, feelings, and perceptions regarding their academic abilities. They also could crystalize the ego-involving nature of language learning by focusing on the social nature of this process. Accordingly, based on the results gained through both quantitative and qualitative phases, it can be concluded that the RRT had an essential role in developing EFL learners' academic self-concept.

### **Conclusion and Implications**

Due to the complicated nature of language which results from different interactions among many factors, learning a language is regarded a notably psychological process, in particular in relation to the fundamental needs of the learners. In this regard, teaching language should pave the way for the learners to gain autonomous learning (Montaño-González, 2017). Fulfilling this aim requires a combination and close association between the use of strategies, metacognition control, and motivational beliefs (Schraw et al., 2006). As a result, this study, like others looking into different aspects of this process,



attempted to elucidate the effectiveness of a particular mode of instruction, such as explicit teaching, modeling, scaffolding or coaching, and reflection, with the goal of improving Iranian EFL learners' academic self-concept (Efklides, 2011).

The findings from both the qualitative and quantitative stages demonstrated that reflective reciprocal teaching with external and internal input resources may be deemed a reliable mode of instruction, opening the path for learners' academic self-concept development. This instruction provides opportunities for boosting learners' positive beliefs regarding their actual capabilities when they are engaged in cooperative learning and doing reflective practices. It also improves learners' academic self-concept by familiarizing them with learning essential strategies taught through explicit teaching, making them believe in their capabilities as successful language learners. This case highlights the role of significant others (teacher and peers) in motivating learners. It also justifies the necessity of considering learners' beliefs, attitudes, and feelings about their language learning abilities in a language learning context in which they are mainly concerned about making a new self-image during a process demanding new forms of interactions and activities (Burns, 1982). Taken together, it appears that Iranian EFL learners experience different levels of self-concept due to various teaching techniques and instructions. In this regard, certain proactive strategies have been recommended to the instructors to help students build their self-concept. They include offering constructive comments and cautious praise, assisting learners in contributing appropriately to achievement and failure, and fostering positive self-talk (Craven et al., 2003).

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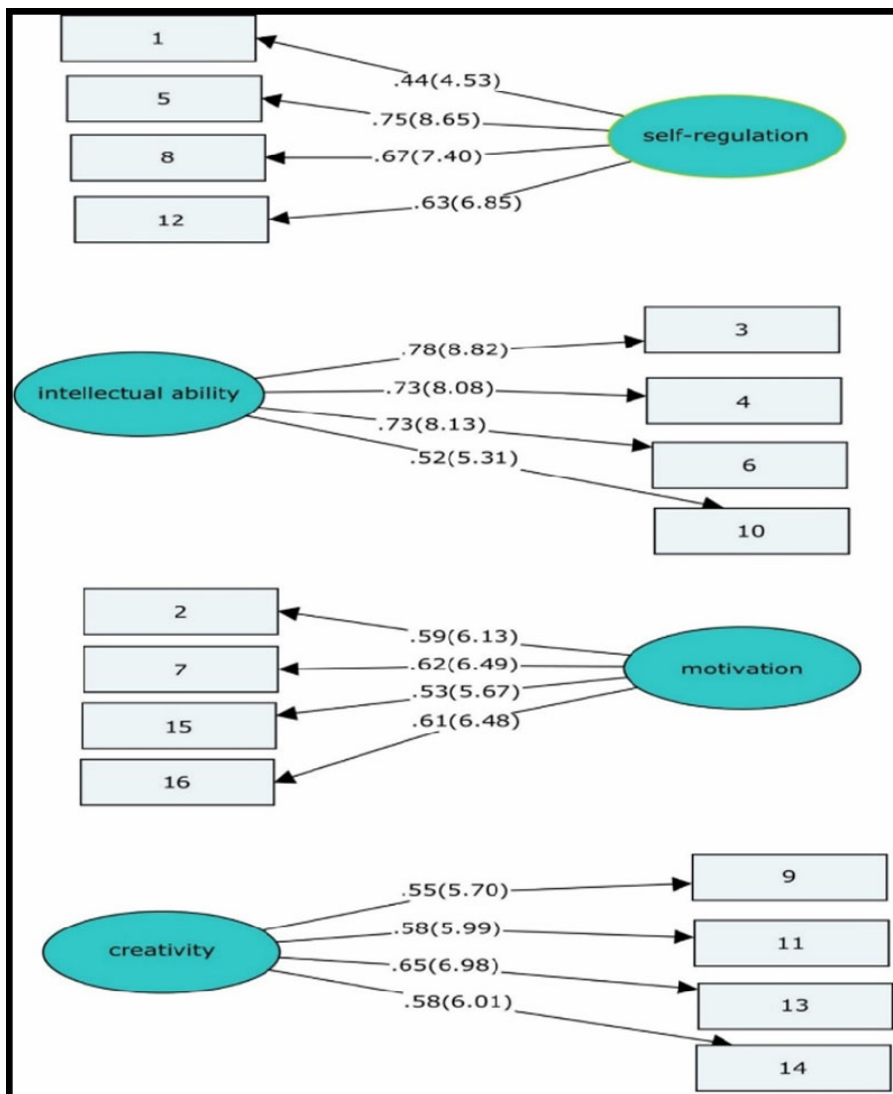
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## Appendix A

**Figure 4**

*The schematic representation of the four dimensions of academic self-concept and the corresponding items*

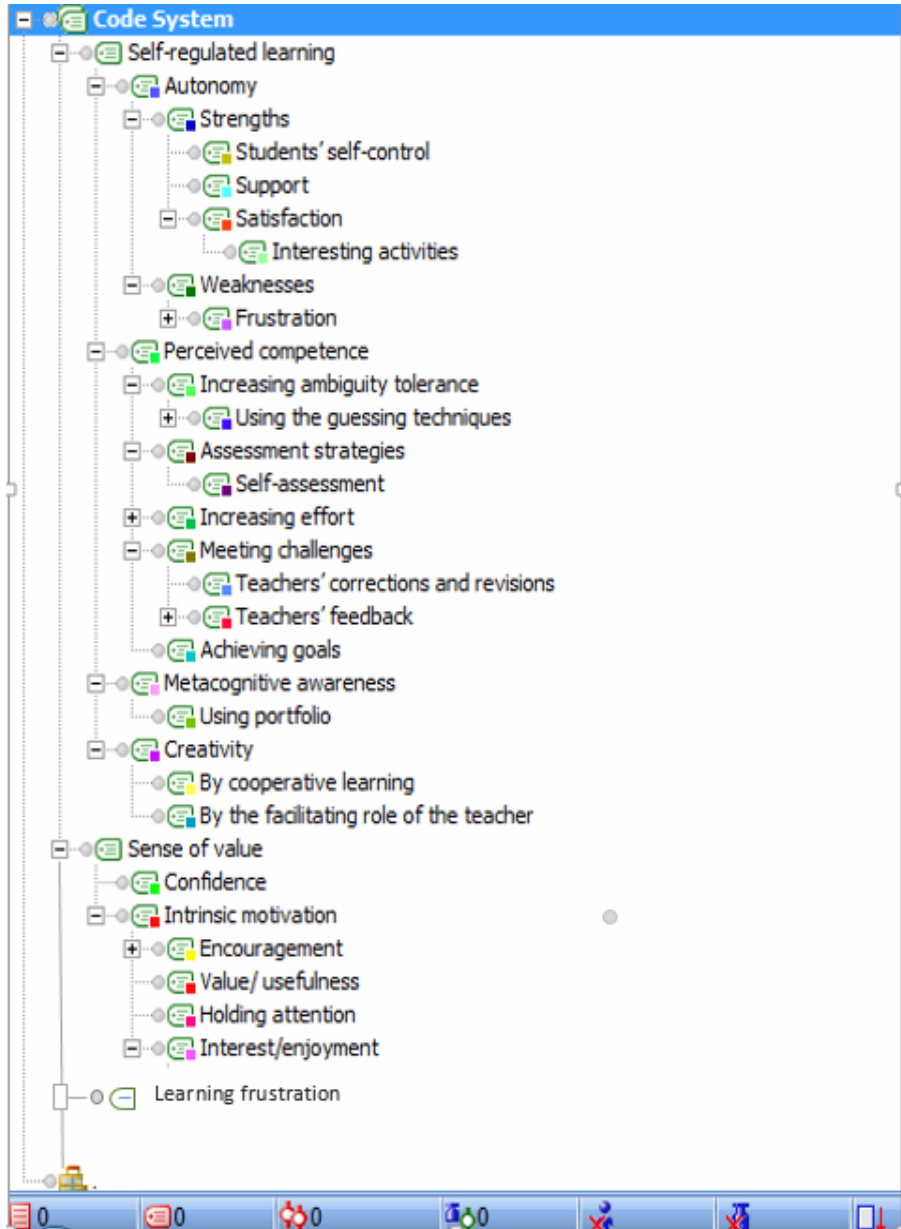


$X^2/df= 2.97$ ,  $RMSEA=. 079$ ,  $GFI=.91$ ,  $NFI=.90$

## Appendix B

Figure 5

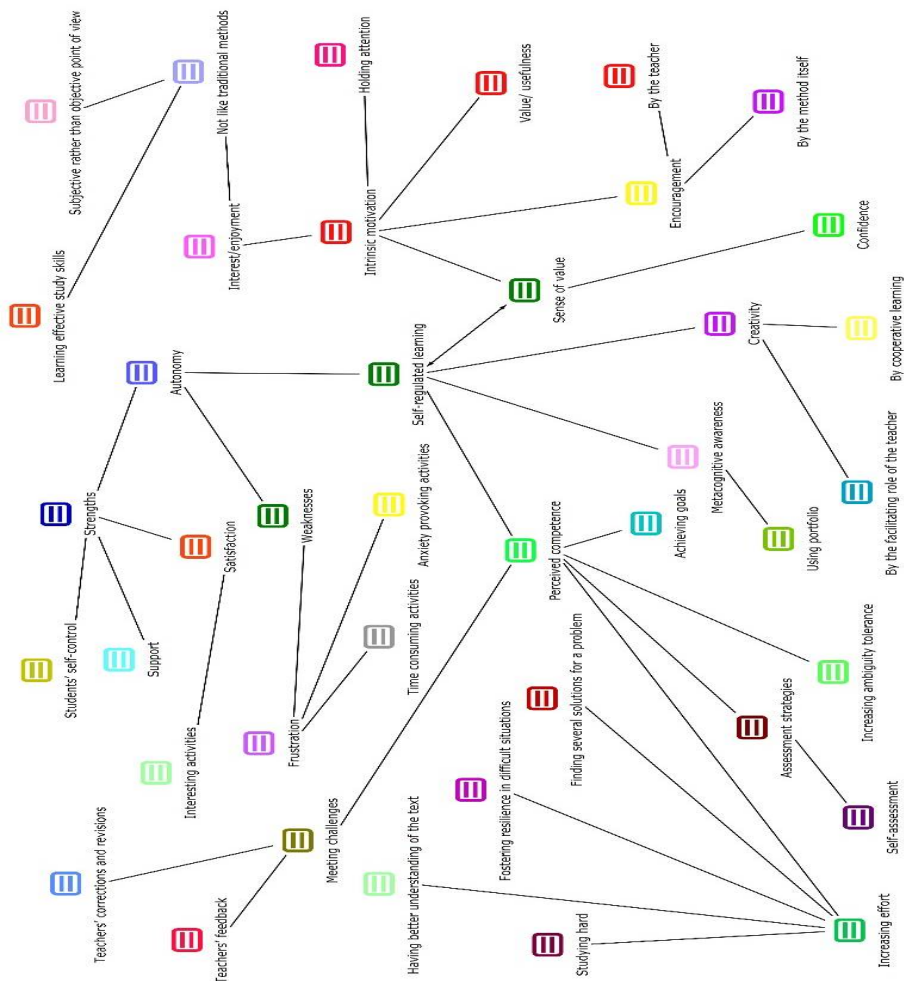
*The EFL learners Perceptions towards the RRT instruction: Themes and Subthemes*



## Appendix C

Figure 6

*EFL learners' perceptions towards RRT instruction*





# The Mediating Role of Cognitive Engagement in the Relationship Between Achievement Goals and Academic Burnout among Iranian EFL Learners

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## Abstract

Notwithstanding the saliency of cognitive engagement, achievement goals, and academic burnout in the learning process, their triple interaction has been underresearched. Thus, the current study aimed to test a structural model of cognitive engagement, achievement goals, and burnout and specifically to investigate the hypothesis that cognitive engagement mediates the effect of achievement goals on burnout. To this end, a total of 384 advanced Iranian EFL learners from different private English language teaching institutes in the cities of Shiraz and Bushehr were selected based on the convenience sampling method. The participants of the study were requested to complete three adapted and validated Likert scale instruments on cognitive engagement, the modified

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version of the Maslach Burnout Inventory-Student Survey, and achievement goals entailing 12, 10, and 12 items, respectively. The Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) approach was carried out to test the hypothesized model of the study. The results of Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) confirmed that the three instruments well fitted the data of the study. Also, the goodness-of-fit indices indicated a good model fit. Likewise, the findings of path analyses demonstrated that achievement goals negatively affected burnout and positively impacted cognitive engagement. Further, cognitive engagement was found to partially mediate the relationship between achievement goals and burnout. The findings of the present study may hold substantial theoretical and practical implications for EFL teachers, syllabus designers, and educational policymakers.

**Keywords:** academic burnout, achievement goals, cognitive engagement, EFL learners, SEM

## **Introduction**

EFL learners are behaviorally and emotionally engaged in a wide range of learning activities that are highly organized and coercive and targeted at a specific achievement goal (Schaufeli & Taris 2005). Indeed, achievement goals are crucial factors in academic achievement (Kaplan & Maehr, 2007) and language performance (Ruishi et al., 2021) and are negatively associated with academic burnout (Madigan & Curran, 2021). This implies that learners with low levels of achievement goals are more likely to experience academic burnout (Moneta, 2011; Naghsh & Khavak, 2016) which results in low academic achievement (Cam, et al., 2014; Oyoo et al., 2020) and harms learning engagement and motivation (Duru et al., 2014; Virtanen et al., 2016).

Achievement goal theory demonstrates that learners' purposes in engaging in achievement tasks impact their degree of task engagement (Greene et al., 2004; King et al., 2012) and that the goal structure of an educational setting might affect learners' motivation, cognitive engagement, and progress within that learning environment (Ames & Archer, 1988). Indeed, learners adopting goal-oriented strategies are more likely to engage in the learning task and emphasize achievement goals to reach assigned outcomes (Zarei & Usefli, 2015).

Academic burnout among learners involves a feeling of frustration

with the academic demands and requirements, pessimism about homework, and feeling inefficient and fatigued (Rostami et al., 2013) and is caused by learners' inability in coping with academic challenges and encompasses three components, namely cynicism, exhaustion, and inefficacy (Maslach et al., 1986; Salmela-Aro et al., 2009; Schaufeli et al., 2002b).

Cognitive engagement viewed as the antipode of burnout (Maslach & Leiter, 2008) plays a pivotal role in learners' progress (Cam et al., 2014; Greene, 2015; Schaufeli et al., 2002a). Research in the field of applied linguistics has shown that achievement goals (e.g., Mirhassani et al., 2007; Moghimi, 2020) and cognitive engagement (Philp & Duchesne, 2016) are among psychological constructs that are instrumental in language learning and development. There is also evidence that achievement goal orientations directly affect cognitive engagement (Meece et al., 1998; Wang & Bai, 2022).

These findings accentuate the central roles of cognitive engagement, achievement goals, and burnout in the learning process within educational settings and can provide the theoretical underpinning for the hypothesized model (see Figure1) depicting the interplay between these three constructs. Psychological constructs i.e., engagement, achievement goals, and burnout are of great significance in learners' academic life and aspirations. This is abundantly clear in positive learning culture and efforts expended to attaining goals (Martin, 2008). Recently, language learning studies (e.g., MacIntyr et al., 2016) have examined advances and positive constructs in positive psychology to boost the language learning process. The previous research on achievement goals, cognitive engagement, and burnout mainly addressed the linkage of two of these constructs at a time in a single study. However, their ternary connections and particularly the mediating role of cognitive engagement in the relationship between achievement goals and burnout have remained untouched in both the language teaching context and mainstream education and are yet to be explored because they can help educators and researchers better understand their structural relationships and also psychological constructs affecting the association between achievement goals and burnout. By understanding the structural relationships of these constructs, we can

determine where to construct interventions and where to refine teaching practices. Further, given the saliency of these constructs in the language learning context and the dearth of research investigating the interacting relationships among these constructs, we intended to contribute to the literature by exploring their interplay through modeling the structural relationship between achievement goals and burnout with the mediating role of cognitive engagement. As a result, the study touched upon the following research questions:

1. Do achievement goals have a significant effect on burnout?
2. Do achievement goals have a significant impact on cognitive engagement?
3. Does cognitive engagement mediate the relationship between achievement goals and burnout?

Based on the research questions, three hypotheses are formulated as follows:

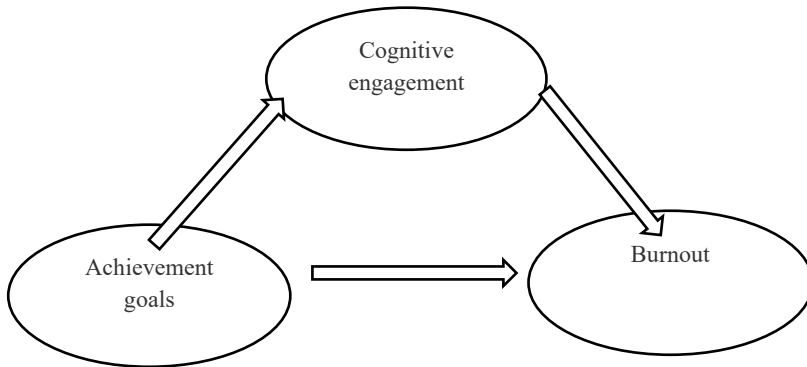
1. Achievement goals have a direct and significant effect on burnout.
2. Achievement goals have a direct and significant effect on cognitive engagement.
3. Cognitive engagement mediates the relationship between achievement goals and burnout.

In light of the theoretical backgrounds and the studies mentioned above, a path diagram was generated to map a conceptual model which predicts the causal relationships between achievement goals and burnout through the mediating role of cognitive engagement. Within the hypothetical model, the ovals represent latent constructs and unidirectional arrows illustrate causal paths. For instance, an independent variable directly impacts a dependent variable. Figure 1 shows a structural model and the directional paths between the components and the sub-scales.



**Figure 1**

*The hypothesized model*



The study findings can contribute to the literature by showing the intertwining nature between language learners' achievement goals, cognitive engagement, and burnout. Indeed, the interplay between these constructs is an important connection to successful language learning and achievement. This research might help EFL teachers better understand how to allay burnout and employ a strengths-based approach to burnout. The current research can be innovative in that it addresses three constructs collectively in a single study and that it employs SEM to provide a detailed profile of how these constructs interact.

### **Literature Review**

Burnout is a psychological syndrome encompassing three constructs, including cynicism, emotional exhaustion, and professional inefficacy (Maslach, 1982; Schaufeli et al., 2002b). Cynicism refers to learners' inattention and casual attitudes to learning activities and is the interpersonal aspect of cynicism (Maslach, 2015). Representing the affect and enduring tiredness, emotional exhaustion is viewed as the main source of stress (Maslach, 1993). Professional inefficacy points to learners' feeling of disqualification and a loss of notable achievement in academic settings (Maslach, 2015). Burnout is conceptualized as reactions that learners produce in the face of the pressure to fulfill their tasks (Salmela-Aro et al., 2009). It is exhaustion arising from hard work,

unfavorable attitudes toward self-study, and a sense of discontent and disgruntlement (Schaufeli et al, 2002b) provoking resentment to deal with academic undertakings that can ruin students' academic success (Mostert et al., 2007).

In the classroom setting, cognitive engagement concerns the implementation of cognitive and self-regulatory learning strategies (Greene, 2015; Reeve, 2012). It entails indomitable will (Pintrich, 2000) and hinges on academic issues including learning goals and motivation, self-regulation, learning practices and perceptions, and planning (Appleton et al., 2006; Fredericks et al., 2004; Jimerson et al., 2003; Sutherland, 2010; Walker et al., 2006). Cognitive engagement also pertains to learners' investment, attention, eagerness, and effort (Glanville & Wildhagen, 2007). Cognitive engagement displays strategies that learners employ to elaborate learning materials (Molinari & Grazia, 2021). It is a combination of reflection and a tendency toward stepping up the endeavor to master complicated skills (Fredricks et al., 2004). Taking investment into consideration, cognitive engagement is conceptualized as the willingness and determination to comprehend sophisticated issues to enhance complex skills (Mahatmya et al., 2012). In principle, cognitive engagement promotes high levels of apprehension and competency (Fredricks et al., 2004) and concerns learners' determination, reflection on learning, and strategies they capitalize on to gain mastery of demanding skills (Metallidou & Viachou, 2007).

Achievement goal theory is premised on theories of motivation and achievement-related behaviors that make learners achieve the desired outcome (Maehr & Zusho, 2009). It entails two primary goals including performance and mastery. The former is related to the avoidance of obstacles and reduced levels of intrinsic motivation while the latter is construed as grounded in learners' high internal motivation and attempts in dealing with challenges (Ames, 1992). To Maehr and Zusho (2009), mastery goals produce positive outcomes but performance might not bring about desired results. Overall, mastery goals are self-based and tasked-based (Martin & Liem, 2010). Mastery-oriented learners seek to enhance their skills and understanding, demonstrate competence, and

gain knowledge (Kaplan & Maehr, 2007). Mastery-avoidance goals are presumed to avoid misunderstanding and incompetence (Martin & Liem, 2010). Sideridis (2005) holds that there is a positive relationship between performance-approach goals and learners' endeavor, perseverance, and accomplishment. Nevertheless, Linnenbrink (2005) maintains that performance-approach goals are not conducive to achievement.

### **Literature Review**

Akbaslı et al. (2019) examined the interplay between engagement and burnout among 472 university students in Ankara, Turkey. The Pearson correlation coefficient and multiple linear regression were run for the data analysis. They found that cognitive and affective engagement significantly affected burnout. Further, Virtanen et al. (2018) explored the relationship between school burnout and student engagement among 2,485 grade 7 and 9 school students in Finland. They adopted a multistep statistical procedure, namely correlation, multinomial logistic regression, and person-centered mixed-model method to analyze the questionnaire data. Their results demonstrated that cognitive engagement and burnout were negatively related. In another study conducted by Zucoloto et al. (2016), the impact of different engagement constructs i.e., emotional, behavioral, and cognitive on burnout was investigated. Participants of their study constituted 363 pharmacy students at Sao Paulo State University. The findings obtained from SEM revealed that behavioral engagement and emotional engagement explained 81 percent of the variation in burnout and that cognitive engagement did not significantly impact burnout.

Concerning the relationship between achievement goals and cognitive engagement, Sedaghat et al. (2011) investigated the impact of motivational factors on academic and cognitive achievement using SEM among 1371 Iranian high school students. They found that achievement goals significantly impacted cognitive engagement and academic achievement. Poorgholamy et al. (2020) investigated the relationship between achievement goals and burnout among 384 university students at Payam-e-Noor University in Shiraz, Iran. They

adopted SEM for analyzing their data. Based on their results, achievement goals had a significant effect on academic burnout.

## **Method**

### ***Design***

A quantitative method was employed for the purposes of this study. The structural equation modeling approach using AMOS graphics 24 was performed for CFA and the model assessment. SEM is a multivariate analysis that helps researchers to explore a series of interrelationships simultaneously (Hair et al., 1998).

### ***Participants***

The subjects who volunteered for this study were 384 Iranian EFL learners (194 males and 190 females) with the age range of 17 to 41 from different academic backgrounds. One hundred and thirty EFL learners were high school students and forty of them were diploma holders. One hundred and twenty-four, seventy, and twenty of the participants held Bachelor's, Master's, and Ph.D. degrees, respectively. They were all native speakers of Farsi with common cultural backgrounds and have been learning English for at least the last four years. They were selected through convenience sampling from language learners enrolling in advanced English classes in various private language institutes in the cities of Shiraz and Bushehr in Iran. Two hundred eighty-one language learners attended English classes in language institutes in Shiraz and 103 EFL learners were from language institutes in Bushehr. The sample size was determined using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample size table based on which a sample of 384 is recommended when the population is indefinite.

### ***Instruments***

Three previously validated self-report instruments on cognitive engagement, burnout, and achievement goals adapted from Gunuc & Kuzu (2015), Bresó, Salanova, & Schaufeli (2007), and Elliot and Murayama (2008),

respectively were employed in this study. We also validated the three questionnaires using CFA, Composite Reliability (CR), Cronbach's alpha, and Average Extracted Variance (AVE), the results of which are reported in the results section.

**Cognitive Engagement Questionnaire.** To measure the EFL learners' cognitive engagement level, we used the cognitive engagement questionnaire as part of the student engagement scale covering six different components i.e., participation, emotional engagement, cognitive engagement, valuing, sense of belonging, and behavioral engagement with 59 items from which 10 items (21-30) measured cognitive engagement on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

**Burnout Questionnaire.** The burnout questionnaire is also a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 for strongly disagree to 5 for strongly agree embraces three main constructs including exhaustion (5 items), cynicism (4 items), and academic inefficacy (6 items).

**Achievement Goals Questionnaire.** The third questionnaire includes 12 items measuring four elements of achievement goals, including performance-approach goal (3 items), mastery avoidance goal (3 items), mastery approach goal (3 items), and performance-avoidance goal (3 items) on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The three instruments were translated into Persian by the lead researcher to assure that the language learners fully comprehend the items of the instrument. In the next step, a certified translator checked the authenticity of the translations and made the necessary changes to them. As the questionnaires were developed and designed in the context of mainstream education, we decided to make minor changes to the items such that they fit the context of language teaching. For example, the words "English" and "language" were added where appropriate. Also, the questionnaires were merged into one (37 items) to make the participants fill them out altogether. Further, we made a few minor changes to the Persian versions of the questionnaires to make them fit the context of language learning. However, the order of the items and the number of them remained untouched. Finally, two experts in the fields of applied linguistics and

educational psychology reviewed the items with reference to the changes made to the items.

**Piloting the Questionnaires.** The Persian versions of the instruments were pilot-tested on a group of 40 advanced EFL learners. The reliabilities of cognitive engagement, burnout, and achievement goals questionnaires using Cronbach's Alpha turned out to be .89, .87, and .90, respectively which exceeded .7 suggesting that the questionnaires were reliable tools for the study (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006; Salkind, 2007).

### ***Procedure***

The three online instruments were administered to EFL learners using WhatsApp, a popular multiplatform messaging application through which a broad range of responses to the questionnaires can be elicited from EFL learners in different language institutes. To collect data, we used an online survey software known as Porseline where a link to the questionnaire was created and forwarded to language teachers to post it in their groups of advanced EFL learners who were invited to take part in the study and were assured that their data would be confidential and that they did not need to provide any personal information for their participation in the study. Upon clicking the link, they agreed to fill out the questionnaire taking about 15 minutes of their time.

### **Results**

The main purpose of this study was to investigate whether cognitive engagement mediated the relationship between achievement goals and academic burnout. Descriptive statistics were first performed to summarize the questionnaire data.

#### ***Descriptive Statistics***

Table 1 depicts the descriptive statistics of the variables of the study.

**Table 1***Descriptive statistics for the constructs*

	N	Skewness	Kurtosis	Mean	Std. Deviation
<b>Burnout</b>	384	-.443	.298	58.1589	5.78858
Exhaustion	384	-.646	.404	16.2082	2.59552
Cynicism	384	-.630	.100	16.6658	2.70491
Inefficacy	384	.113	-.697	19.1151	1.36596
<b>Achievement goals</b>	384	-.172	-.470	27.2849	5.92034
Performance approach	384	-.346	.110	6.3507	2.05228
Mastery avoidance	384	-.430	-.675	8.2247	2.96202
Mastery approach	384	-.599	.452	4.5342	1.65152
Performance avoidance	384	-.245	-.459	8.1753	2.67404
<b>Cognitive engagement</b>	384	.654	1.854	18.5068	5.59023
Valid N (listwise)	384				

Following Table 1, the highest mean score ( $M= 19.11, SD= 1.36$ ) among the burnout dimensions was ascribed to academic inefficacy. The means of cynicism and exhaustion stood at 16.66 and 16.20, respectively. Also, the highest mean score among the achievement goal components belonged to mastery avoidance ( $M=8.22, SD=2.96$ ). To examine the normality of the data, the skewness and kurtosis statistics were analyzed. According to Brown (2006), skewness and kurtosis values within the range of  $-3$  and  $+3$ , and  $-10$  to  $+10$  are indicative of the normal distribution of the data when using structural equation modeling. Based on the skewness and kurtosis ranges as shown in Table 1, it is inferred that the normality assumption was met.

### **Measurement Model Analysis**

The SEM approach was adopted to examine the hypothesized model. A conceptual model was first proposed based on theoretical underpinnings. The

model was then tested for the fit of the sample data. Finally, we used path analysis to explore the correlations between direct and indirect effects on the outcome variables.

In the present study, CFA was used to evaluate the measurement model. For this purpose, the factor loading of each indicator (item) on each structure was estimated and analyzed using its significance level. When the p-value is less than 0.05, it indicates that the factor loadings are significant and that the indicators significantly measure their respective constructs in the model. Also, for each component, the two indices i.e., AVE and CR were calculated to measure the validity and reliability of the components, respectively. The AVE index shows what percentage of the variance of the components is affected by their respective indicators. The AVE index is used to measure the validity of a component and is also referred to as convergent validity. Researchers have set a value of 0.5 or higher for the appropriateness of this index (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Therefore, based on the AVE index, values higher than 0.5 indicate the appropriate validity of the components under study. To determine the reliability of the questionnaires and their components, the composite reliability is calculated. If the CR value is greater than 0.7, it shows strong evidence of internal reliability (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). In this study, in the test phase of the model, the composite reliability, AVE, and Cronbach's alpha were employed. The results of confirmatory factor analysis, structural validity, and reliability indices of the measurement models are depicted in Table 2.



**Table 2***Factor loadings, composite reliability, Cronbach's alpha, and AVE of the questionnaire*

Constructs	Standardized estimates(Path coefficients)	Sig.	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability	AVE
<b>Burnout</b>	-	$p < 0.01$	0.733	0.763	0.529
Exhaustion	0.78	$p < 0.01$			
Cynicism	0.86	$p < 0.01$			
Academic inefficacy	0.49	$p < 0.01$			
<b>Achievement goals</b>	-	-	0.738	0.823	0.543
Performance approach	0.53	$p < 0.01$			
Mastry avoidance	0.79	$p < 0.01$			
Mastry approach	0.75	$p < 0.01$			
Performance avoidance	0.84	$p < 0.01$			
<b>Cognitive engagement</b>	Factor Loadings	-	0.880	0.936	0.593
128	0.74	$p < 0.01$			
129	0.75	$p < 0.01$			
130	0.79	$p < 0.01$			
131	0.80	$p < 0.01$			
132	0.74	$p < 0.01$			
133	0.77	$p < 0.01$			
134	0.81	$p < 0.01$			
135	0.84	$p < 0.01$			
136	0.75	$p < 0.01$			
137	0.70	$p < 0.01$			

Based on Table 2, the reliability indices calculated using Cronbach's alpha exceeded 0.7 indicating high internal consistency of the scales (Salkind, 2007). Also, the standardized estimates of the constructs as well as the standardized factor loadings of the items of the cognitive engagement instrument are all significant ( $p < 0.01$ ). The factor loadings of the items of the cognitive engagement instrument are greater than 0.7 showing that the components perfectly explain the dimensions (Tabachnick et al., 2007). The AVE and the composite reliability values turned out to be greater than 0.5 and 0.7, respectively. This indicates that the model constructs have convergent and divergent validities for measuring the research variables.

### ***Confirmatory Factor Analysis***

As the instruments were administered to a different context i.e., the Iranian EFL learners, the instruments underwent some minor changes. As a result, CFA was performed to investigate their factor structures. The goodness-of-fit indices assessed included CMIN/DF (chi-square fit statistics/degree of freedom), RMSEA (Root Mean Square Error of Approximation), CFI (Comparative Fit Index), TLI (Tucker-Lewis Index), IFI (Incremental Fit Index), and GFI (goodness-of-fit index). These indices were analyzed via AMOS 24 under the normal-theory maximum likelihood method. The RMSEA assesses whether a questionnaire well fits a sample size (Brown, 2006). The acceptable cut-off values for the fit indices including CFI, GFI, TLI, and IF are above 0.90 (Byrene, 2010).

**Table 3**

*Fit indices of the questionnaires*

	CMIN/ DF	GFI	IFI	TLI	CFI	RMSEA
Burnout	2.135	.94	.95	.93	.95	.054
Cognitive engagement	1.449	.96	.97	.95	.97	.050
Achievement goals	1.557	.95	.96	.95	.96	.051
Acceptable fit	< 3	>.90	>.90	>.90	>.90	<.08

The values of the goodness-of-fit indices, as shown in Table 3, all exceeded the standard-fit suggesting that the instruments fitted the data well.

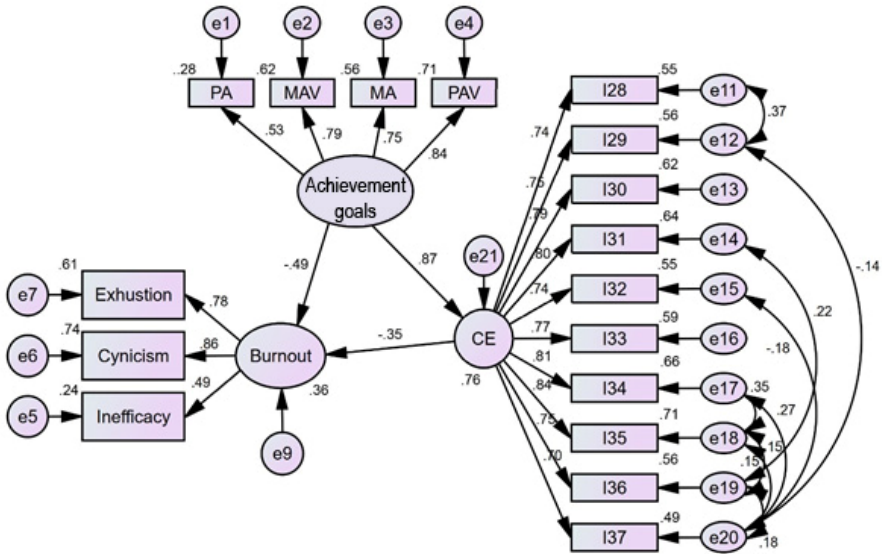
### ***Model Evaluation***

The fit indices of the model turned out to be moderately acceptable. Consequently, the model was modified through the modification indices proposed by the post hoc analysis procedures. Accordingly, we correlated a few residual errors between items of the cognitive engagement scale. The fitted structural model after applying the necessary modifications is presented in Figure 2. The value of the coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) of the burnout variable is equal to 0.36, which means that 36% of the variance changes of

burnout is predicted by achievement goal and cognitive engagement. To evaluate the fitness of the model, the same goodness-of-fit indices used in the confirmatory factor analysis phase were examined. Table 4 reports the model fit indices.

**Figure 2**

*SEM of achievement goals, cognitive engagement, and burnout in standardized estimates*



*Note.* CE= cognitive engagement, PA = performance approach, MA = mastery approach, MAV = mastery avoidance, and PAV = performance avoidance

**Table 4**

*Fit indexes of the model*

Indexes	GFI	IFI	TLI	CFI	RMSEA	CMIN/ DF
Measurement model	0.948	0.930	0.939	0.942	0.043	1.28
Acceptable fit	>.90	>.90	>.90	>.90	<.08	< 3

RMSEA as the most important fit index turned out to be 0.43 which is

less than the acceptable cut-off point of .08 (Browne & Cudeck, 1993). The values greater than .08 suggest poor model fit (Hair et al., 2010). Also, the fit indices, including GFI, IFI, and CFI as shown in Table 5 turned out to be more than the acceptable fit value of .90. CMIN/DF was less than the cut-off point of 3 indicating an acceptable fit between the hypothetical model and the data (Kline, 2011). Based on the results of SEM, the goodness of fit indexes of the model was acceptable. That is, the model well fitted the data collected from the three questionnaires of the study.

Table 5 shows the standardized and unstandardized regression estimates of achievement goals, cognitive engagement, and burnout.

**Table 5**

*Path analysis of the model*

	Standard coefficients	Unstandard coefficients	C.R	C.E	Sig.
Achievement goals - Cognitive engagement	0.87	2.521	5.86	0.43	0.001
Achievement goals - Burnout	-0.49	-1.365	-2.97	0.46	0.005
Cognitive engagement - Burnout	-0.35	-0.914	-2.61	0.35	0.008

Following Table 5, the standard path coefficient between achievement goals and burnout turned out to be statistically significant ( $\beta = -0.49$ ,  $p = <0.005$ ). Path coefficients display the potential causal relationship between variables ranging from +1 to -1. The higher the value of the beta coefficient, the stronger the effect. The standardized Beta coefficient of -.49 suggests that the strength of the impact of achievement goals on burnout equaled -0.49 confirming the first research question. Likewise, the standard path coefficient between achievement goals and cognitive engagement was significant ( $\beta = 0.87$ ,  $p = <0.001$ ). Here again, the strength of the effect of achievement goals on cognitive engagement turned out to be 0.87. This finding also confirms the second hypothesis of the study.

The findings as depicted in Table 6 demonstrate the degree of the indirect and the total effects of achievement goals on burnout through cognitive engagement.

**Table 6**

*Direct and indirect effects of the variables of the structural model*

Independent Variable	Mediator	Dependent variable	Direct effect	Indirect Effect	Total effect	VAF
Achievement goals	-	Cognitive engagement	0.87**	-	0.87**	-
Achievement goals	Cognitive engagement	Burnout	-0.49**	-0.30**	-0.79**	0.37

*\*\**: statistically significant as  $p < 0.01$

To establish mediation, the independent and dependent variables are to be significantly correlated without the presence of the mediator (Zhao et al., 2010). To examine this relationship, the initial direct effect of achievement goals on burnout in the absence of cognitive engagement was investigated and the standardized beta coefficient of this pathway turned out to be significant ( $\beta = -.62, p = .000 < .05$ ). As is evident in Table 6, the indirect and the total effects of achievement goals on burnout through cognitive engagement are - 0.30 and - 0.79, respectively. These values are significant at  $p = <0.01$ . To determine the strength of the mediation, we calculated the value of Variance Accounted For (VAF) which shows the ratio of the Beta Coefficient of the indirect effect to the total effect. The value of the VAF index in the model turned out to be (0.37) which implies that 37% of the total effect of achievement goals on burnout is explained by the indirect effect. If the value of VAF exceeds 0.8, it represents full mediation; a value below 0.2 implies no mediation and a VAF value of between 0.2 and 0.8 represents partial mediation (Hair et al., 2014). As the value of the VAF index (0.37) lies between 0.2 to 0.8, thus, cognitive engagement serves as a partial mediator in the relationship between achievement goals and burnout, thereby fully supporting the third hypothesis. Under partial mediation, both direct and indirect effects are significant in the same direction (Baron & Kenny,

1986; Zhao et al, 2010). As mentioned above, the indirect effect of achievement goals on burnout is still significant after controlling for the mediator (cognitive engagement) providing evidence for the partial mediation model.

To confirm this finding, we also performed a more robust method i.e., bias-corrected bootstrap using Amos. This method is used to investigate whether the mediating effect of a variable is significant (Preacher & Hayes, 2008).

**Table 7**

*Results of bias-corrected bootstrap for the indirect pathway*

Variables	Se	Upper bound	Lower bound	Sig.
Achievement goals – cognitive engagement – burnout	.229	-.211	-.650	.005

Since the upper and lower bounds show the same direction i.e., either negative or positive, the mediating effect is meaningful. As is evident in Table 7, the upper and lower bounds of the confidence interval were -.0229 and -.650, respectively suggesting that a mediation effect was established. Also, as zero did not lie within the confidence intervals, the mediating effect was significant (Hayes, 2009) at  $p < .005$  with a 95% confidence interval and the bootstrap samples of 5000.

## Discussion

This research was undertaken with the goal of assessing a structural model of burnout, achievement goals, and cognitive engagement among Iranian EFL learners. Moreover, the mediating role of cognitive engagement in impacting achievement goals on burnout was investigated.

The first research question examined if achievement goals significantly affected burnout. The results indicated that achievement goals significantly and negatively impacted burnout. This implies that learners with higher levels of achievement goals are less likely to suffer from burnout. In explaining this finding, it can be argued that the fear and avoidance of taking action and consequently the passive nature of these language learners may result in low

levels of motivation and effort for undertaking language learning activities. Thus, they suffer a gradual decline in their performance which can lead to academic burnout over time. This finding is in accord with those of Poorgholamy et al. (2020), Naghsh and Khavak (2016), Moneta (2011), and Usan Supervia and Salavera Bordas (2020). The results, however, are in contrast with those of Koushafar et al. (2014) who did not find any relationship between achievement goals and burnout. The discrepancy of our result with that of theirs might be attributed to different contexts of study. While we performed our study on Iranian EFL learners, they conducted their research on high school students in Iran. Another line of explanation for the inconsistency of this result may pertain to the level of cognitive engagement and motivation among EFL learners in our study and the high school students who were involved in their study. In explaining the disparity of the result, it should be noted that our participants were willingly attending the English course in the language institutes as an extra-curriculum program, while the subjects in Koushafar, et al.'s (2014) study were high school students who were taking mainstream courses. However, the development of burnout should best be perceived by taking the impacts of crucial contextual as well as individual factors into consideration (Leiter & Maslach, 1988).

The second research question investigated whether achievement goals significantly impact cognitive engagement. The findings revealed that achievement goals significantly and positively affected cognitive engagement. That is, language learners with high levels of achievement goal orientations avail themselves of deeper cognitive strategies and more self-regulatory activities. This finding agrees with those of Meece et al. (1988) and Greene & Miller, 1996; Nolen, 1988). Also, Martin and Liem (2010), Ramshe et al.(2019), and Yu and Martin (2014) found similar results suggesting that learners' level of cognitive engagement is a function of their personal best goals. Meece et al. (1988) maintain that cognitive engagement and achievement goals are greatly impacted by both situational and individual factors, thereby displaying key signs of learners' motivation in learning. This finding can be justified on the grounds that language learners placing more emphasis on task-mastery goals

and performance-approach goals are more cognitively engaged in undertaking language activities. In other words, mastery and performance-approach goals make learners more cognitively engaged which can, in turn, lead to positive outcomes (Harackiewicz et al., 2002; Linnenbrink, 2005; Murayama & Elliot, 2009; Pintrich, 2000). Further, this finding is commensurate with the results of Sedaghat et al.'s(2011) study in which the learners' achievement goals significantly influenced their cognitive engagement and achievement. Also, our result in this regard lends support to the findings of Dweck and Elliot( 1983) and Maehr and Nicholls (1980) that learners' cognitive engagement in learning activities was impacted by their achievement goal orientations i.e., mastery, performance, and learning. Along the same lines, Mehrdadian(2021) reached the same results and revealed that performance approach and mastery approach goals positively and significantly impact cognitive achievement.

The third research question examined the mediating role of cognitive engagement in the casual relationship between achievement goals and burnout. The finding demonstrated that cognitive engagement partially mediated the relationship in question. That is, cognitive engagement absorbed the partial effect of achievement goals on burnout, and that cognitive engagement, directly and indirectly, affected burnout. The findings revealed that the effect of achievement goals on burnout was significant in the absence of cognitive engagement. This relationship remained significant when the cognitive engagement was controlled. Based on Baron and Kenny(1986), if a significant relationship between the independent and dependent variables when the mediator is not controlled remains significant in the presence of the mediator, there is evidence for partial mediation. This indicates that the effect of achievement goals on burnout is partially transmitted with the help of cognitive engagement. Based on the findings, achievement goals negatively and significantly influenced burnout in the presence and absence of cognitive engagement. Also, cognitive engagement was found to significantly impact burnout. This is in line with the findings of Akbasli, et al.'s (2019) who reached identical results in the context of Turkish university students. This result also confirms that of Schaufeli et al (2002b) demonstrating that engagement and



burnout are two opposite ends of a continuum. This finding is also in agreement with that of Molinari and Grazia (2021) who revealed higher levels of cynicism are associated with lower levels of cognitive engagement. However, Zucoloto et al. (2016) found that cognitive engagement did not significantly affect burnout among university students at Sao Paulo University. The inconsistency of the results can be justified in terms of the context of the study (EFL setting vs. non-language learning context) whose subjects might show different levels of cognitive engagement. Another justification might be that cognitive engagement primarily involves learning the content. Thus, the knowledge gained in educational settings and the mental energy required does not directly impact the development of burnout (Zucoloto et al., 2016).

### **Conclusion and Implications**

The findings of this study reveal that cognitive engagement partially mediated the relationship between achievement goals and burnout. The results suggest that language learners who are more cognitively engaged are more resistant in the view of burnout levels. The findings accentuate the roles of achievement goals and cognitive engagement in preventing burnout among EFL learners in Iran. The results of this research bear a set of applied pedagogical implications. The first implication concerns material developers to design instructional interventions to promote cognitive engagement among language learners. This in fact can assist language teachers to diagnose language learners' engagement-related problems to employ well-timed and precautionary measures to combat burnout. The other implication regards EFL teachers who can encourage and assist their language learners to set effective learning and achievement goals. Considering the study results, language teachers are suggested to strongly promote their learners' competencies and performance and cognitively engage them in language learning tasks to assist them to mitigate and recover from pronounced experiences of burnout

This study does have some limitations which can put forward recommendations for future studies. The first limitation concerns the data collection method which was based on convenience sampling. Future research

may utilize a random selection method which can increase the generalizability of the findings. Thus the results should be approached cautiously. The other limitation regards self-report scales the results of which might be biased. The subjects of the study were advanced language learners selected from miscellaneous private language institutes. Consequently, the results may be more beneficial to private language institutes. As a result, future researchers may replicate this study on language learners from different proficiency levels and other language learning settings, namely high schools or universities to ensure greater validity for the findings.

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# The Semiosis of Digital Commensality toward Sustainable Communication: A Case Study of Food-Related Applications Using Instagram's Intertextuality

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## Abstract

The digital commensality as physically eating together with someone (online or offline) using food apps through Instagram's intertextuality for a sustainable communication implies the application of an integrated corpus-based model in multimodal (inter)action analysis framework; it enables us to study the irresolvable dialectic between social actions and mediational means. The semiosis of Iranian digital commensality provides insights for considering user's signifying tastes and their habits relied on food system, including food type choices, ways of preparation, the eating arrangement and manner. The results show that interactive signs of Easy-paz and Maman-Paz apps empower mediated actions to perform rituals and challenges for developing offline commensality through Instagram intertextuality. The findings also show that online commensality was developed by Mr. Taster app via influencing and by Maaii app through Mukbang. Furthermore, Delino, and Snap-food apps were found to be benefiting from mediated actions to perform online-to offline commensality by equipping delivery mechanisms on individuals eating activities.

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**Keywords:** digital commensality, Iranian food apps, Instagram's intertextuality, interactional discourse analysis, sustainable communication,

## Introduction

The strenuous growth of e-commerce over the last few years has created a fertile environment for the adoption of mobile platforms. Especially, when the COVID-19 crisis have been over, consumers were more thoughtful about what they consume and how much they need to consume (Kotler, 2020). In this regard, food delivery as one of the fastest-growing e-commerce enables platform applicants to deliver orders from an especial place at a specific moment with high accuracy and reliability (Yuen et al. 2019). In particular, online interactivity as an important component in the food platform's engagement is defined as the affordance of a text with multimodality to be acted upon, realizing the full capacity of hypertextuality<sup>1</sup>, and thus meaning-making. However, digital texts have anchors, such as links, buttons, and fields, which enable users to act upon the text. It enables readers to travel (Lemke, 2002) from one text to another through the use of hyperlinks. Accordingly, the role of social media as a mode for sustainability-related communication is a critical area of research (Jha & Verma, 2023).

It must be mentioned that the transformation of natural nutrients into food cannot be reduced to simple utilitarian rationality or availability logics (Fischler, 1980; Fischer, 2011). In fact, food is an organic system which "can express patterns about social relationships" (Stajcic, 2013, p.6). While smartphones now provide unprecedented opportunities to develop food delivering services that can engage people in real-time and in the real-world, lack of commensality with existing food platforms is a concern. As Spence et al. (2019, p. 23) asserted "eating together assumes a ritual and symbolic meaning that is by far greater than the simple satisfaction of the need for nourishment". The digital commensality refers to physically eating together with someone as a result of some digital technology-based intervention (Eleftheriou-Smith, 2017). It could refer to eating alone over the Internet; skyping with a remotely located

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<sup>1</sup> Landow (1992) defines hypertextuality as the affordance of digital texts on giving access to a network of other texts.

person during eating (skeating); eating by oneself while watching someone else (Mukbang or broadcast jockey) (Eleftheriou-Smith, 2017).

Accordingly, this research looks at the semiosis process of digital commensality in the interactional discourse of food platforms to obtain sustainable communication which will be performed by all users in this genre. The main issue of the semiosis process of digital commensality in the interactional discourse of food platforms on mobile spaces presupposes these preliminary questions; In what manner, do human-computer interactions in food apps enable users to sustainably communicate based upon digital commensality? This study was novel in this area of research on accounts of its contributions to investigate the semiosis of digital commensality in the sustainable communication by using food applications platforms through Instagram intertextuality.

## **Methodology**

### ***Corpus Design***

This study systematically reviews the data for digital commensality in Iranian food apps that were utilized from intertextual relations with Instagram social network aiming to provide semiosis of interactivity in this genre. In this regard, after measuring engagement rate of Iranian food apps, the sample was selected based on Baldry and Thibault (2006) model which considers both the nature of text and its context. Due to the fact that meaning is produced and understood as a result of the interaction of different factors like text, readers' or listener's preconception and context dynamically (Sasani 2010; Nabian and Shairi, 2018). Accordingly, four criteria were considered regarding the Iranian food apps selection. Firstly, the selected Iranian food apps should work on multiple mobile operating systems, including Android and IOS operating systems. Secondly, they should be related to Iranian food's habits and tastes as Sojoudi (2006) mentioned the food type, its preparation, eating arrangement and manner are related to national cultural activities. Thirdly, they should be affordable and popular. The Iranian food apps we have finally chosen for the analysis, fulfil these selection criteria. The research corpus consists of four

Iranian food apps, including Snapp food<sup>1</sup>, Easy Paz<sup>2</sup>, Maman-Paz<sup>3</sup> Delino<sup>4</sup> Mr. Taster<sup>5</sup>, and Maai<sup>6</sup> apps.

### ***Procedures***

The research corpus was investigated by quantitative method that offers an effective way for investigating targeted apps based on the integrated corpus-based model. The sample were selected by targeted method from a large amount of data. In qualitative analysis, micro-analytical boundaries are crossed so that groundbreaking findings could be discovered and exact shifts in a participant's focused attention would be determined (Norris, 2019b). It also enables us to gain insights into semiosis of digital commensality regarding the user interactivity toward sustainable communication in the genre of Iranians food app platforms through Instagram intertextuality.

### ***Data Analysis***

The food apps enable users as *social actors* to perform various kinds of *computer-mediated communication* in any related socio-cultural situations (Norris, 2016). Generally speaking, these cultural products as product of communication would seem to be permitted by an underlying system of significations (Eco, 1979). Multimodal (inter)action analysis as an integrated model facilitates interpretative analysis outlined from theoretical considerations. Accordingly, a corpus-based model was employed taking the semiosis of interaction in use to a deeper level. A stratification view of meaning-making in the computer mediated communication could be studied by three strata of expression, content, and context (Halliday, 1985; Halliday, 2014), where each level focuses on a specific aspect of meaning. According to this stratification, all semiotic resources can be described as parts of communicative action at the expression level (Blitz-Raith and Liu (2017), Adami (2013) and Norris (2016)). Then, the semiosis of food system- as a secondary semiotic system (Barthes, 1997; Sojoudi, 2006) and commensality (Goffman 1961; Spence et al., 2019)- based on its interactivity. The content level of Blitz-Raith and Liu's (2017) study involves surveying the mediational means and social

actors, as described by Norris (2016). Finally, at the context level, the interaction in use was taken into account across different contexts (Malinowski, 1923). For instance, context of situation and context of culture (Halliday, 1985; Sasani, 2010a) were studied as mediational means (Norris, 2011; Norris, 2016; Norris, 2019a).

### ***Expression Stratum of Food App***

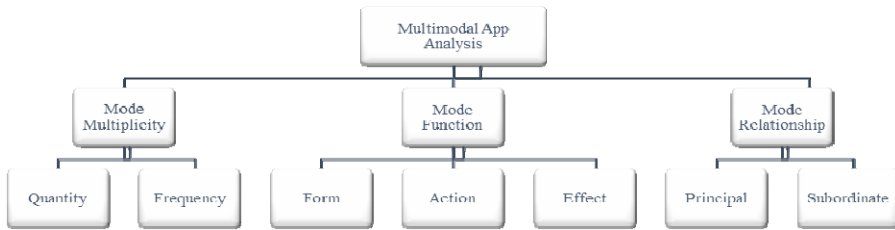
In social media, interactivity as a social product encompasses user-machine and user-message interactions (McMillan, 2002). The sensory-perceptual mood of the sign user, affected by various phenomena and variables, affects the conditions for the production and reception of signs (Hatefi, 2021). In this regard, a sign is “something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity” (Peirce, 1932, p. 228). Malinowski (1923) considered “human speech as a mode of action” ( p.326), and considered two primary types of signs as semiotic resources, including interactional and non-interactional signs.

**Interactive Semiotic Resources.** The interactive signs as semiotic resources relate to an active perspective of intentionality toward a certain effect or goal, such as ordering food, choosing, and so on. From semiotics point of view, they are interactive sites or signs which can be represented through writing, image or any combination of these semiotic system and they can be still or dynamic (Adami, 2013). The interactional sign of food applications could be explained by three layers of multiplicity, function, and relationship of interaction signs as semiotic resources (Blitz-Raith & Liu, 2017). The multiplicity of interactive signs examines the occurrence of the involved in creating food apps. In fact, the multiplicity of interactive signs focuses on firstly the number of interactive signs- i.e., how many interactive signs are used, and then the frequency of interactive signs -i.e., and how often an interactive sign recurs. Furthermore, interactive signs are considered as a visible part of a text (Adami, 2013). These signs as signs of interactivity and as sites of action could produce certain effects. The functions of application sign as semiotic resources include: (a) a meaningful form or what a semiotic resource looks like, (b) an

action or what a semiotic resource does, and (c) an effect or what a semiotic resource's impact is (Adami, 2013).

**Figure 1**

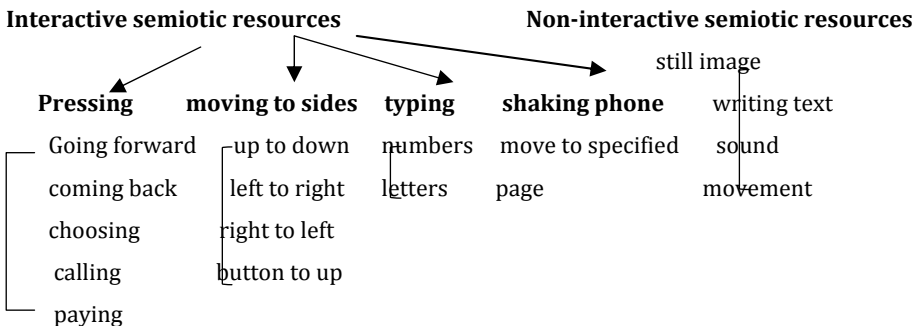
*Multimodal app analysis model of Blitz-Raith and Liu (2017)*



As a matter of fact, interactivity or user-engagement in the discourse of apps includes pressing, moving to sides, and typing actions which create several options. Pressing icon devotes to go forward, come back, choose, call, and pay functions. Moving action refers to transmitting from up to down, button to up and left to right or converse. Typing action relates to type letters and numbers. Shaking phone option enables users to move to a specific page. Non-interactive semiotic resources are still images, writing texts, sound, and movement. All of these semiotic resources are summarized in the figure below.

**Figure 2**

*Function of application signs as semiotic resources*





The relationship of interactive signs examines how modes are related to one another in a food app. Each of these modes as semiotic resources allows the designer to transmit various meanings in terms of the way the app discourse is realized (Monfared & Haghbin, 2019). Blitz-Raith and Liu (2017) focus on identification of modes that make the meaning explicit and of modes that create details or support. They label the former *the principal mode* and the latter *the subordinate mode*.

**Non-interactional Semiotic Resources.** The notion of mediated action emphasizes the fact that social action is grounded in social actors and objects in the world, highlighting the irresolvable dialectic between social action and mediational means. A most important aspect here is the aspect of mediation (Norris, 2011). Understanding the mediation of static or non-interactive signs is embraced in the conception of the three methodological units of multimodal (inter)action analysis, the lower-level mediated action, the higher-level mediated action, and the frozen mediated action. Each of these actions is always mediated in multiple ways (Norris, 2011).

As Norris (2011) mentioned “actions come in frozen forms; they are performed on a higher and a lower-level” (p. 41). “The lower-level action is a communicative mode’s smallest meaning unit. For the mode of spoken discourse, the smallest meaning unit is the utterance” (p. 39). A higher-level action is produced through a multiplicity of chained lower-level actions that interlink and play together in diverse ways. An example of a higher-level action is a conversation.

Higher-level actions are constructed through the lower-level actions that social actors perform at the very same time as they produce the lower-level actions. In other words, a conversation ... is constructed through the many utterances, postural and gaze shifts, and gestures that the participants perform, but, at the same time, the participants perform the many chains of lower-level actions in order to converse (p. 39).

### ***Content Level: Food Semiotic System***

As Barthes (1977, p.28) mentioned the food system as the alimentary language are summarized as table (1);

**Table 1***Food semiotic system (Barthes 1997)*

	<b>foods system's components</b>	<b>subsections</b>	<b>Examples</b>
<b>food system</b>	rules of exclusion	_____	alimentary taboos
	signification of oppositions of units	type of unites	savoury/sweet contrasts
		type of which remains to be determined	
	rules of association	simultaneous (at the level of dish)	garnishes of food
		successive (at the level of a menu)	arrangement of food's table
	rituals of food	_____	alimentary rhetoric

Sojoudi (2006) introduces food system as a secondary cultural discourse that in relation with other semiotic systems participate in intertextual relations and play its role in the making-meaning. Broadly speaking, the food semiotic system that is represented in any media, has a distinctive role in determining the ethnicity, nationality, social status, gender, social class, age and the similar (Sojoodi, 2006). Furthermore, signs and texts are parts of cultures' overarching network of meaning (Danesi, 2006). In this regard, the choice of food, its preparation, the ways of arrangement, and even eating could be considered as meaningful and cultural activities.

As Spence et al. (2019) asserted "eating together assumes ... a ritual and symbolic meaning that is by far greater than the simple satisfaction of the need for nourishment" (p. 23). The *digital commensality* refers to physically eating together with someone as a result of some digital technology-based intervention. It could refer to eating alone over the Internet; skyping with a remotely located person during eating (skeating); eating by oneself while watching someone else (Mukbang or broadcast jockey) (Eleftheriou-Smith 2017).

### **Context Level**

Actions are always mediated, and they are mediated not only by

cultural tools as commonly understood, but by the way that the social actors live in (Norris 2011). As Goffman (1959) asserts, “many crucial facts lie beyond the time and place of interactions or lie concealed within it” (p. 2). Therefore, the context of any given interaction is of great importance to discourse analysis the context as an intricate part of the ongoing interactions (Norris, 2011). Halliday (2014) mentioned, “a text is ... organized externally as a unit operating in context” (p. 43). In this regard, Malinowski (1923) mentioned two types of context, context of situation and context of culture. Halliday (2014) refers to the context of culture a system of higher-level meanings “...in which various semiotic systems operate, including language, ...and other systems of meaning” (p. 32). Sasani (2010a) explains that the context of culture includes an immense hemisphere of culture space and in some cases is governed by the culture or situation space (Sasani, 2019a, 189–196). However, mobile apps are linked to a specific cultural sphere that enables user or users to interact with each other and make meanings. Halliday (1978) points out, “the context of situation is a theoretical construct for explaining how a text relates to the social processes within which it is located” (p. 10). Sasani (2010a) extends the context of situation to all temporal and local features that do not appear in the text and do not participate in constructing text (Sasani 2010a,). The interactive nature of mobile apps creates an intermediate environment as a public sphere or discussion circles, whereby users can communicate both simultaneously and non-simultaneously (one to one, one to several, several to several) and participate in the semiosis process of interaction.

## **Results**

### ***Computer-user Interaction of Food Apps***

As mentioned above, the interactivity of app signs has been discriminated and classified in two interactional and non-interactional signs. Next, interactional signs of food applications have been explained by three layers of multiplicity, function, and relationship among the interactive sign. Interactional semiotic resources were included in three types of *pressing*, *moving to sides*, and *typing letters and number signs*. The function of these

interactional semiotic resources in user-engaged discourse of Iranian Food Apps showed that interactive pressing buttons with moving signs/options can allow the user to visit app pages. The pressing function as the principle sign in relation to the subordinating of moving sign allows the user to search. Additionally, the search operation can be performed simply by typing buttons as the principle mode along with the subordinate role of the pressing button for the search command. After the search operation, the pressing button played the principle function of food selection, which was based on movement and observation of food plate. Choosing food could be done by clicking or pressing the relevance icon. After pressing the buying button, users could have access to the payment page to type numbers, which would help them to pay by means of the moving and pressing buttons. The processes of canceling the order and returning to the previous pages could also be done via the pressing button. Finally, shaking phone option enables users to be transmitted to social hobbies pages.

### ***Food System of App***

Each interactional sign, in relation to static semiotic sources, can represent the Iranian food system. In the following subsections, the semiosis of digital commensality in Persian food apps through Instagram's intertextuality is surveyed. What follows in the proceeding subsections elaborates on food issues, including ingredients, preparation, meals, serving arrangement, accessibility, and facilities.

**Food's Ingredients in Iranian Apps.** Based on Easy-Paz slogan which represents "Easy cooking with excellent recipes", user/customers could receive the ingredients of a recipe in the exact amount of that. More sophisticated, Easy-Paz application gets off fresh and quality, measuring food's constituents along with the cooking recipes, to set up customers on Iranian taste. These ingredients belong to diverse national foods that cannot be found effortlessly in any Iranian market. Moreover, some foods can be prepared with outstanding recipes which are not served in any Iranian restaurants. On top of that, the ingredients of some kind of local foods, sweets, and desserts could be observed

in the menu of this app. Easy-Paz app cast around to find any kinds of superb and first-rate meals to be adapted with the Iranian taste.

The interactive digital arena of the Easy-Paz app allows digital commensality that could be orchestrated systematically. Customers in the role of observing subjects are able to access localized ingredients as observed objects through digital interaction with Easy-Paz app's delivery services. This app, a mediational tool, forms an alliance in cooking activity in a manner that could help all observing subjects (native chef/commensals specialist and the customers) to cooperate and to run commensality digitally.

As you can see in the figure (3) which is a frozen action, the green raw materials are packed and labeled. These materials' color refers to fresh ingredients and they can persuade costumer to choose them. These docketts reveal Easy-Paz logo and the name of materials introduce the ingredients of native Italian Linguini as *Linguini with the grown in spring vegetables*. In Italian culture, Linguini become famous as a seasonal dish especially with the belonged-spring vegetables. This meal is cooked for celebrating the arrival of spring. However, this Italian dish is recontextualised with a slight difference in the Easy-Paz menu where the local Italian pasta is not put in it and mushrooms have been reinstated by tofu in comparison to the original meal.

**Figure 3**

*Ingredient of Linguini in Easy-Paz app (Hakimi 2017)*



Cooked meals with this ingredient as the output of this digital commensality help the customers to feel like a chef by accessing the fresh food's materials for cooking the meals at home or at any other place. The Instagram page of Easy-Paz is full of Iranian-made samples of this food in a table [or Sofre] as frozen actions which insist on offline commensality.

**Food Preparation in Iranian App.** In order to prepare fine fettle foods, Easy-Paz brings forth the variety of nations food's recipes which are composed of European, Far Eastern, Mediterranean, and even local Iranian dishes. It must be mentioned that food preparation has evolved in congruence with the findings of Perullo (2008; quoted in Stano, 2013) as taste is activated legitimacy through comparison and sharing. Additionally, if on the one hand the taste dimension depends on biological, physiological, and individual components, on the other hand, it seems to be socially and culturally determined. As it is discernible in Easy-Paz recipes, food has never suffered a sharp acceleration over time. On the report of globalization process, food changes could go around with a variety of migratory flows which encounter or even conflict with different food cultures to affect local food systems -much faster than in the past- and become part of these systems (Perullo 2008 quoted in Stano, 2013).

The digital commensality of liaising with the observing subject in cooking observed objects at homes could be supported by computer-mediation interaction of Easy-Paz app. Interactive space of this app supports customers in accessing recipes by using interactional signs. The importance role of pressing icons along with subordinate function of moving options guides the users to order favorite foods, buy them, and be able to deliver their order as soon as possible. This activity as a role of observing subject could engage customers to fulfill food delivery service lonely by means of Easy-Paz app in any locale.

Besides, the Frozen action showing the cooking stages of the recipes are arranged to describe cooking processes cautiously. All verbal commands in recipes refer to the cooking style. Furthermore, recipes' colorful pictures are in harmony or in contrast could-refer to freshness, uniqueness, and so on. Moreover, they could encourage people to cook personally. Launching social

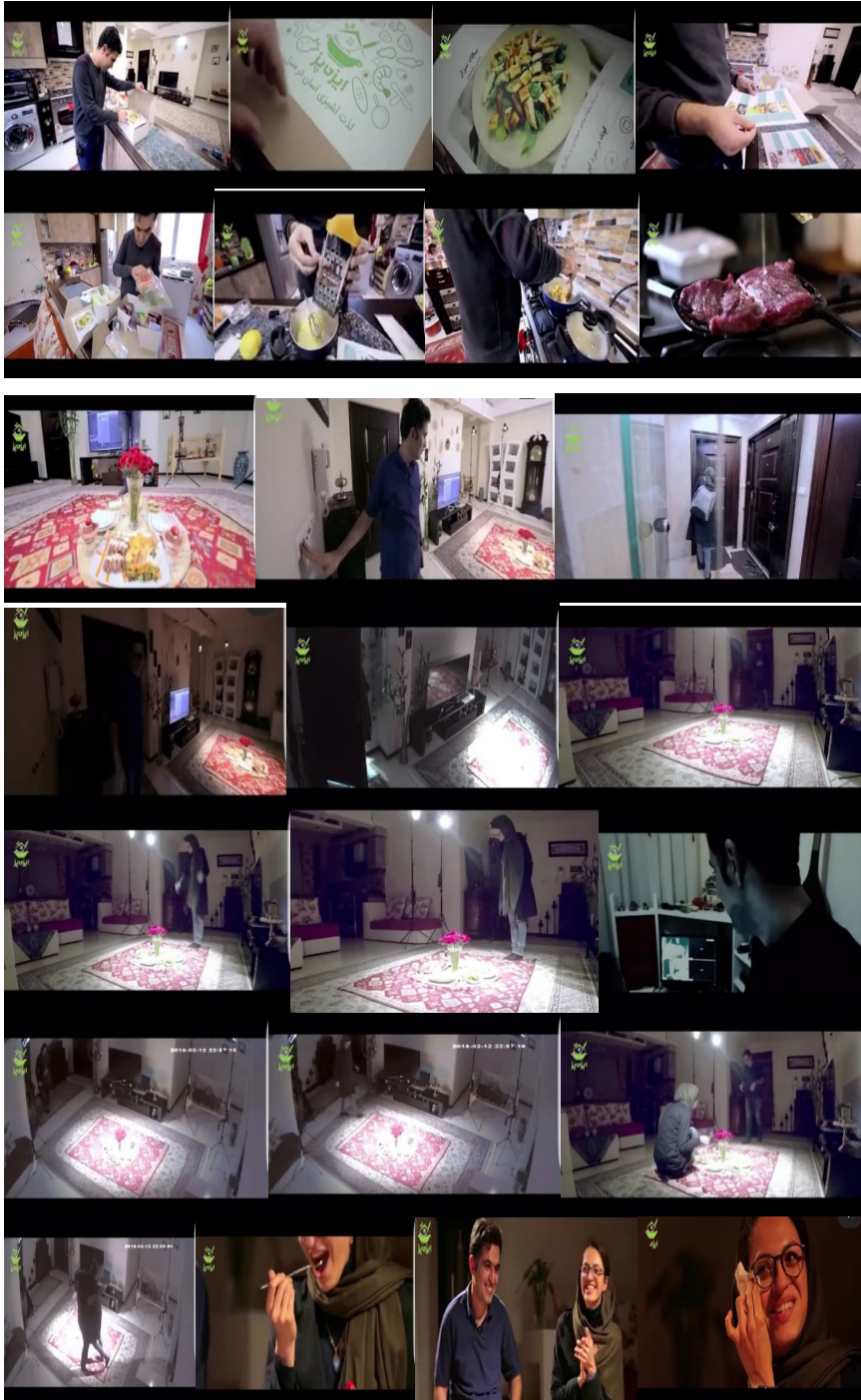
challenges in Easy-paz Instagram's social network could promote the customers as a chef only by helping from its recipe.

As you can see in the pictures below, a woman has been astounded by her husband after seeing her husband's home-made meal which has laid out in the traditional *Sofre*. In this challenge, the man has cooked the food by consulting Easy-Paz app. After that food was embellished in the *Sofre*, he has been ready to surprise his wife by turning off the lights. After a while, his wife came back home and encountered with a beautified *Sofre* in an unlighted home. She was really astonished and carefully begun to discover that these foods can be cooked only by an executive chef. Unbelievably, she has realized that her husband has prepared the food. After she looked over her husband, she hugged him while she was crying with enthusiasm. Finally, she clapped for her husband.

These social challenges invited couples to offline commensality by arranging tables or *Sofres* for eating collectively by searchable verbal elements of #Surprise\_her". This challenge also supplements the couple's love by transferring the cooking responsibility to men at home. Furthermore, conversing wife's roles could have been analyzed the *Sofre* as a frozen action. All Lower-level actions, such as being ready to surprise the women, being astonished (tired women), starting to cry, showing satisfaction, and clapping for thankfulness could build higher-level activity of offline commensality.

**Figure 4**

*Social challenge of "#Surprise\_her" in Easy-Paz Instagram's page (Easypaz company n.d)*





Maman-Paz is another App for ordering home-made cooking that by using the slogan of “Mommy’s home-cooked food, prepared with love from home” reflects the role of Iranian women, especially highly-experienced older women. Contemporary food trends have been returning to organic principles, such as *biological production* and *natural periodicity*, encouraging people to prefer local organic products instead of foods imported or grown using *unnatural* techniques (Stano, 2013). In this regard, chefs named as moms were applied to recontextualise commensality traditionally by means of this app. In the Maman-paz app, only a variety of home-made dishes are offered with showing the image of chefs as moms. Due to the fact that the app space does not allow offline commensality, it could be followed on the Instagram pages of this app. Maman-Paz Instagram’s page is widely devoted to show mom’s cooks. The low-level action of preparing Iranian food, such as cleaning carefully the rice in a tray, frying stew’s ingredients as rice’s dessert, tying the food’s pot by Bokhche to keep it warm could lead to high-level action of offline commensality.

**Meals.** The categorization of delivery food services, including main meals, desserts, snack, drinks, and others in menus of Snap-food and Mr. Taster App is considerably variable. The digital commensality -or eating alone through interaction with app- of Snap-food relies on enriching frozen actions of foods menus as observed objects which enable observing subject, i.e. customers and restaurateurs to interact reciprocally through computer-mediation space. The focus of Snap-Food app is prominently on identifying food division which could dispense computer-user mediation by means of interactional signs. For developing user-engaged interactivity, the food categorization has involved easily-accesses facilities which are enhanced through pressing icons and moving interactional options. In addition to being searchable, they are easily accessible by inserting classified foods as frozen actions in various category, such as sorting by meal, type of food, proximity to place, and so on. By passing through the app page from top to bottom, you are able to visit all types of categories, and by making progress from left to right, or conversely, you can see the types of food in a categorized menu- are showed as frozen actions. The

main meals are also have been classified according to the food's type based on the region or nation. Furthermore, different foods are presented in various categories by means of food globalization and translation processes among different food semiosphere. As an example, recent decades have seen the growth of foreign foods on supermarket shelves. The variety of different Snap-food dishes allows the competition to run depending on the context of situation or temporal events, and place position. Snap food and Maman-paz apps also introduce lunch and dinner meals which are available by using interactional signs. Based upon the slogan of "By Mr. Taster's app, always find the best restaurants", some restaurants or cafes are recommended on Mr. Tester's app to encourage people to choose the best foods.

Delino app, a mediational tool, provide the opportunity of getting access to various nations foods which are adjusted with Iranian food system by exclusively focusing on breakfast meals. More convoluted, the menu of Delino app takes in variety of sweets foods, such as pancakes, muffins, and croissants which are offered with different jams regarding Iranian taste and habits. Still more, various kinds of nation food, namely Spanish Omelette, English breakfast, and suchlike are decontextualized and decontextualized according to Iranian food system. Fishers (1990) introduces the notion of the omnivore's paradox; from one side, human suffer from a biological need for testing varied foods (neophilia). Under other conditions, generally fear of the risks of trying new foods begins (neophobia), (Fishers, 1990; quoted in Stano 2013, p.44). As Stano (2013) mentioned, food encounters with constant transformation and re-definition as translation processes which are gradual or sometimes very slow.

On Maaii's App, users can find their favorite meal effortlessly by typing key words in the searching box and pressing the search icon. After clicking on the suggested food's name, its recipe along with the Mukbang link to Instagram are accessible. Currently, watching Mukbang via social networks is an alternative way to satisfy the yearning for communal eating (Kang et al. 2020). As the picture below shows, Maaii's Muckbang of eating Mirza-Ghasemi is displayed through her Instagram page. Mirza-Ghasemi is one of in demand Persian foods -originally from northern Iran- made with grilled

eggplants, garlic, tomatoes, and eggs. In keeping with Iranians' table [Sofre], Mirza Ghasemi is consumed normally with some kind of pickles in company with a slice of bread. As you can see in the picture, Maaii starts taking a morsel of this food to bite it. Especially, to increase the satisfaction of the users, a Mukbang creator like Maaii intentionally eats loudly or places the food close to the viewing audience. Through these visual and auditory stimuli, Mukbang viewers feel that their desire for food is fulfilled indirectly (Kang et al., 2020) through online commensality.

**Figure 5**

*Maaii's Mukbang of eating Mirzaghasemi (Maedeh, 2020)*



**Food Serving Arrangement.** In general, the style of serving food in the interactional discourse of food apps are shown in food plates as frozen actions which could help people to eat individually or socially. Notwithstanding the constraints of app capacity, online commensality could be complemented by intertextual relation through the Instagram pages. Maman-Paz Instagram's page is widely devoted to show variety of traditional home-made foods which are recontextualized regarding customs and rituals. Due to the fact that Maman-paz offers Iranian food, moms take part in a strict rivalry in accordance with food arrangement. As an illustration, you can observe various pictures of one meal. Although the ingredients and the cooking process of the meal are the same, the designing and arrangements of the ingredients are exceedingly non-identical. You could also observe these various exhibitions as a commensality stratum of frozen action from more collective eating food towards individual's meals.

However, in Easy-Paz app different forms of cooking are recommended without any competition. The variety of international foods are decontextualized to be discovered in Iranian food system. They are decontextualized based on Iranian taste and habits in their socio-cultural atmosphere.

Scientifically speaking, in spite of the fact that "The table or in Iranian culture, [Sofre] is the original social network" (Spence 2017), the proliferation of online to offline delivery services, reveals that how current day technology can impact commensality from online to offline settings. However, rising reduced commensality in offline area leads to developments with dramatic headlines such as death of the family meal and the dining table (Spence et al. 2019). Especially, in communicative space of Delino and Snap-food, we almost always encounter with the individual eating activity rather than collective one.

However, the eating manners in the Maman-paz app are preferred to be collectively by emphasizing on spreading out the Sofre. We could see a variety of Sofre which are arranged in conformity with Nowruz, Shab-e-Chelle and Ramadan rituals and so on. In these pictures, the arrangement of Sofre is significantly relies on Ramadan rituals which focus on collective eating – or

offline commensality- related to sociable customs activities.

As you can see in the picture below, an old woman has begun to break her fast as a low-level action in front of her late husband's picture as a frozen action to insist on the collective high-level action of eating. She has put emphasis on social interaction rather than individuality even by remembering the memory of the deceased on the Sofre. Using large dishes such as platters and serving bowl, inserting them in the center of Sofre are frozen actions which emphasize on the higher-level collective action of eating.

**Figure 6**

*Ritual Sofre in Maman-Paz Instagram's page (Mamanpaz company, 2020)*



**Food Accessibility and Facilities.** Delivery services of food app which function based on the time and the surrounding place of the customers enable them to take the benefit of peculiar social-time-place facilities. Utilizing interactive signs by aiming at providing quickly accessible location-based service could be referred to as a pre-eminent feature of Snap-food. It empowers customers as observing subjects to deliver various meals or observed objects through developing digital commensality stand on interactivity with Snap-food App's delivery services. It is also possible for Mr. Taster's users to participate in the monthly lottery just by shaking their phones. Unlike other apps, Snap-

Food's delivery service is hugely broadened to be reached out in numerous city of Iran. On the contrary, bring forth facilities in Maman-Paz, Delino and Easy-Paz apps are merely monopolized in Tehran. Into the bargain, the numerous page in Instagram are only devoted to Snap-food to supply services in other cities.

Focusing on being accessible for the customer without less effort in the shortest time belongs to Snap-food app. Its interactive space is dedicated to providing context-dependent services. The application requests users to turn on their navigator before logging in. Then, the customers encounter with various kinds of food classification which inter-semiotically involve various foods pictures as frozen action and enable them to deliver foods by pressing the interactive signs. Firstly, all serving places as frozen actions—through semantically synonym inter-semiotic or logically additive inter-semiotic—are listed as restaurants, supermarkets, coffee shops, juice shops, nuts shops, bakeries, protein stores, groceries, confectionaries, and others. After that, all meals are classified as Iranian's, Italian's, pizzas, sea foods, sandwiches, burgers, fries, Indian's, steaks, Lebanese, breakfast, salads types. Finally, the general categories of best bet, with discounts, with coupons, newest in Snap-food, only in Snap-food are exposed with their sub-categories. The pressing interactional icon formed categorized elements that enable users to find reasonably-priced shops and foods easily, best options from the customers' point of view. They can also benefit from moment-by-moment and special discounts on this app. Furthermore, interactional moving options provide them with the opportunity to know the special facilities in short time. The interactional typing sign is devoted to brief search and pay money. In short, by benefiting from temporal offer opportunities regarding the local situation, Snap-Food from other food apps can be distinguished. Accordingly, the food meals are set down based on their accessibility to pave the way of users to buy affordable and low-cost food as a scenario of online commensality.

## **Discussion**

Following Kotler's (2020) findings, consumers during the Covid-crisis

were more aware of what they consume and how much they need using product delivery services to deliver orders from anywhere at any time. In comparison with earlier findings, however, no evidence of sustainable communication during the post corona crisis was detected. This leads us to understand the semiosis of Iranian digital commensality in food apps via Instagram intertextuality. The outcomes of this research have provided insights into theoretical and practical achievements.

### ***Theoretical Consideration***

For investigation of human-computer interactions in food apps through digital commensality toward sustainable communication using Instagram intertextuality, a corpus-based model was used to be studied in terms of expression, content and context levels.

At expression level, in keeping with Malinowski (1923)'s view, app semiotic resources based on their interactivity were included in three types of pressing, moving to sides, and typing letters and number signs. Completing Adami's (2013) and Blitz-Raith and Liu's (2017) theoretical concepts, the interactive signs as semiotic resources can be conceptualized as active perspectives of intentionality toward an effect or goal, such as ordering food, selecting, and so on. Following Norris (2011), non-interactive semiotic resources occur when actions are frozen; they are performed at higher and lower levels. The lower-level action is a communicative mode's smallest meaning unit. A higher-level action is produced through a multiplicity of chained lower-level actions that interlink and play together in diverse ways.

At the content level, in agreement with Barthes (1977), Sojoudi (2006) and Danesi (2006) food as the alimentary language or a secondary cultural discourse is part of a broader system of meaning in culture; the choice of food, its preparation, the manner in which it is arranged and consumed can all be considered meaningful and cultural activities. Contrary to Eleftheriou-Smith (2017), in cyberspace a digital commensality does not only refer to the act of physically dining together with someone as a result of a digital technology-based intervention. According to Spence et al.'s typology (2019), food also

fulfills more than just nutrient needs. Additionally, in line with Barthes (2008) and Stajcic (2013), food as an organic system can express patterns of social relationships, and from Fischler's (1980, 2011) viewpoint, natural nutrients rarely translate into a simple utilitarian rationale.

In terms of context, Goffman (1959) states that many crucial facts lie beyond the time and place of interactions or the cultural context as a system of higher-level meanings - as observed by Halliday (2014) and Sasani (2019a). Mobile apps exist within cultural contexts, making it possible for users to interact and make meaning together. These applications create an intermediate environment as a public sphere or discussion circle, where users may communicate simultaneously and non-simultaneously -one to one, one to several, several to several- and participate in the semiotic process of interaction.

### ***Practical Achievements***

By developing the semiotics of digital commensality in Iranian food apps through Instagram's intertextuality consistent with food ingredients and preparation; meals; serving arrangements and accessibility features, we shed light on users' signifying tastes and habits.

In relation to *food ingredients*, the Easy-Paz application measures food's constituents and cooking recipes, allowing users to cook like a chef, creating Iranian menus for customers. Iranian-made samples of this food are displayed on the Easy-Paz Instagram page as frozen actions, which require offline commensality. Additionally, Easy-Paz provides a wide variety of national recipes for *food preparation* in the Iranian App. In agreement with Perullo (2008; quoted in Stano 2013), if on the one hand, the taste dimension is determined by biological, physiological, and individual components, on the other hand, it seems to be determined by social and cultural factors. By launching social challenges - such as #Surprise\_her - on Easy-paz's Instagram network, Men instead of women can take on the role of chef by following the app's instructions. Furthermore, in accordance with Stano (2013), Contemporary food trends have been returning to organic principles, such as



biological production and natural periodicity, encouraging people to prefer local organic products instead of foods imported or grown using unnatural techniques. In this regard, Maman-Paz's slogan "Mom's home-cooked food, prepared with love from home" reflects the role of highly-experienced older women.

For developing user-engaged interactivity relating to meals' food, the food categorization of Snap-Food has easy-access facilities and Maman-paz apps also introduce lunch and dinner meals which are available by using interactional signs. In agreement with Fishers (1990) the notion of the omnivore's paradox refers to how humans have a biological need to taste different foods (neophilia). Under other conditions, individuals generally fear the risks of trying novel foods (neophobia). Similarly, Stano (2013) describes food as having undergone constant transformations and re-definitions, as a translation process that can be gradual or very slow. Furthermore, on Maaii's App, users can find their favorite meal effortlessly by typing key words in the searching box and pressing the search icon. After clicking on the suggested food's name, its recipe along with the Mukbang link to Instagram are accessible. In agreement with Kang et al. (2020), Mukbang is as an alternative way to satisfy the yearning for communal eating.

In keeping with *food serving arrangement*, however, falling commensality in offline areas leads to headlines such as the end of the family dinner and the dining table (Spence et al., 2019). Delino and Snap-food place an emphasis on individual eating rather than collective eating. Maman-paz, however, emphasizes spreading out the Sofre when it comes to eating behaviors. We could see a variety of Sofre which are arranged in conformity with Nowruz, Shab-e-Chelle and Ramadan rituals and so on. Finally, *food accessibility and facilities users* of Snap-food App's delivery services are enabled to take advantage of social-time-place facilities to deliver various meals or observed objects and to interact with Snap-food App's delivery services. Snap-Food's delivery service has a wide range of locations in Iran, unlike other apps.

## Conclusion

The semiosis of online and offline commensality on Iranian user-engaged food app was systematically investigated, taking into consideration the macro-analysis of integrated corpus-based model.

**Figure 7**

*Human-machine interaction of Iranian food apps through Instagram intertextuality*



Interactive signs of Iranian food apps respectively lead to online commensality which refers to *eating alone over the internet*; as in the above diagram, at the first stage, searching for the food, visiting the menu, and seeing the comments, will enable users to proceed to the second stage of selecting a food, ordering their meal, or canceling an order. Finally, in the third stage, users can be encouraged to perform online commensality by paying and, in some cases, leaving a comment. The decrease in commensality in offline settings, which has been destroying collective eating habits in families around the dining table or Sofre, is dealt with through app services without concentrating on individual or collective eating activity. Enriching Iranian food app menus permits customers as observing subjects to order various meals or the observed objects through developing digital commensality with more emphasis on interactivity. In this regard, online commensality could be invigorated by the

main role of pressing icons along with the subordinate function of moving options which let the app's users order their favorite foods and have them delivered as soon as possible.

Regardless of how Iranian Sofre or table supports the original social network, apps can impact commensality by representing food on a plate, which could be eaten individually or in company of others. Notably, app spaces do not allow offline commensality and they could be enriched on the Instagram pages of the apps. However, with the spread of ASMR challenge, instagrammers – such as Maaii- are able to share their Mukbungs to encourage users toward online commensality. Meanwhile, offline commensality to some extent could be strengthened via intertextual relations with Instagram pages, where the Iranian eating manner through social challenges or resemioticised rituals –especially Nowruz, Shab-e-Chelle, and Ramadan - are preferred to be done collectively rather than individually.

1. Snapp food mobile app provides users to find the best restaurants around them, order their favorite meal and get it delivered to their door.
2. The EasyPaz mobile app provides users with the chance to learn and cook their own foods. By means of this application, users can select their favorite option from a wide variety of foods, and then deliver ingredients along with the recipe.
3. Maman-Paz is a special app for cooking Iranians home-made foods which enable skilled chef –women in Tehran - to amaze customers with your cuisine.
4. Delino application is made originally for ordering the breakfast online. It also enables users to order their lunch or snack through this app.
5. Mr. Taster's app enables users to easily find fancy restaurants. Mr Taster's suggestion could be accessible by searching the names of cities, regions, names of restaurants, and even the type of food.
6. Maaii application, through intertextual relation with Instagram, tries to describes the exact taste of foods using the Pap ASMR challenge (Mukbang) in Iran. This app also provides access to online food services.

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# **Translated Fiction in Iran: Readers' Reception and Expectations**

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## **Abstract**

Do translators know what kinds of translation their readers like and what kinds they dislike? The translator, like every author, has some readers in mind. Hence, in order for a translation to be acceptable, it needs to fulfill its readers' expectations. The present study surveys readers' expectations regarding literary translation (novels and stories), literary translators, as well as the peritext, the text and the format of such translated books. To this end, readers' reviews in three sites, namely Fidibo, Taghcheh, and Goodreads, were collected and then coded and classified following the thematic analysis approach. Chesterman's (2007) tripartite model of reception which studies readers' reactions, responses, and repercussions was adopted as the theoretical framework. Readers' expectations were classified into five main categories, namely translational expectations, textual/linguistic expectations, peritextual expectations, formatting expectations, and good literary translators' features. The results indicate that readers like translations that are both fluent and readable and are free from linguistic and textual abnormalities which are often the result of literal translation. Furthermore, the results of translational expectations specifically show that readers prefer translation methods and approaches that truly transfer the meaning, style, tone, register as well as

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culture-specific concepts. As to the peritext, readers preferred that an introduction and a literary criticism of the foreign work be included in the translation. Also, they defined a good literary translator as someone who is fully competent in the foreign language, able to comprehend the original text accurately and well-endowed with writing ability.

**Key words:** expectations, readers' reception, reader's reviews, translated fiction, translation readers

## Introduction

Each translation activity, according to Schäffner (1998, p. 1), aims at producing "a good translation, a good target text (TT)." However, as Schäffner herself asks, what are the criteria to judge a good translation, compared to bad or poor translations? The success of a translation could be attributed to so many factors. Among those factors, the fulfilment of the expectations of readers is no less important. According to 'functional theories' in translation studies (TS), every translation is directed towards specific readers and hence, in order to function successfully, it must be done in accordance with readers' expectations and therefore fulfil their needs. Otherwise a translation is deemed to failure (Nord, 1991). With this in mind, it becomes urgent to establish what readers of translation need and expect from the target text (TT). According to Gutt, (1996, p252), "the success of the translated text is crucially dependent on the expectations of the target audience." McAuley (2015) believes that "any attempt to judge the success of a translation has to take into account the reaction of its intended audience" (p. 5). In other words, as Munday (2016) declares, describing Nida's dynamic equivalence, "the message has to be tailored to the receptor's linguistic needs and cultural expectation." (p. 68). What is important in this statement is that it highlights readers' expectations, likes, and dislikes as criteria for judging the success of a translation.

Although the reader is frequently mentioned in translation theories, often it was the implied reader that was the focus of those theories (Suojanen et al., 2015). Implied readers which have been the focus of reception studies up to a recent time, are "textually encoded readers", that is, they have no real existence (Chan, 2010, p. 122). In other words, implied readers are the readers intended by an author or a translator. On the other side, real or actual readers

have real existence; they are individuals who actually receive the text. This second group is what Nord (2000) calls 'receivers'. The present research which concentrates exclusively on the latter group is based on the presumption that surveying real readers' opinions about translation could yield more practical results than studies that investigate the texts themselves in order to get an insight of the intended readers' expectations. Chesterman (1998) emphasizes the importance of ensuring that studies in translation reception clearly include real readers of translation. According to him, readers of translated texts probably have some expectations as to the text-type and discourse conventions, style and register of the text, the appropriate degree of grammaticality, the statistical distribution of all types of text features, use of collocations, and lexical choice (Chesterman, 2017, p. 167).

Due to the importance of readers' attitudes and expectations, in the present survey, the aim is to examine what readers of translated fiction into Persian need and expect from those translations, as well as their translators, texts, formats, and peritexts. What do they consider to be a pleasing feature or a shortcoming of a translated literary book? To fulfil this goal, the literature has been reviewed in search of a theoretical framework that surveys readers' expectation with regard to translation. Some models have been proposed, one of the most prominent of which is Gambier's model in the area of audio-visual translation. Gambier (2018) proposes a model encompassing three types of reception (3Rs) specific to the study of audio-visual products (e.g. subtitles). These are reaction, response and repercussion (Gambier, 2018, p. 57).

User-Centered Translation (UCT) is another model in TS that surveys readers' expectations, preferences and attitudes regarding the different types of translation. Proposed by Suojanen et al. (2015), UCT is designed to initially elicit readers' preferences and expectations and enhance the quality of translation on that basis. The assumption is that after the text has met readers' expectations, it will function successfully. Another model, which is adopted as the framework of the present study, is Chesterman's (2007) three partite model (3Rs), according to which the study of translation reception is to be divided in three broad areas: reactions, responses, and repercussions. Responses, which is

the core of the present study, refers to the readers' opinions regarding what translation should be like.

Studies in the area of 'translation reception usually fall into two types. There are studies that investigate how readers respond to micro-level elements of a translation. These are called thematic studies (Suojanen et al., 2015, p. 116). On the other hand, there are reception studies that investigate overall user experience rather than focusing on single elements. "The purpose of such studies is to find out how readers understand translated texts or what kinds of translation strategies are most useful and acceptable from the readers' perspective" (Suojanen et al., 2015, p. 112). In fact, the present research is concerned with this latter type. A good deal of studies have been conducted in the area of audiovisual translation reception. Gottlieb (2004) used a questionnaire to find out how the viewers of subtitled programs understand and interpret those programs and what their attitudes toward the subtitled programs are. The matters that caused objection were usual characteristics of subtitles such as instances of condensations of the text that were beyond the translator's control. With regard to technical translation, Lv and Ning (2013) found out the following five principles pertinent to Chinese readers' horizon of expectation toward scientific-technological texts: the principles of faithfulness, brevity, expressiveness, accuracy, and serving readers. Regarding the translation of marketing texts, which according to Reiss's text typologies is predominantly associated with the appellative text type, Risku et al. (2017) interviewed 13 participants who all work in marketing, public relations or after-sales in internationally active companies and are the receivers of those translations. They agreed that the text should be molded to the norms and expectations of the target culture. With concern to the competences of a qualified translator, the participants mentioned the following competencies: linguistic, cultural, and technical expertise, the use of company terminology, and a request for feedback if anything is unclear. The studies reviewed above concerned the reception of different text types. The translation of holy scriptures is not an exception. Adopting a self-designed questionnaire, Elimam (2017) surveyed Muslim native English speakers for their expectations of

Quran translation. The survey revealed that the majority of the respondents preferred the Quranic terms to be transliterated rather than simply translated, favored editions that provide explanations of difficult words in brackets, as do translations which provided an introduction to each surah, and viewed footnotes positively, which reveal their desire to know as much relevant information as possible. A large majority (%84) preferred a translation to be carried out by a Muslim rather than non-Muslim translators.

In the area of literary translation, empirical studies on actual readers are not as many as those studies conducted in other translation types (e.g. audiovisual translation). In his Doctoral thesis, Campbell (2015) examined the attitudes of non-professional readers towards literary translated books and translators in the UK (p. 1). The following skills were mentioned to be required of a qualified translator: perfect knowledge of source and target languages, experience as a translator or writer, and being a native target-language speaker. The preservation of culture-specific items was positively viewed since they were considered an indispensable component of the source culture location. Exploring young and adult American readers' book reviews from online resources Children's Literature Comprehensive Database (CLCD) and Goodreads on the one hand, and Chinese readers' responses from the child readers' individual blogs and several Chinese educational websites, Huang (2014) revealed that from the viewpoint of both American and Chinese readers, for translated children's literature to be of high quality, translators must possess interlingual aptitude and intercultural knowledge/sensitivity.

Nonetheless, the studies reviewed above are all out of the Iranian context. According to Fish (1980), in the theory of interpretive community, readings of text are culturally constructed and change over time. Such a community is defined as "a group of individual readers whose interpretation of texts is shaped and constrained by shared assumptions about reading and by a common set of interpretive practices", (Gambier, 2018, p. 47). Consequently, due to the decisive role of culture in the formation of readers' attitudes, the results of a research in Community A may not apply to community B. Prior to the present research only two studies precede in the area of literary translation

in Iran. However, they have their limitations. First and foremost, the studies are restricted to participants from the city of Mashhad, so the need arises for more inclusive studies covering a wide population across the country. Using a mixed method approach of interview in the first phase and a questionnaire designed on the basis of the results obtained in the interviews, Bijani et al. (2014) elicited the responses of 424 college students in the city of Mashhad with regard to translated fiction into Persian. They came up with twelve categories of favorable literary translation, the most significant of which is facilitating readers' imagination of the story. Adopting the same self-designed questionnaire mentioned above, Khoshsaligheh et al. (2020) conducted another research again in the city of Mashhad in an attempt to survey the opinions of 385 translation readers (all academic individuals) with respect to the features proved favorable in the study by Bijani et al. (2014). The study too targeted the community of university students, though it claims to explore the opinions of ordinary readers. Ordinary readers are contrasted to professional readers who usually read translation for a special purpose. The study confirmed the importance of immersion as the most favorable feature followed by faithfulness and footnoting.

It seems to be highly significant to conduct a comprehensive research in order to identify the expectations and attitudes of Iranian readers with regard to literary translation. In line with this aim, the study is an attempt to answer the following questions:

1. What translational features do Iranian readers prefer to see in literary books translated into Persian?
2. What are Iranian readers' textual expectations from translated literary books?
3. What peritextual features do Iranian readers like in translated literary books?
4. What concerns do Iranian readers have with regard to the format of translated books published in Iran?
5. Who do the readers consider as a good literary translator?

## **Methodology**

In this section, first the framework adopted in the study will be explained and then the procedures of data collection and data analysis are described.

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

Chesterman (2007) divides the study of translation reception into three broad categories:

- Reactions: “To refer to the effects of the textual (i.e. translations themselves) on the cognitive (i.e. the mental and emotional reactions of readers), we could thus use the term reactions” (Chesterman, 2007, p. 179). This is the first effect, Chesterman asserts.
- Responses: Responses are prompted by the initial effects (reactions) which appear in the form of opinions and reviews by readers. Examples range from writing to a newspaper to complain about a translation, drawing a red line under an offending item, posting a translated book review online, or making notes to offer further work to an excellent translator.
- Repercussions: Repercussions, according to (Chesterman, 2007, p. 180), are “the effects of translations at the cultural level”. Examples might be “the canonization of a literary work, changes in the evolution of the target language, changes in norms and practices, changes in the perception of cultural stereotypes.”

Since the present research studies reviews by readers posted online, it is concerned with *responses* which as mentioned above are prompted by *reactions*. However, *repercussions* are beyond the researchers’ aim.

### ***Data Collection Procedures and Sources***

To study the viewpoints of Iranian readers, reviews posted by readers in two Iranian sites (i.e. Fidibo and Taghche) along with an American site (i.e. Goodreads) were investigated. These sites give customers a chance to write reviews on any book they wish. The content of the comments on the translated

literature concerned a number of issues. Some commentators posted their view commenting on the translation and the translator, weighing the quality of the translator's work. Some commented exclusively on the content of the book and the author. Others commented on both the translation/translator and the author. Some other comments considered even the price and other similar issues.

These sites had sections containing and marketing translated stories and novels. Since the study is language-independent, that is, no distinction is made between reviews on translations from Russian literature, American literature or any other literary works in the world, any review that dealt with literary translation was welcomed, irrespective of the source language.

A choice had to be made between the available books to access the reviews pertinent only to those chosen books. The criterion for the selection is being a literary translated book. However, literary masterpieces like *Animal Farm* and *1984* were included in the study, based on the assumption that they are mostly read over the world and hence more reviews on their translations can be found. Twenty-three translated literary books were selected and the comments relevant to those translations were examined in this study. The purpose was to analyze the viewpoints of a randomly selected group of Iranian readers of such translated fiction. As a first step in the data collection process, the reviews posted under the translated books chosen were studied fully. Those reviews that directly addressed issues of translation quality were copied in a separate folder of word office file. Reviews belonging to each translated novel were collected together. Those reviews that had to do with issues other than translation such as the plot of story, and the theme were not included in the data collection corpus. Overall, 569 reviews were selected as valid. These belonged to 23 translations which were mostly classical works of literature.

However, the reviews were very broad and still had to be neatly classified into meaningful categories. As a second step in the data collection process, the reviews were initially coded according to the five categories of translational expectations, textual expectations, peritextual expectation, formatting expectations, and characteristics of good literary translators, which



were established during a pilot analysis prior to the main data collection process.

### **Data Analysis**

According to Munday (2016) reviews can either be analyzed synchronically or diachronically. Munday (2016) points out “An example of a synchronic analysis would be an examination of a range of reviews of a single work; examples of a diachronic analysis would be an examination of reviews of books of an author or newspaper over a longer time period” ( p. 242). The present study adopts a synchronic approach to examine readers’ comments on translated books and to establish what they like or dislike regarding the textual elements, the peritexts, the format, and the strategies and the procedures used in the translation. The study further analyzed readers’ opinions regarding the characteristics of good literary translators. Initially, the content of the reviews was analyzed holistically, looking for reader’s evaluations of the translation and the translator. After the initial coding, the reviews were sub-classified according to the specific features and issues they addressed. Following a thematic analysis approach, the reviews were sub-classified into sub-categories which are defined and described comprehensively in the next section. Thematic analysis (Mathews & Ross, 2010) is defined as “a process of working with raw data to identify and interpret key ideas or themes” (p. 373). The analysis is based on segmentation and categorization of the data prior to the final interpretation. Further, it has to be dynamic. That is, the themes and categories cannot be predetermined at the beginning. In fact, themes emerge as the data is analyzed and interpreted fully.

### **Results**

In line with the research questions, the findings were classified under five main headings. The first heading is concerned with the expectations of readers with regard to features exclusively addressing translation. By *exclusively addressing translation*, we mean that readers used the word translation when they discussed those particular favorable translational features. The second category concerns positive features of the text and the

language of the translation. This was accordingly named *textual/linguistic expectations*. The third heading, titled *peritextual expectations*, reports the expectations of readers with regard to the peritext (e.g. preface, title, footnotes, cover, etc.). The fourth category, *formatting expectations*, deals with what readers like about the format of a literary translated book. Finally, the last section addresses positive features of literary translators from the viewpoint of readers.

### ***Translational Features (Expectations)***

Overall, 9 categories appeared as favorable translational features (see Table 1). The categories emerged out of 251 reviews. The most commonly reviewed and desired feature in literary translation is fluency (%47), and the least reviewed are equivalent response and full translation, each constituting %4.8 of the whole nine categories. The degree of importance of each is further illustrated in Table 1.

**Table 1**

*Translational features of a good literary translation*

		<b>Statistics</b>	
N	Valid	251	
	Missing	0	
		Number of Reviews	Percentage
Valid	Fluency	118	47.0
	Faithfulness	17	6.8
	Accuracy	19	7.6
	Loyalty to the Author's Style, Tone and Characters' Register	29	11.6
	Translation from the Original Language	11	4.4
	Preservation (Foreignization) of Cultural Items	9	3.6
	Complete (Full) translation	12	4.8
	recency of Translation	24	9.6
	Equivalent Response/Effect	12	4.8
	Total	251	100.0

As Table 1 above illustrates, fluency comes first with %47, followed by loyalty to the author's style, tone, and register (%11.6), recency (%9.6), accuracy (%7.6), faithfulness (%6.8), complete translation and equivalent response (each %4.8), translation from the original language (%4.4), and foreignization of cultural concepts (%3.6). Here are some of the reviews regarding the above features (our translations):

1. *I read Mr. Hossein Kazemi Yazdi's translation, and in my opinion, it was much more fluent and understandable than Mr. Seyed Hosseini's translation. (Ta'oun).*
2. *Don't fall in the same trap I fell into. Make sure to read the original or a good translation. While reading, I felt that the translation could not convey the beauty of the author's writing and style. But I didn't expect it to be such a failure. ( The Death of Ivan Ilyich)*
3. *It was also good in terms of translation. However, given the fact that it was translated a long time ago, it needs to be edited to make it easier for today's readers to understand. ( Qomarbaz)*

The above reviews, concern fluency, loyalty to the author's style, and recency, respectively.

Statistically, as the above table shows, except fluency that exceeds other features by a great margin, all the features had almost similar degree of importance. This potentially suggests that each feature has an equal degree of importance in creating a TT that fulfils readers' expectations.

### ***Textual/Linguistic Expectations***

The second most debated topic concerns textual and linguistic expectations. Out of the 184 reviews, seven expectations were extracted. The majority pointed to the importance of a comprehensible TT (39.7%), followed by correct spelling and punctuations (19.0%), common well-established native Persian words and expressions (18.5%) (referring to words and expressions that can be readily understood by the Persian readers), immersion (9.2%)(which has to do with readers' engagement with and visualization of the story to be achieved through the selection of words and phrases that appeal to the readers' linguistic taste) (Khoshsaligheh, Kafi, & Ameri, 2020, p. 12), aesthetical

and pleasing language (5.4%) (meant that a translation of a literary work must be correspondingly a work of art in itself). In other words, the translation must appeal to readers' sense perception (Abrams & Harpham, 2012, p. 4). Other expectations are consistent TT according to TL norms' (5.4%), and correct TL grammar with 2.7% (see Table). Below are some examples of readers' comments concerning textual linguistic expectation.

*1. It was difficult to communicate with the text because it was neither fluent nor catchy nor of high quality. Especially with the literal and very weak translations of this version that I read, there were many vague sentences and unfamiliar Arabic words in the text. (Goodreads)*

This reviewer mentions a number of reasons that hindered his visualization of the story. These are non-fluent TT, word-for-word strategy of translation, uncommon words, and ill-structured sentences.

*2. The translation was excellent. Master Parviz Shahdi translated the book from the original source, that is, from French, which is a good thing and a great advantage. The translated text is very fluent and understandable and not heavy and difficult. In addition, it is excellent in terms of literary richness and the use of literary ornaments, and the translation itself is a source for strengthening Persian literature. It is excellent that at the same time as we read a French novel, we can improve in terms of Persian literature as well because of the excellent translation. (Taoun)*

The reader here is very much pleased with the translation because it is aesthetically perfect. In other words, the reader is impressed by the artistic beauties of the TT. This refers to the significance of having a writerly ability that allows the translator to render a text which is artistic and literary. The reader's contentment with the artistic beauty of the TT convinced him to consider the translation as a very good example of Persian literature.

*3. Either the translation was very bad, or the speaker read it wrong. He had not followed Persian grammar correctly. For example, where the sentence was long, several phrases were nested in it, and the main verb was forgotten. Or the sentence contained a plural subject, and a singular verb. There were many of these mistakes. (Madame Bovary)*

This third example declares that the translation does not conform to the Persian syntax. The sentences are long, which is not usual in Farsi. The reader further reports that some sentences do not contain a verb, in some others the subject is plural, while the verb is singular. This points to the fact that translators must make sure that their sentences are grammatically correct.

**Table 2**

*Textual/linguistic expectations*

**Statistics**

N	Valid	184
	Missing	0

		Number of Reviews	Percentage
Valid	Comprehensible TT	73	39.7
	Correct Spelling and Punctuation	35	19.0
	Common Well-established Persian native words and expressions	34	18.5
	Immersion	17	9.2
	Aesthetical and Pleasing Language	10	5.4
	Consistent TT According to TL Norms	10	5.4
	Correct TL Grammar	5	2.7
	Total	184	100.0

***Peritextual Expectations***

After translational and textual expectations, peritextual elements were of a concern to readers. Out of 569 reviews analyzed, 105 directly addressed peritextual features, out of which six categories emerged. These are criticism/introduction/and author’s preface (%66.4) as the most important peritextual elements followed by family tree for perplexing foreign story character’s names (%16.8), attractive, accurate title that reflects the author’s intention (%6.5), footnotes & attractive cover that is compatible with the content of the book (each %3.7), and writing the name of the translator and the

publisher on the front cover (%.9) (see Table 3 below).

As the table below illustrates, the most valued parts of the peritext were literary criticisms, introductions (which usually contained information about the author and his work) and the author's preface, which is a peritextual element of the ST. Except this category which differed from other features by a great margin, and the proposal to draw a family tree (illustrating the kinship between the story characters), the other peritextual features had almost equal degree of importance (see Table 3).

**Table 3**

*Peritextual expectations*

**Statistics**

N	Valid	105
	Missing	0

		Number of Reviews	Percentage
Valid	Criticism, Introduction, Author's Preface	71	66.4
	Family Tree for Perplexing Foreign Story Character's Names	18	16.8
	Attractive, Accurate Title That reflects the Author's Intention	7	6.5
	Footnotes for the Description of Cultural Terms	4	3.7
	Numbered Pages	1	.9
	Attractive Cover that is Compatible with the Content of the Book	4	3.7
	Writing the Name of the Translator and the Publisher On the Front Cover	1	.9
	Readable Font	1	.9
	Total	107	100.0

Here are some of the reviews concerning the above categories.

1. *Regarding Jalal's translation, although sometimes the sentences need a bit of thought, inclusion of the translation of Sartre's criticism on the book helps a lot to*

*understand it. This reason is enough for this translation to be considered the best translation (Fidibo, foreign translation by Jalal Al Ahmad)*

The above review highlights the importance of 'literary criticism' which supposedly helps the reader to better comprehend the text.

*2. If you want to read the book, first download a genealogy of the characters. Because you get extremely confused due to the repetition of names and their length (Taqcheh, One Hundred Years of Solitude, Mohammad Reza Sahabi)*

The reader above, advises other readers to download an already drawn family tree of the story characters, because otherwise they might be perplexed by the similar and long foreign names. The family tree that most reviewers suggested makes it much easier for readers to distinguish the different characters. It does so through matching characters to their roles in the story and their kinship to each other.

### ***Formatting Expectations***

Regarding formatting expectations, which addresses the overall layout of the text, only two reviews mentioned such expectations. One review commented on the importance of numbering pages (%.9), and the other highlighted the significance of readable font (%0.9) (see Table 4).

Here is how one reviewer expressed his dissatisfaction with an electronic book whose pages were not numbered:

*1. The first principle that should have been observed in the production and editing of such "electronic books", but was not observed, is the indisputable principle of page numbering in such a way that the reader who probably wants to take notes from the book does not say: "Wow!" This is the first and perhaps the most important drawback of this software...*

As to the font, one reader expressed his satisfaction with a translated book that had a large readable font.

*2. The only advantage was the type of pages and the large and readable font.*

**Table 4***Formatting expectations*

		Statistics	
N	Valid	2	
	Missing	0	
		Number of Reviews	Percentage
Valid	Numbered Pages	1	.9
	Readable Font	1	.9

***Characteristics of Good Literary Translators***

With regard to the favorable features and skills of a good literary translator, nine categories emerged out of 27 reviews. The most valued feature is linguistic knowledge which encompasses knowledge of the SL, the TL, and special knowledge of linguistics (%37.0), followed by the ability to fully comprehend the ST meaning (%22.2), and writerly ability (%18.5), which concerns the translator's ability to correspondingly create aesthetical and a pleasing literary TT (like an author). Then comes creativity, extra-linguistic knowledge (cultural, social, historical knowledge), respect for the professional ethics, being meticulous in the choice of works for translation, mastering numerous words, and experience as a literary translator (each %3.7; see Table 4). Except the first three skills that suggest a preference for linguistic skills over other skills, the other six features had an exactly equal degree of importance as each was reviewed only once (see Table 5).

The comment below considers high command of both SL and the TL as vital capabilities of literary translators.

1. *One of the very good and valuable translations of this book, after the translation of Mohammad Ghazi (may his soul be at peace), is the translation of Ahmed Shamlou (may his soul be at peace). The importance of Shamlou's*



*translation, in addition to being in line with the language developments in recent years and its novelty, is Shamlou's mastery of several European languages and his familiarity with linguistics. (Taqcheh, Shazdeh Kochulu, Ahmed Shamlou)*

As to the artistic ability of the translator, literary translators are expected to translate with the aim of creating a literary work of art that can be easily distinguished from other text types through its aesthetic features. Consider the following review.

2.

*ostoevsky is wonderful, especially with the art of Jalal Al Ahmad*

**Table 5**

*Good literary translators' features*

**Statistics**  
Good Literary Translator's  
Features

N	Valid	27
	Missing	0

		Number of Reviews	Percentage
Valid	Linguistic Knowledge	10	37.0
	Writerly Ability	5	18.5
	Perfect Knowledge of the ST	6	22.2
	Creativity	1	3.7
	Extra-linguistic Knowledge	1	3.7
	Respect For Professional Ethics	1	3.7
	Meticulousness in the Choice of Books for Translation	1	3.7
	Experience as a Literary Translator	1	3.7
	Mastering numerous Words	1	3.7
	Total	27	100.0

## Discussion

As argued in the introduction, real readers have received a scarce scholarly attention in Translation Studies as compared to the textually embedded reader (i.e. implied reader). This fact was an inspiration for conducting the present research. Furthermore, given the fact that the results of readers' reception studies cannot be generalized to other parts of the world (Nord, 1991), the lessons learnt from the present study are highly valuable in their own context (Iran).

The tables above suggest that in each category, one or two features are predominant, while the rest had almost equal degree of importance. For instance, with regard to the translational features, except fluency which was reviewed by 118 readers, the other eight features were mentioned by a range of 9 to 29 readers. The differences between most of the categories are not staggering. However, given the large number of reviews collected, the fact that some features are more commonly reviewed than others potentially imply that they are more important to readers than other features. It is now clear that fluency which transcends other features in the degree of importance, is the first translational feature that comes to the attention of the Iranian readers. Taking 'fluency' and 'recency of translation' aside, the other seven features indicate an appreciation of the ST. The results of translational features indicate that translated literature must be viewed by the Persian reader as a text with a foreign character emerging from a setting which is different from readers' own cultural and social setting. Hence, readers must expect a reading experience which is different from the experience of reading literary books written by Persian authors.

On the other hand, with regard to language, the results indicate that comprehensibility, as the most valued textual feature, along with the preference for common native Persian words, correct TL grammar, consistent and cohesive TT (that has to conform to Persian language norms) all point to a translation that is as comprehensible and natural (for readers) as if written by a native Persian author. The remaining two textual features, namely correct spelling and punctuations and pleasing and aesthetical text can be interpreted

in the following manner. As some reviewers explicitly stated, the use of correct punctuations assisted them to better comprehend the text, while incorrect spelling and punctuations hampered their comprehension. So, this favorable feature is in agreement with the most valued textual feature, namely comprehensibility. Pleasing and aesthetical text, on the other hand, implicitly proposes a translation based on text type. This category implies that translated literature is judged by the same features that govern literature in general. Consequently, being aesthetical is still another feature of the translated literature. In fact, this conclusion is further supported by readers' demand for the correspondence of style, register, and tone, which are noticeable literary devices of the expressive text type. Hence, the practical implication is that it would be much better if translators made the notion of text type as a building block, leading them through the whole process of translation. That means that an expressive text (e.g. fiction, etc.) shall be translated in a manner that makes it conform to the genre of expressive texts.

Among the translational and textual expectations, two preferences were more notable. These were readers' preference for loyalty to the author's style and their preference for short sentences as opposed to long sentences. These two features do seem to be in conflict in some instances. As is mentioned in the definition of style above, the sentence structure and the type of sentences (whether long or short) might be a distinctive feature of a given author's writing style. That means that a given author might deliberately use long sentences for a special effect. This phenomenon is prominently evident in periodic sentences "in which the component parts, or members, are so composed that the close of its syntactic structure remains suspended until the end of the sentence; the effect tends to be formal or oratorical" (Abrams and Harpham, 2012, p. 385). This type is contrasted to the nonperiodic sentence which is "more relaxed and conversational in its effect—the component members are continuous, but so loosely joined that the sentence would have been syntactically complete if a period had been inserted at one or more places before the actual close" (Abrams and Harpham, 2012, p. 385). Hence, given the importance of preserving the authorial style, breaking a long periodic sentence

into smaller sentences (in order to fulfil readers' expectations with regard to the sentence type) might with strong possibility disrupt the author's style. The results obtained in the present study cannot further clarify readers' attitudes towards these two points, namely 'loyalty to the author's style' and 'long versus short sentences'. It might be a better idea to investigate readers' perceptions towards these features in future studies.

The results reached with regard to the peritextual and formatting expectations do suggest some interesting conclusions. Preference for the inclusion of literary criticism, author's preface, translator's introduction, a title that reflects the author's intention, a cover that is compatible with the book's content, and footnotes do imply Iranian reader's appreciation of the foreign and distinctive character as well as the foreign atmosphere of the work. However, a quite unexpected result with regard to the peritexts was readers' proposal to make available a family tree as a facilitative tool to deal with the complexity posed by foreign names which made it difficult for readers to keep track of the story.

As to the translator, the various categories extracted point to different skills expected to be possessed by literary translators. The mostly reviewed features, namely linguistic knowledge, writerly ability, and perfect comprehension of the ST, stress the importance of the translator's linguistic ability. Writerly ability also indicates that literary translators are partly assimilated to literary authors. Extra-linguistic knowledge is another qualification emphasized by reviewers. This refers to familiarity with the source culture, which according to the reviewers, helps readers better comprehend the ST meaning. The other qualification is being meticulous in the choice of books which makes it essential for literary translators to take their abilities into consideration and think twice before deciding on a given book. Experience on the other hand must be assumed by readers as a factor that enhances translators' linguistic as well as extra-linguistic abilities. However, it must be acknowledged that the results reached in this section (i.e. translator's skills) are not much representative because very few reviews in comparison to other features were found in the sites. Overall, only 27 reviews were found to

be addressing the translator's skills. This does not mean that Iranian readers did not pay attention to the translators. On the contrary, readers were fully aware and appreciative of the translators and the great service they offer to the community; they kept asking each other about the better translator. In fact, readers were more engaged in discussing textual, linguistic and translational features.

The present research shares some results with the previous few studies carried out in the area of reader's reception of literary translation. Campbell's study (2015) found perfect knowledge of source and target languages, experience as a translator or writer as three favorable features of literary translators in the UK. These three features were also favored by Iranian readers in the present study. Both studies also verified the importance of maintaining culture-specific items and the need to get absorbed in the book. The latter feature which is termed immersion in this study, was also considered a highly significant feature by Iranian ordinary readers in the study recently conducted by Khoshsaligheh et al. (2020). In fact, in the said study, immersion appears the second most favored quality, after faithfulness.

Comprehensibility, footnotes, as well as an introduction that explained the background to the novel, and fidelity to the original work, which were among the favorable features in the present research, had been previously confirmed as highly significant preferences by Chinese readers of translated fiction (Chan, 2010). As to the translator's skills, the mentioned study highlighted interlingual aptitude and intercultural knowledge as two vital skills to be possessed by literary translators. These results again were consistent with the way Iranian readers conceived of literary translators.

The present study shares the most with Bijani's et al. (2014), which elicited Iranian undergraduate readers' expectations toward literary translation. The two studies confirmed the following eight categories as features of a favorably received translation of foreign fiction among Persian readers. The categories are facilitating readers' imagination of the story (i.e. immersion), conveying the real sense, loyalty to the author's writing style, consistent TT language according to TL norms, clear and comprehensible TT,

Correspondence of TT & ST functions, accurate TL grammar, and the preservation of the ST cultural items.

In addition to the above-mentioned studies, this study had much in common with the results reached by Venuti (1998), “that most English-language reviews prefer fluent translations written in modern, general, standard English that is natural and idiomatic” (18-20). Persian readers likewise favored a fluent translation that is written in modern and standard Persian. Moreover, by appreciating features like correct TL grammar and consistent TT according to TL norms, they in fact emphasized the significance of a natural TT, which is free from linguistic peculiarities. Furthermore, English-language reviewers’ inclination towards idiomatic translation is closely similar to the Persian readers’ preference for aesthetical and pleasing texts.

## **Conclusion**

The results of the present study can come to the aid of translators in their attempt to provide a successful translation. Now, it is clear that in order to be effective, translators must consider the following important points. First of all, they must make sure that their translation is fluent, comprehensible and conforms to today’s language, which is partly realized through the use of common well-established words and expressions. Correspondingly, the grammar of the TT should be based on the Persian language syntax. In other words, while translators must make sure that the ST meaning is transmitted accurately and faithfully, they do not have to abide by the ST grammatical structures because languages are not usually identical in their syntax. Languages sometimes express the same meaning using dissimilar syntactic structures. Furthermore, carrying out structures from an SL into a TL will likely result in transference, that is, odd sentences which in turn hampers readers’ comprehensibility of the text. Literary translators should pay attention to three components of the ST, namely style, tone, and register. These three need to be accurately and identically reflected in the TT. In fact, bearing in mind that the texts we are dealing with are literary texts, loyalty to stylistic elements becomes more crucial here. Correspondingly, translators must attempt to

preserve cultural concepts and terms and avoid domesticating them in the TL, so as to convey the true sense of the novel/story.

From a textual perspective, translators should use punctuation marks correctly, and revise the translation after it is done. Of course, the revision stage could be performed by a reviser. Equally important is correct spelling.

Translators should also build up a writerly ability so as to be able to create a literary work of art through translation. This is not to be mistaken with terms like 'transcreation', or 'rewriting literature'. Quite the reverse, translators are not at all recommended to domesticate the foreign work. Moreover, literary translators are expected to create pleasing and aesthetical text, two prominent features of literary works in general.

As to the peritext, translators are highly recommended to write a literary criticism, or provide readers with criticism from an external source. Likewise, they can make available in the introduction a concise biography of the ST author and give a short description of his previous works. In line with this requirement, translators might use footnoting as a tool for defining and describing unfamiliar concepts.

Regarding the translation of titles, translators must make sure to transmit the same meaning intended by the ST title. This issue is also true for the design of the book cover. That is, care must be taken to make sure that pictures on the TT book cover are true representations of the content of the book. However, issues relating to book design are usually the job of the publishing house. Yet, translators can consult publishers in this regard. Ultimately, attempts must be made to follow the 'faithfulness' principle even in the design of the book cover.

Lastly, literary translators should broaden the scope of their linguistic as well as extra-linguistic knowledge. Equally important is translators' endeavor to know their readers well. The ultimate end must be the fulfilment of readers' expectations.

The present research used a distinctive tool (i.e. reviews) to investigate the attitudes of Iranian readers of translated fiction. Readers were researched as an interpretive community with a focus on their commonalities rather than

differences. However, studies differentiating between different types of readers (e.g. the professional reader, the ordinary reader, etc.) might provide interesting results, illuminating the differences in the outlook of these readers towards literary translation and translators. Furthermore, prospective researchers might use other empirical tools (e.g. interviews, questionnaires, etc.) to conduct similar studies. However, it shall be noted that it is a common presupposition in studies of reader's reception that attitudes of people towards translation might change within time and under specific conditions (Nord, 1991). Hence, researchers in the future might conduct further studies to test the authenticity of the 'time' factor. Moreover, researchers might study the conditions (e.g. cultural, social, educational, etc.) that lead readers to develop a particular conception of translation. Equally important is researching readers' attitudes and expectations towards the translation of other text types (e.g. informative texts, appellative texts).



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# **Abstracts in Persian**



## مطالعه اکتشافی چالش ها و فرصت های تغییر به آموزش آنلاین در کلاس های زبان انگلیسی به عنوان زبان خارجی در طول همه گیری بیماری کووید -۱۹

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تاریخ دریافت: ۱۴۰۰/۰۷/۰۳ تاریخ تصویب: ۱۴۰۱/۰۳/۰۳

### چکیده

شیوع بیماری کووید -۱۹ آموزش را در سراسر جهان متحول کرد. تغییر فوری به آموزش آنلاین (آموزش اضطراری از راه دور) برای مدیران، معلمان، دانش آموزان و هر کسی که در آموزش و پرورش دخیل است بسیار سخت بوده است. اگرچه یادگیری آنلاین و ترکیبی مدت هاست که در آموزش و پرورش انجام می شود، این تغییر ناهمگانی برنامه ریزی نشده، تصویری متفاوت به ویژه در کشورهای کمتر توسعه یافته از نظر فناوری ایجاد کرد. بر این اساس، پژوهش اکتشافی حاضر با هدف درک چالش ها و فرصت های موجود در این تغییر فوری به آموزش آنلاین از دیدگاه دانشجویان کلاس های زبان عمومی که زبان انگلیسی به عنوان زبان خارجی آنها می باشد پرداخته است. اگرچه قبلاً برخی از شیوه های آموزش زبان به کمک فن آوری و موبایل در کلاس های زبان عمومی مورد بررسی قرار گرفته است، اما دانش آموزان برای اولین بار در این شرایط یک دوره کاملاً آنلاین زبان آموزی را تجربه کردند. در مجموع ۶۸ دانشجو در این مطالعه شرکت کردند و داده ها از طریق مصاحبه فردی، مصاحبه گروهی، و نوشتن برگه های بازخورد توسط دانشجویان جمع آوری شد. تجزیه و تحلیل محتوا با استفاده از Nvivo 11 برای داده های متنی انجام شد. یافته ها در چهار گروه عمده چالش ها و فرصت ها شامل فناوری، روانشناختی/عاطفی، زبانی، و محیطی/اجتماعی طبقه بندی شدند. به طور کلی، ۱۶ چالش و ۱۱ فرصت مورد بررسی قرار گرفت که در مقاله به طور کامل مورد بحث قرار گرفته است.

**کلیدواژه ها:** کوید -۱۹، آموزش آنلاین، آموزش اضطراری از راه دور، آموزش زبان به کمک فن آوری، چالش ها و فرصت ها

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## معرفت شناسی تکاملی فراگیری زبان دوم با تمرکز بر ساختار عاملی و رابطه آن با عقاید معرفت شناسی عمومی

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### چکیده

شواهد پژوهشی بر اهمیت عقاید زبان آموزان در فرآیند و بازده فراگیری دلالت دارد. با این حال، پژوهش پیرامون عقاید معرفت شناختی تکاملی مختص فراگیری زبان دوم، که دربرگیرنده عقاید مرتبط با ثبات، سادگی، منبع و توجیه دانش زبان دوم است، بسیار محدود است. مطالعه حاضر با دو هدف ساخت و رواسازی پرسشنامه معرفت شناسی تکاملی مختص فراگیری زبان دوم و بررسی ارتباط عقاید معرفت شناختی عمومی و مختص فراگیری زبان دوم طراحی گردید. ۶۸ عقیده-گویه پیرامون ۱۷ مضمون مستخرج از مصاحبه با زبان آموزان با ویژگی های متفاوت در یک مطالعه ی کیفی اولیه (۴ عقیده-گویه تکاملی شامل ۴ نقطه دانایی مطلق، موقت، مستقل، و بافتارمند، در ارتباط با هر یک از مضامین) طرح و مورد مطالعه آزمایشی قرار گرفت. تحلیل عاملی دوسطحی و راه حل اشمید-لیمن روی داده های بدست آمده از ۵۷۱ زبان آموز روایی سازه ای پرسشنامه را نشان داد. تحلیل به استخراج ۸ عامل اولیه شامل عقیده-گویه های مرتبط با دانش و دانستن زبان دوم در هر یک از ۴ نقطه تکاملی مذکور و ۴ عامل ثانویه شامل عقیده گویه های مرتبط با ۴ نقطه تکاملی منجر شد. در نهایت، تحلیل آماری، ارتباط معنادار، اما نه قوی، میان عقاید معرفت شناختی عمومی و معرفت شناسی مختص فراگیری زبان دوم (مبتنی بر پرسشنامه رواسازی شده در این مطالعه) بر اساس داده های بدست آمده از ۱۲۷ زبان آموز را نشان داد. یافته ها در ارتباط با الگوهای موجود معرفت شناسی و نظریه های فراگیری زبان دوم مورد مباحثه قرار می گیرد.

**کلیدواژه ها:** دانش مطلق، شناخت زمینه ای، پرسشنامه معرفت شناسی رشدی (LDEI)، دانستن مستقل، یادگیری

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## تاثیرات برنامه ریزی قبل از انجام درسکار، برنامه ریزی در حین انجام درسکار و تلفیق برنامه ریزی قبل و در حین انجام درسکار بر پیچیدگی، صحت و روان بودن تولیدات شفاهی کودکان فراگیر زبان انگلیسی

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تاریخ دریافت: ۱۴۰۰/۰۲/۱۶

### چکیده

بررسی تاثیرات نقش برنامه ریزی به عنوان یک متغیر اجرایی برای انجام درسکار بر کیفیت تولید زبان دوم شاهد رشد چشمگیری در سالهای گذشته بوده است (الیس، ۲۰۰۵؛ اسکین، ۲۰۱۴). با تکیه بر نتایج تحقیقات قبلی، هدف مطالعه‌ی پیش رو بررسی تاثیرات سه نوع برنامه ریزی شامل برنامه ریزی قبل از انجام درسکار، برنامه ریزی در حین انجام درسکار و تلفیق برنامه ریزی قبل و در حین انجام درسکار بر پیچیدگی دستوری، صحت و روان بودن تولیدات شفاهی فراگیران خردسال بوده است. شرکت کنندگان ۶۰ کودک ۱۰ تا ۱۲ ساله ی فراگیر زبان انگلیسی بودند که به صورت تصادفی در یکی از چهار گروه تحقیق از جمله گروه کنترل قرار گرفتند. از شرکت کنندگان خواسته شد تا یک ویدیو کوتاه صامت را دیده و داستان آن را نقل کنند. نتایج بدست آمده نشان می دهد که برنامه ریزی قبل از انجام درسکار منجر به روان تر شدن گفتار شده و همچنین برنامه ریزی در حین انجام درسکار و تلفیق برنامه ریزی قبل و در حین انجام درسکار پیچیدگی دستوری و صحت گفتار را همزمان بهبود می بخشد. بر اساس یافته های این تحقیق به معلمان کودکان فراگیر زبان دوم پیشنهاد می گردد تا با بهره بردن از تاثیرات مثبت متنوع نقش برنامه ریزی در انجام درسکارها تولیدات شفاهی زبان آموزان خود را به لحاظ پیچیدگی دستوری، صحت و روان بودن گفتار تقویت کنند.

**کلیدواژه ها:** برنامه ریزی درسکار، درسکارهای داستانی، پیچیدگی، صحت، روانی گفتار

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## آموزش معکوس در کلاس درس زبان عمومی دانشگاه: نقش ویژگی های شخصیتی، تحمل ابهام، و تمایل به ارتباط در عملکرد دانشجویان

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### چکیده

آموزش معکوس یکی از روش های نسبتاً جدید آموزشی است که در آن آموزش در خارج از کلاس صورت می گیرد و زمان کلاس به تمرین و تثبیت یادگیری زیر نظر معلم اختصاص می یابد. مطالعات مختلفی در جهان و ایران به بررسی اثربخشی آموزش معکوس در آموزش زبان انگلیسی پرداخته اند، اما این مطالعات یا در بافت مدارس و آموزشگاه های خصوصی زبان انجام شده و یا با دانشجویان رشته زبان انگلیسی انجام شده است. این مطالعه به بررسی عملکرد ۱۸۲ نفر از دانشجویان زبان عمومی در کلاس آموزش معکوس در درس زبان عمومی در دانشگاه فرهنگیان مشهد می پردازد. بر اساس نتایج آزمون t زوجی و مستقل و آزمون تحلیل واریانس چندمتغیره تکراری، آموزش معکوس باعث بهبود یادگیری دانشجویان در درس زبان عمومی می گردد. علاوه بر این جنسیت، رشته تحصیلی دانشجویان، ویژگی های شخصیتی و تحمل ابهام بر اثربخشی آموزش معکوس موثر تاثیرگذار نیست. تمایل به برقراری ارتباط نیز اگر چه به لحاظ آماری بر اثربخشی آموزش معکوس تاثیرگذار است اما اندازه اثر آن بسیار کم و حدود ۳ درصد است. بر اساس یافته های این پژوهش، آموزش معکوس یکی از راه های افزایش اثربخشی آموزش زبان عمومی در کلاس های حضوری و مجازی می تواند باشد.

**کلیدواژه ها:** کلاس معکوس، اثربخشی، شخصیت، تحمل ابهام، تمایل به برقراری ارتباط

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## تأثیر آموزش متقابل تاملی بر خودپنداره تحصیلی زبان آموزان انگلیسی به عنوان زبان خارجی ایرانی

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### چکیده

هدف مطالعه حاضر بررسی تأثیر آموزش متقابل تاملی (RRT) به عنوان یک شیوه آموزشی بر خودپنداره تحصیلی زبان آموزان انگلیسی به عنوان زبان خارجی ایرانی میباشد. به این منظور، سه کلاس متشکل از ۱۰۰ زبان آموز زبان خارجی ایرانی با گرایش آموزش زبان انگلیسی با استفاده از نمونه گیری آسان انتخاب و به عنوان گروه آموزش متقابل (RT)، گروه آموزش متقابل تاملی (RRT) و گروه کنترل تعیین شدند. طرح این مطالعه از نوع نیمه آزمایشی الگوی پیش آزمون، درمان و پس آزمون با رویکرد ترکیبی برای جمع آوری داده ها و تجزیه و تحلیل نتایج مداخله بود. در مرحله کمی، داده ها از طریق پرسشنامه خودپنداره تحصیلی جمع آوری شد. نتایج آمار توصیفی و تحلیل واریانس نشان دهنده تأثیر قابل توجه آموزش متقابل تاملی بر این متغیر بود. همچنین، بررسی کیفی ادراک فراگیران از طریق مصاحبه نیمه ساختار یافته و تحلیل محتوا، دیدگاه مثبت آنها را در مورد این آموزش نشان داد. روی هم رفته، به نظر می رسد که نقش دیگران مهم (معلم و همتایان) و روش تدریس سهم عمده ای در خود باورهای فراگیران دارد. نتایج برنامه مداخله به نوبه خود دیدگاه جدیدی را در مورد کلیه فرآیندهای آموزش، یادگیری و ارزشیابی ایجاد می کند. آنها همچنین زمینه های مناسبی را برای بهبود ساختارهای روانی آموزشی در کنار مهارت های شناختی و تنظیمی یادگیرندگان فراهم می کنند.

**کلیدواژه ها:** کارآموزی شناختی، یادگیری مشارکتی، ادراک فراگیران، آموزش متقابل، تأمل

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## نقش میانجی درگیری شناختی در رابطه بین اهداف پیشرفت و فرسودگی تحصیلی در بین زبان آموزان ایرانی: رویکرد مدل سازی معادلات ساختاری

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### چکیده

علیرغم نقش مهم درگیری شناختی، اهداف پیشرفت و فرسودگی تحصیلی در فرآیند یادگیری، تعامل سه گانه آنها کمتر مورد تحقیق قرار گرفته است. از اینرو، این مطالعه با هدف آزمون مدل ساختاری درگیری شناختی، اهداف پیشرفت و فرسودگی تحصیلی و به طور خاص بررسی این فرضیه که آیا درگیری شناختی تأثیر اهداف پیشرفت بر فرسودگی تحصیلی را میانجی گری می کند، انجام گرفت. در مجموع ۳۸۴ زبان آموز ایرانی با سطح زبان انگلیسی پیشرفته از موسسات خصوصی آموزش زبان انگلیسی مختلف در شهرهای شیراز و بوشهر بر اساس روش نمونه گیری در دسترس برای تکمیل سه پرسشنامه معتبر با مقیاس لیکرت شامل درگیری شناختی، نسخه اصلاح شده پرسشنامه فرسودگی تحصیلی ماسلاخ و اهداف پیشرفت انتخاب شدند. این سه پرسشنامه به ترتیب شامل ۱۲، ۱۰ و ۱۲ گویه می باشد. در این مطالعه از روش مدل سازی ساختاری برای آزمون مدل فرضی استفاده شد. نتایج تحلیل عاملی تاییدی حاکی از آن بود که ابزارهای تحقیق به خوبی با داده های مطالعه برازش دارد. همچنین، شاخص های برازش نشان دهنده برازش خوب مدل فرضی بود. یافته های تحلیل مسیر نیز نشان داد که اهداف پیشرفت بر فرسودگی تحصیلی تأثیر منفی می گذارد و تأثیر مثبتی بر تعامل شناختی دارد. علاوه بر این، درگیری شناختی به طور جزئی رابطه بین اهداف پیشرفت و فرسودگی تحصیلی را میانجی گری می کند. یافته های این پژوهش ممکن است مفاهیم نظری و عملی قابل توجهی برای معلمان زبان انگلیسی، طراحان برنامه درسی و سیاست گذاران آموزشی داشته باشد.

**کلیدواژه ها:** درگیری شناختی- اهداف پیشرفت- فرسودگی تحصیلی- زبان آموزان- مدل سازی معادلات ساختار

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## معنای پردازشی همگرایی دیجیتال به سوی ارتباطی پایدار: بررسی موردی اپلیکیشن های غذا در ارتباط بینامتنی با اینستاگرام

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تاریخ دریافت: ۱۴۰۱/۰۴/۰۸ تاریخ تصویب: ۱۴۰۱/۱۲/۲۰

### چکیده

همگرایی دیجیتال، به عنوان فعالیت جسمانی خوردن همراه با یک فرد (به صورت آنلاین یا آفلاین) با استفاده از اپلیکیشن های خوراک به وسیله بینامتنیت اینستاگرام به سوی ارتباطی پایدار، مستلزم استفاده از مدل تلفیقی پیکره بنیاد در چارچوب تحلیل گفتمان تعاملی چندشیوه است. این مدل ما را قادر می سازد تا مناظره حل ناپذیر میان کنش های اجتماعی و ابزارهای بیناکنش گر را بررسی کنیم. معنای پردازشی همگرایی دیجیتال ایرانی نگرش هایی را برای در نظر گرفتن ذائقه معنادار کاربر و عادات های آن ها فراهم می آورد که مبتنی بر نظام خوراک، از جمله انتخاب نوع غذا، روش های آماده سازی، ترتیب و شیوه غذا خوردن است. یافته ها نشان داد که هر چند اپلیکیشن های ایزی-پز و مامان-پز با بهره گیری از بینامتنیت اینستاگرام کنش های تعاملی اینستاگرام را برای سازوکارهای تعاملی اینستاگرام، بر برگزاری مراسم و چالش گسترش همگرایی آفلاین تأکید دارند، همگرایی آفلاین در اپلیکیشن مستر تیستر با اینفلوئنسری و در اپلیکیشن مایی با موبانگ گسترش می یافت. همچنین، اپلیکیشن های دلینو و اسنپ فود با تجهیز سازوکارهای تحویل غذا به افراد، از کنش های بیناکنش گری در اجرای همگرایی آفلاین-به-آفلاین بهره می برند.

**کلیدواژه ها:** همگرایی دیجیتال، اپلیکیشن های غذای ایرانی، تحلیل گفتمان تعاملی، ارتباط پایدار، بینامتنیت اینستاگرام

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## انتظارات و دریافت خوانندگان ایرانی از ترجمه ادبی به زبان فارسی

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تاریخ دریافت: ۱۴۰۱/۰۳/۱۱ تاریخ تصویب: ۱۴۰۱/۱۲/۲۰

### چکیده

آیا مترجمان می‌دانند که مخاطبان ترجمه چه ترجمه‌ای را می‌پسندند و چه ترجمه‌ای را نمی‌پسندند؟ مترجم، مانند نویسنده، گروهی خاص از مخاطبان را مدنظر قرار می‌دهد. از این رو، برای آنکه ترجمه‌ای مورد قبول واقع شود، باید پاسخگوی انتظارات خوانندگان باشد. پژوهش حاضر به بررسی انتظارات خوانندگان ایرانی از ترجمه ادبی (رمان و داستان)، مترجمان ادبی، مولفه‌های پیرامنتی، متن و طرح (یا همان قالب متن) می‌پردازد. برای این منظور، ابتدا نظرات خوانندگان در سه سایت یعنی "فیدیبو"، "طاقچه"، و "گودریدز" گردآوری شد و سپس داده‌ها بر مبنای روش تحلیل موضوعی، رمزگذاری و دسته‌بندی شدند. مدل سه‌وجهی چسترمن (۲۰۰۷) که از سه مولفه‌ی "واکنش‌ها"<sup>۳</sup>، "پاسخ‌ها"<sup>۴</sup>، و "عکس‌العمل‌ها"<sup>۵</sup> تشکیل شده است مبنای نظری پژوهش قرار گرفت. نظرات خوانندگان به پنج دسته کلی تقسیم شد که عبارتند از «انتظارات ترجمه‌ای»، «انتظارات زبانی و متنی»، «انتظارات پیرامنتی»، «انتظارات مربوط به قالب متن» و «ویژگی‌های مترجم ادبی خوب». نتایج نشان می‌دهد که خوانندگان ایرانی ترجمه‌ای را می‌پسندند که روان و خوانا باشد و از نابهنجاری متنی و زبانی ویژه‌ی ساختار زبان مبدا به دور باشد. همچنین نتایج انتظارات ترجمه‌ای نشان داد که خوانندگان، روش‌ها و رویکردهایی را می‌پذیرند که معنا، سبک، لحن، سیاق کلام، و عناصر فرهنگی متن مبدا را با صداقت در ترجمه منعکس می‌کنند. در خصوص پیرامنت‌های ترجمه، خوانندگان انتظار دارند مقدمه یا نقدهی درباره‌ی اثر در آن گنجانده شود و مترجم خوب را کسی می‌دانند که دانش زبانی، توانایی درست‌نویسی و درک خوبی از متن مبدا دارد.

**کلیدواژه‌ها:** دریافت خوانندگان، انتظارات، نظرات خوانندگان، ترجمه ادبی، خوانندگان ترجمه

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<sup>۳</sup> Reactions

<sup>۴</sup> Responses

<sup>۵</sup> Repercussions

## فهرست مطالب

- ۷-۳۴ مطالعه اکتشافی چالش‌ها و فرصت‌های تغییر به آموزش آنلاین در کلاس‌های زبان انگلیسی به عنوان زبان خارجی در طول همه‌گیری بیماری کووید-۱۹  
سمیه فتحعلی
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معصومه رحمانی، مرضیه باقر کاظمی، علیرضا عامری
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علی عاج، پرویز مفتون، مسعود سیری
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احمد رضا اقتصادی رودی، محمد پژوهش
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حمیده طاهری، مهناز کیودی، محمدرضا نصر
- ۱۷۹-۲۰۸ معناپردازی همگرایی دیجیتال به سوی ارتباطی پایدار: بررسی موردی اپلیکیشن‌های غذا در ارتباط بینامتنی با اینستاگرام  
فریده حق‌بین، نرجس منفرد
- ۲۰۹-۲۳۴ انتظارات و دریافت خوانندگان ایرانی از ترجمه ادبی به زبان فارسی  
مزدک بلوری، جلیل جلالی



فصلنامه علمی

## افق‌های زبان دانشگاه الزهراء (س)

سال هفتم، شماره سوم، پاییز ۱۴۰۲ (پیاپی ۱۷)

صاحب امتیاز: دانشگاه الزهراء (س)

مدیر مسئول: دکتر محسن شیرازی‌زاده

سردبیر: دکتر محمدرضا عنانی سراب

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ویراستاران زبان فارسی: دکتر نرجس منفرد

مدیر اجرایی: نرگس جعفری

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ساسان بالقی‌زاده: دانشیار، عضو هیئت علمی گروه زبان و ادبیات انگلیسی دانشگاه شهید بهشتی

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کلیه حقوق برای دانشگاه الزهراء (س) محفوظ است.

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مجله افق‌های زبان با همکاری انجمن زبان‌شناسی ایران منتشر می‌شود.

LGHOR

