

Volume 4
Issue 2
Autumn – Winter 2020
(Biannual – Serial No. 8)

ISSN 2588-350X
E-ISSN 2588-5634

Journal of Language HORIZONS

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In the Name of God



Journal of Language Horizons

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Alzahra University Publication

Address: Alzahra University, Vanak, Tehran, Iran

Postal Code: 1993891176

Email: lghorizons@alzahra.ac.ir

ISSN: **2588-350X**

E-ISSN: **2588-5634**

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.
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Book

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

Journal article

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

Journal article with volume number

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

Article in a book

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

Journal Article with DOI

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

Journal Article without DOI (when DOI is not available)

Becker, L. J., & Seligman, C. (1981). Welcome to the energy crisis. *Journal of Social Issues*, 37(2), 1-7.

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

Encyclopedia Articles

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

Developmental genetics. (2005). In *Cambridge encyclopedia of child development*.
http://www.credoreference.com.library.muhlenberg.edu:80/entry/cupchilddev/developmental_genetics

Reference citation in text

Direct citation 1

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

Direct citation 2: Fewer than forty words

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

Direct citation 3: More than forty words

Miele (1993) found the following:

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

One work by two authors

- Smith and Takamoto (1997) argued that ...

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

One work by multiple authors: use et al.

- First citation: Jones et al. (1997) found that...
- in a recent study of second language acquisition (Jones et al, 1997)...
- Subsequent citations: Jones et al. (1997) further argued that. ...
- In a recent study of second language acquisition (Jones et al., 1997)...

One work by multiple authors, more than 6

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

Multiple works: Arrange in alphabetical order

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

For works not included in the above examples refer to *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed.).

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

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On the Construct Validity of the Iranian Ministry of Health Language Exam (MHLE)

Research Article

S. Susan Marandi¹

Leila Tajik*²

Leila Zohali³

Received: 2019-09-02 | Revised (1): 2020-02-28 | Accepted: 2020-03-16

Abstract

Considering validity as a unitary concept, this study investigated the construct validity of the Iranian Ministry of Health Language Exam (MHLE). To meet this objective, we first conducted item analysis and reliability analysis, and verified KR20-if-item-deleted indices on the scores of 987 MHLE test takers before running factor analysis. Though the test was found to enjoy a high level of reliability, it suffered from 28 problematic items flagged through item analysis and KR20-if-item-deleted indices. Next, we ran factor analysis on the data, screened through item analysis, by implementing Horn's parallel analysis and Velicer's minimum average partial (MAP) tests. Parallel analysis resulted in overfactoring. The MAP

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test, however, produced results with two to seven factors. Though the 4-factor result of the MAP test seemed to be more logical at first glance, the overall results were rather disappointing. Nineteen items did not load significantly on any factor and a clear pattern of item loading was not found for many items. These findings can be viewed as evidence detracting from the validity of MHLE.

Keywords: language assessment, language testing, proficiency test, item analysis, reliability analysis, factor analysis, MHLE.

Introduction

Early validity theory emerged during the 1930s and 1940s (Fulcher & Davidson, 2007) when the American Psychological Association (APA) recognized the necessity of preparing codes of ethics for testing. Efforts to codify validity standards resulted in introducing four approaches to validation, i.e., content, predictive, concurrent, and construct validity in 1954 (Stapleton, 1997). Later, in 1966, predictive and concurrent validity were reduced to a single category, namely criterion-related validity (Anastasi, 1986; Crocker & Algina, 1986; Stapleton, 1997). Soon, psychometricians felt dissatisfied with treating different types of validity as distinct pieces of evidence for supporting score interpretations (Messick, 1980). It was then that validity was considered a single, unitary concept (Bachman, 1990). In this new orientation, validity is regarded within a unified framework with content and criterion-related evidence in support of the construct validity in testing applications (Messick, 1989). Nowadays, the term construct validity is employed as an umbrella term embracing various types of evidence in favor of validity (Anastasi, 1986; Shepard, 1993) and is defined as "an integrated evaluative judgment of the degree to which empirical evidence and theoretical rationales support the adequacy and appropriateness of inferences and actions based on test scores" (Messick, 1989, p. 13).

The significance of determining validity of test interpretations, especially for high-stakes tests, is evident to test developers and practitioners (Brown, 2005). High-stakes tests are defined as tests whose scores have a significant influence on learners' life options and opportunities (Moses & Nanna, 2007; Spolsky, 1995). Roeber (2001) considers admission tests for professional programs, like universities, citizenship tests, and certification exams as high-stakes test assessment situations. An example of high-stakes tests is university entrance examinations which might be administered in different countries. In cases when the test is administered annually on a nationwide basis, the stakes are very high. In Iran, the National Organization for Educational Testing (NOET) organizes a few nationwide high-stakes tests for students wishing to enter bachelor's, master's, and doctoral university degree programs each year. In addition to these examinations, a small number of high-stakes language proficiency tests are administered by the NOET, the Ministry of Health, Treatment, and Medical Education, and a few state-run universities under the supervision of the Ministry of Science, Research, and Technology to those interested in pursuing their higher education at doctoral level.

The Evaluation Center of the Ministry of Health, Treatment, and Medical Education is one of the organizations which develops and administers language proficiency tests to master graduates of medical sciences wishing to pursue their studies at the doctoral (MD) level. These tests are among the prerequisites to taking part in MD entrance examination in fields related to medical sciences. The tests are considered to be of high-stakes nature due to the great impact they have on the future of a considerable number of master-graduate test takers from all over the country. Notwithstanding the significance of the decisions made on the basis of the Ministry of Health Language Exam (MHLE), no valid documents, to our knowledge, has been reported on the test effectiveness as well as the crucial characteristics of the test, namely the reliability and validity of the test interpretations. To address these gaps, we conducted the present study to assess item analysis of the test and to perform an in-depth examination of the reliability and construct validity of the test uses in light of appropriate statistical computational methods. Results of the analysis have the potential to assist the test construction team in revising poor items, if any. Furthermore, the study can give insights to ESP practitioners and students on the constructs which underlie the test and, accordingly, help them to prepare their students and themselves for the exam.

Review of Literature

This section divides the related literature into two sections with theoretical and practical orientations. The initial section provides information on the history of validity, elucidating various orientations towards the concept in addition to defining the concept of validity and detailing various approaches utilized for assessing the construct validity of a test. The second section reviews empirical studies investigating construct validity of various language proficiency tests.

Theoretical Underpinnings

To begin with, one needs to know the history of validity. According to Brown (2010), in the traditional view of validity, it is divided into three sub-types: content, criterion-related, and construct; however, more recently, it has been rethought as a unitary factor known as construct validity. Related literature has yielded a variety of interconnected definitions for the term construct. Anastasi (1986), for instance, defines constructs as "theoretical concepts of varying degrees of abstraction and generalizability which facilitate the understanding of empirical data" (p. 5). Bachman (1990) views constructs as "definitions of abilities that permit us to state specific hypotheses about how these abilities are or are not related to other abilities, and about the relationship between these abilities and observed behavior" (p.255). Finally, Fulcher and Davidson (2007) maintain that for a general term to be considered a construct, it must have two features: first, it should be defined in a way so that it is measurable; second, it should be defined in such a way that it can have relationship with other constructs that are different.

As stated above, in more recent years, researchers in the field of measurement have reconceptualized validity as a unitary factor named as construct validity. As an example, Messick (1980) maintained that "construct validity is the unifying concept that integrates criterion and content considerations into a common framework for testing rational hypotheses about theoretically relevant relationships" (p. 1015). Content validity as one type of evidence for test validity has been defined as "any attempt to show that the content of the test is a representative sample from the domain that is to be tested" (Fulcher & Davidson, 2007, p. 6). It involves two important concepts of content relevance and content coverage (Bachman, 1990). The exploration of content relevance requires the specification of the behavioral domain in question and specification of the task or test domain (Bachman, 1990; Messick, 1980). Content coverage, however, refers to the extent to which the test tasks adequately represent the behavioral domain in question (Bachman, 1990). Bachman (1990) considers examining the content as one of the first facets of a test that need to be taken into consideration by prospective test users. In fact, in designing a test, scholars start with a definition of the content or ability domain, or at the very least, with a list of content perspectives, from which they generate items, or test tasks.

Criterion-related evidence for validity includes concurrent and predictive types of validity. To measure criterion-related validity, there should be a comparison between the test scores with one or more external variables (called criteria) which offer a direct measure of the characteristic or behavior in question (Messick, 1990). In other words, to assure of the criterion-related validity, the tester searches for a relationship between a particular test and a criterion to which he/she wishes to make prediction. Concurrent validity indicates the extent to which an individuals' level on the criterion is related to their performance on a concurrent test (Fulcher & Davidson, 2007). Predictive validity, however, indicates "the extent to which an individual's future level on the criterion is predicted from prior test performance" (Messick, 1990, p. 11).

The above paragraphs indicate that in the past decades, content and criterion validities have been regarded as evidences or stages for the construct validity as a unified construct. Within the last two decades, however, the concept of validity has enjoyed further explorations and scrutiny. Detailed analysis of the concept resulted in the introduction of other types of evidence, in addition to content and criterion types, which can form validity as a unitary concept. Messick (2005) divides the validity into six sub-components, relevant to all educational and psychological measurements, including performance assessments. In this model, the unified validity includes content validity, structural validity, substantive validity, generalizability validity, external validity, and consequential validity. According to him, "evidence of content relevance, representativeness, and technical quality" consist the content facet of construct validity (p. 6). The substantive aspect includes "theoretical rationales for the observed consistencies in test responses, including process models of task performance" (p. 6), in addition to "empirical evidence that the theoretical processes are actually engaged by respondents in the assessment tasks" (p. 6). The

structural aspect examines "the extent to which the internal structure of the assessment reflected in the scores, including scoring rubrics as well as the underlying dimensional structure of the assessment tasks, is consistent with the structure of the construct domain at issue" (p. 6). The generalizability aspect appraises "the extent to which score properties and interpretations generalize to and across population groups, settings, and tasks" (p. 6) and includes "validity generalization of test-criterion relationships" (p. 6). The external aspect of validity includes "convergent and discriminant evidence from multitrait-multimethod comparisons" (p. 6), along with "evidence of criterion relevance and applied utility" (p. 6). Finally, the consequential aspect evaluates "the value implications of score interpretation as a basis for action as well as the actual and potential consequences of test use, especially in regard to sources of invalidity related to issues of bias, fairness, and distributive justice" (p. 6).

In his elaboration of the nature of test validity, Weir (2005) provides elaborate discussion on theory-based validity and context validity as a priori validity evidence and scoring validity, criterion-related validity and consequential validity as a posterior validity evidence. As he maintains, theory-based validity necessitates that we describe, fully, the construct we are attempting to measure at the a priori stage. The fuller the description, "the more meaningful might be the statistical procedures contributing to construct validation that can subsequently be applied to the results of the test" (p.18). Context validity appraises "the extent to which the choice of tasks in a test is representative of the larger universe of tasks of which the test is assumed to be a sample" (p.19). Weir employs scoring validity as "the superordinate for all the aspects of reliability" (p. 22). It concerns "the extent to which test results are stable over time, consistent in terms of the content sampling and free from bias". Criterion-related validity is concerned with "the extent to which test scores correlate with a suitable external criterion of performance" (p. 35). Lastly, consequential validity examines " whether the potential and actual social consequences of test interpretation and use are not only supportive of the intended testing purposes, but at the same time are consistent with other social values" (p. 37). More recently, Shaw and Weir (2007) introduce a framework of validity components which adds cognitive validity to the other components of validity introduced earlier by Weir (2005). As stated by them, cognitive validity requires "collecting both *a priori* evidence on the cognitive processing activated by the test task through piloting and trialling before the test event... and also *a posterior* evidence on constructs measured involving statistical analysis of scores following test administration" (p. 6).

However named, it seems that any sort of related information of a test has a significant contribution to its construct validity (Colliver et al., 2012; Cox & Malone, 2018). Messick (1989) believes that this contribution becomes stronger when there is an explicit measurement of the goodness-of-fit between the information and the theoretical logic which underlies the score interpretation.

In addition to the detailed analysis of the concept of construct validity and its various types of evidence, several approaches have been proposed for as-

sessing the validity of test interpretations. The approaches introduced to examine the validity of criterion-referenced (CR) and norm-referenced (NR) tests seem to overlap. Among others, Hambleton (1982) provides a list of methods that can be used to ensure of the construct validity of CR tests. It includes content analysis, item-objective congruence analysis, Guttman scalogram analysis, exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis, experimental studies and the multitrait-multimethod approach, each of which is best suited for specific purposes. Regarding the construct validation of NR tests, Alderson et al. (1995) introduce test's correspondence with the theory, internal correlation addressed through factor analysis, and multitrait-multimethod matrix.

Though the literature on the validation processes of various types of tests is vast, the most well-known procedure for test validation is factor analysis (Hatch & Farhady, 1982; Kerlinger, 1979). Factor analysis, as a multivariate technique (Alavi & Ghaemi, 2011; Field, 2009; In'nami & Koizumi, 2011; Khine, 2013; Ockey & Choi, 2015; Sawaki 2012; Schmitt, 2011), refers to "an analytic method for determining the number and nature of the variables that underlie larger numbers of variables or measures" (Kerlinger, 1979, p. 180), "techniques for analyzing test scores in terms of some number of underlying factors" (Hatch & Farhady, 1982, p. 255), and "a number of related statistical techniques which help us to determine the characteristics which go together" (Bryman & Cramer, 1990, p. 253). Reymont and Joreskog (1993) define factor analysis as:

A generic term that we use to describe a number of methods designed to analyze interrelationships within a set of variables or objects [resulting in] the construction of a few hypothetical variables (or objects), called factors that are supposed to contain the essential information in a larger set of observed variables or objects...that reduces the overall complexity of the data by taking advantage of inherent interdependencies [and so] a small number of factors will usually account for approximately the same amount of information as do the much larger set of original observations (p. 71).

There are two basic types of factor analysis: exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) (Meyers et al., 2006). In the exploratory analysis, the researcher attempts to identify the few themes, abilities, dimensions, or traits that underlie a relatively larger set of variables by examining the relationships among a set of measures (Bachman, 1990; Meyers et al., 2006). In the confirmatory mode, however, the researcher begins with "hypotheses about traits and how they are related to each other and attempts to either confirm or reject these hypotheses by examining the observed correlations" (Bachman, 1990, p. 260).

Empirical Investigations

In addition to the theoretical studies which detail various approaches utilized for estimating the construct validity of a test, there are extensive empirical studies investigating the construct validity of proficiency tests. Among other

proficiency tests, the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), in its paper based and Internet-based (iBT) format, has been scrutinized by many researchers interested in validation studies. Hale et al. (1988), Hale et al. (1989), and Kyle et al. (2016), for instance, studied the factor structure of the paper-based TOEFL, consisting of three sections: listening comprehension, structure and written expression, and vocabulary and reading comprehension. All three studies identified a distinct listening comprehension factor and multiple other correlated factors. Freedle and Kostin (1999) investigated the construct validity of minitalks of TOEFL. Though they found evidence supporting that reading and listening items load on two separate factors, their results showed many underlying similarities in the skills measured by TOEFL's listening and reading (minitalk) items.

Regarding the TOEFL internet-based test, Stricker et al. (2005) employed a multiple-group confirmatory factor analysis to examine the factor structure of a prototype of the TOEFL iBT called LanguEdge for Arabic, Chinese and Spanish native language groups. This prototype consisted of four sections of reading, listening, speaking and writing. The authors identified a correlated two-factor model - one for speaking and the other for a combination of reading, listening and writing - for the three language groups. Parallel to this line of research, Sawaki et al. (2009) investigated the factor structure of the TOEFL iBT. They conducted an item-level confirmatory factor analysis for a test completed by participants and could identify a higher-order factor model, with a higher-order general factor (ESL/EFL ability) and four first-order factors for reading, listening, speaking and writing. They found that integrated speaking and writing tasks, requiring language processing in multiple modalities, define the target modalities (speaking and writing). Their results supported the practice of reporting a total score and four scores corresponding to the modalities for the test.

In addition to the TOEFL, other proficiency tests have also been the subject of scrutiny in validation studies. Beglar and Hunt (1999), for instance, examined the construct validity of the revised versions of the University Word Level of Nation's Vocabulary Levels Test and the 2000 Word Level by employing Rasch and classical item analyses. They found that the new forms had statistically significant correlations with the TOEFL. The new versions were also found to be reliable with only three misfitting items. Kim and Kim (2017) validated an English placement test (EPT) developed for a General English Language Program (GELP), the goal of which was to improve reading, speaking and writing skills. The findings showed that the EPT was highly reliable. Additionally, item difficulty and item discrimination indices illustrated that the EPT was appropriately developed. In a recent article, Saito (2019) examined the factors underlying the nine vocabulary measures that were hypothesized to tap into appropriateness (global, semantic, and morphosyntactic accuracy) and sophistication (frequency, range, concreteness, meaningfulness, imageability, and hypernymy) aspects of L2 lexical proficiency. He submitted all participants' performance scores to a factor analysis with oblique rotation method. A three-factor solution was identified, accounting for 78.5% of the total variance in the nine lexical var-

ables. Whereas all the appropriateness measures were clearly clustered into the one single factor, the sophistication measures were divided into two sub-component factors. The results suggested that the corpus-based frequency and range measures were methodologically and thematically different from all of the abstractness-related measures (i.e., concreteness, meaningfulness, imageability, and pernymy).

The factor structure of proficiency tests has also been explored in the Iranian context. Salehi (2011), for instance, employed exploratory factor analysis to investigate construct validity of a reading comprehension section of University of Tehran English Proficiency Test (UTEPT). Principal component analysis extracted 11 factors out of the 35 items. Due to the unexpected number of factors, Salehi ran another method of extraction, principal axis factoring, to corroborate the findings. Surprisingly, the second method also yielded 11 factors. In a more recent study, Alavi et al. (2018) examined the construct validity of IELTS listening comprehension test (LCT), implementing structural equation modelling (SEM) and assessed differential item functioning (DIF) through cognitive diagnostic modelling (CDM) and Mantel Haenszel (MH). Initially, they administered a proficiency test designed by the university of Cambridge to 480 participants; next, they administered a 40-item IELTS LCT developed by the University of Cambridge to 463 participants, out of 480 participants. Data was analyzed with use of LISREL to explore the construct validity of the test. Additionally, for detecting the potential DIF items, MH and CDM were used to make the results of DIF related findings more reliable. The results of the first study confirmed an appropriate model fit, so that all four constructs, i.e., gap filling, diagram labeling, multiple choice and short answer on IELTS LCT, had a statistically significant contribution to IELTS LCT. The second study examined the DIF items to argue the validity of IELTS LCT. MH detected 15 DIF items and CDM detected at least 6 DIF items and at most 12 DIF items.

Though the above section may elucidate that there is a vast literature assessing the construct validity of various types of language proficiency tests, to our knowledge, there are, still, tests of proficiency type, which have been unnoticed in terms of their validation. An example would be the Iranian Ministry of Health Language Exam for which we could find no validation reports. Due to the significance of ensuring of validity of this high-stakes test, we addressed this neglected aspect of the exam in the present research.

Method

Data

Our data consisted of the scores of 987 MHLE test takers, including 518 female and 469 male master graduates, who took the test on October 8th, 2010. They had graduated from different universities across the country and had majored in different fields of study related to medical sciences, namely biostatistics, health economics, medical parasitology, medical ethics, medical immunology, epidemiology, health education, medical informatics, artificial limbs, medical

bacteriology, reproduction biology, environmental health, clinical biochemistry, pregnancy health, professional health, nursing, molecular medicine, functional proteomics, medical entomology and vector control, clinical psychology, military psychology, medical biotechnology, medical genetics, health policy, health and social welfare, disasters and emergencies health, audiology, anatomical sciences, nutrition science, neuroscience, food science and technology, pharmacology, physiotherapy, physiology, medical physics, sport physiology, medical mycology, occupational therapy, speech therapy, health sciences management, social work, addiction studies, biomedical engineering, tissue engineering, medical nanotechnology, medical virology, hematology, medical education, and bacterial toxins.

It has to be noted that the prime reason we researched the 2010 test data was that the Evaluation Center officials did not permit us to have access to the more recent test scores for keeping privacy and confidentiality of the fairly recent test results, as they put it. To ensure that analyzing this version of the test has much relevancy to the present context, we had no option but to make sure that the test content, format and characteristics had remained almost untouched through the years. Our analysis of the MHLE test items administered thereafter by the Ministry along with informal talks with the Evaluation Center officials and managers of the language institutes which held preparation classes for the MHLE candidates, provided us with strong indications that the tests administered through the years have been almost constant in terms of their content and characteristics. Equally importantly, we found that, roughly, the same examination board, following the same policies for test development, has been involved in the test development and administration through the years. These indications prompted us to feel confident in analyzing the test and be hopeful that the findings can offer benefits to different communities involved.

Instrumentation

The instrument was the Ministry of Health Language Exam which is an English proficiency test administered by the Evaluation Center of the Ministry of Health, Treatment and Medical Education. The test includes 100 multiple-choice items with equal weighting and with no negative scoring. The rationale for no negative marking is not announced in the exam webpage, nor is any information provided on who the examination board for test development and administration are. Test takers who meet the cutoff point of 55 on the test are granted the language certificate which is a prerequisite for the doctoral entrance examination of the Ministry of Health, Treatment and Medical Education. The MHLE is administered five or six times a year on a regular basis. The exact date of the exam is announced a month in advance. The exam centers are primarily located in Tehran, with a few centers in other large and populated cities, including Mashhad, Tabriz, Esfahan, and Shiraz.

As also announced in various websites for the preparation of the exam, the MHLE consists of three sections. The first section is named Listening Compre-

hension, while the second and third sections are merely distinguished as Part 2 and Part 3. The listening comprehension section consists of 30 items (i.e., items 1 to 30) in three parts which measure understanding main ideas, listening for specific information, and inferring the speaker's meaning. Part 2 consists of items 31 to 70. While it is not explicitly mentioned in the test, Part 2 is devoted to assessing test takers' grammar and vocabulary skills. Though it is not always easy to distinguish between the two as some items seem to be addressing both, the first 16 items (i.e., items 31 to 46) are more aligned with learners' grammar knowledge. More specifically, these items, mainly, measure the examinees' mastery of verb tenses, modals, adverb of transition, passive voice, parts of speech, etc. The next 24 items of Part 2, however, (i.e., items 47 to 70) are devoted to vocabulary knowledge, primarily including sentence completion and synonym questions. The last part of the exam, named as Part three, assesses reading comprehension skill. This section consists of six passages with 30 items, measuring test takers' understanding of main ideas of the texts, their vocabulary knowledge, their making inferences, etc.

Data Analysis

In order to examine the construct validity of the MHLE, descriptive statistics, item analysis, reliability analysis, and KR20-if-item-deleted statistics were calculated before conducting factor analysis. To obtain these information, we, first, inserted our data, namely the item and total scores of 987 MHLE test takers, into the Test Analysis Program (TAP) (version 14.7.4). According to Brooks and Johanson (2003), this program reports test analysis information, including raw scores, percentage scores, summary statistics, reliability, standard error of measurement, item difficulty, item discrimination, and distractor analyses. It, also, details several item-total correlation indices, namely biserial, point-biserial, and adjusted point-biserial correlations (Crocker & Algina, 1986). Additionally, as Allen and Yen (1979) maintain, TAP provides some relatively unique features, such as providing confidence intervals for examinee scores; allowing the creation of a table of specifications and analyzing those subsets of items; creating individual grade reports for examinees; sorting item analysis and examinee results; allowing input of a grading scale so that letter grades can be assigned automatically to percentage scores; allowing user choice of proportions used for calculating discrimination indices; and calculating the number of items needed to attain a desired level of reliability, using the Spearman-Brown prophecy formula. In our study, employing the TAP, initially, we obtained descriptive statistics of the sample test performance data including the mean, median and standard deviation of the set of scores. Next, item analysis of the test and its reliability estimate were calculated. Item analysis consisted of analyzing item difficulty, item discrimination (ID) and item-total correlation (ITC) (Downing & Haladyna, 2006). In classical test theory, item analysis is considered as a source of evidence for construct validity (Van der Walt & Steyn, 2008), and due to the fact that factor analysis is based upon correlation matrices, determining

problematic items using item analysis has been regarded as being a crucial preliminary step (O'Connor, 2000).

Item difficulty, also called Item Facility (IF), examines the percentage of test takers correctly answering a given item. According to Brown (2005), item facility ranges from .00 to 1.00 and ideal items in a norm-referenced test (NRT) have an IF of 0.50. In the present study, based on Brown (2005), items with IFs between 0.15 and 0.85 are considered acceptable. Item discrimination indicates "the degree to which an item separates the students who performed well from those who did poorly on the test as a whole" (Brown, 2005, p. 68). Theoretically, item discrimination ranges from -1.00 to 1.00 and the higher the ID index, the better the item discriminates. According to Brown (2005), items with ID index higher than 0.40 are considered good items; items with ID indices between 0.20 and 0.29 are considered acceptable items; and, items with ID indices lower than 0.19 are poor items which need to be revised or discarded from the test battery. Falvey et al. (1994) consider items with the discrimination value of below 0.20 as unacceptable items. In the present study, the cutoff point for item discrimination was considered to be below 0.15; otherwise, far too many items would have been deleted. This decision is justified based on Hughes (2003, p. 226) who maintained "there is no absolute value that one can give for a satisfactory discriminating index. The important thing is the relative size of the indices". In addition to identifying items with below 0.15 ID index in the present study, items with negative ID values were located and removed. According to Downing and Haladyna (2006), the negative ID index of an item indicates that the items test something different because the students in the low group have outperformed the students in the high group. Also, too easy items may result in negative ID index (Downing & Haladyna, 2006).

In addition to item difficulty and item discrimination, item-total correlations were calculated through adjusted point-biserial correlation; that is, the correlation of any single item with the total test. According to Falvey et al. (1994), items with correlations below 0.20 with the total test and items with negative values of ITC are considered unacceptable items. Negative values of ITC might indicate a different construct of the item (Alavi, 1997). Removal of items with low and negative ITCs increases the reliability of the test (Downing & Haladyna, 2006).

Following item analysis, the test reliability was examined. Reliability has been defined as "the extent to which the results can be considered consistent or stable" (Brown, 2005, p. 175). Different strategies, including test-retest, equivalent forms, and internal consistency are employed to estimate the test reliability (Hughes, 2003). In the present study, the internal consistency of the test was examined through KR20 coefficient due to the fact that this measure calls for one test and a single administration of the test (Stoker & Impara, 1995). To make sure that all items contribute to the test reliability, KR20-if-item-deleted statistics was also checked. According to Jackson et al., (2002), when the KR20 value is higher than the current index with the item deleted, one should consider deleting this item to improve the overall reliability of the test. Please note

that in order to meet the requirements of the KR20 coefficient, the scores of the multiple-choice items of the test were transformed into categorical data.

Next, the items were coded in the *R* software *paramap* package, version 1.0., and an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted on the test. To determine the optimal number of factors to retain in the EFA, we applied two modern validation procedures widely recommended by statisticians (e.g. O'Connor, 2000), namely Horn's parallel analysis and Velicer's minimum average partial (MAP) test. Due to the fact that we assumed the existence of correlation between factors (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2008), we employed Principal Axis Factoring (PAF) method with Oblimin rotation to extract factors. Before conducting factor analysis, data adequacy and sphericity were examined by KMO and Bartlett's test.

Results and Discussion

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 summarizes the descriptive statistics of the total test and its subsections. As the table indicates, the mean of the examinees' performance on the total test was 41.73 which is not a high value considering the total score for the whole test (which was 100). The highest mean score for the items of the test subsections belonged to the vocabulary section (which was 13.18 out of 24.00). The median of the total test was 40.00. The low values of the mean and median indicated that the overall performance of the students was not satisfactory. This might be explained by the overall difficulty of the test as well as the item difficulty and item discrimination indices. The standard deviation of the total test was 11.99 and the largest standard deviations in the subsets are for listening and reading comprehension sections (4.92 and 4.02 respectively).

Table 1.
Descriptive Statistics of the Total Test and the Main Sections of the MHLE

Sections	No. of Items	Mean	Median	Std. Deviation	No. of Subjects
Listening Comprehension	30	10.36	9.00	4.92	987
Grammar	16	6.23	6.00	2.41	987
Vocabulary	24	13.18	13.00	3.97	987
Reading Comprehension	30	11.94	11.00	4.02	987
Total	100	41.73	40.00	11.99	987

Item Analysis

Table A1 in the Appendix reveals the item difficulty, item discrimination, and adjusted point-biserial correlation indices. As the table shows, items 14, 84, and 100 have IFs lower than 0.15 and are regarded as difficult items. On the other hand, item 49 with an IF greater than 0.85 is considered an easy item. Similar to

difficult questions, easy items are not considered ideal types of questions and need to be revised or removed accordingly.

Also, as the table indicates, items 1, 5, 6, 9, 15, 19, 23, 24, 25, 26, 48, 51, 52, 53, 63, 65, 68, 77, 86, and 88 have item discrimination indices higher than 0.40 and are considered to be good items in this regard. Items 2, 3, 11, 17, 27, 29, 33, 34, 35, 40, 41, 42, 45, 47, 54, 59, 60, 70, 73, 78, 79, 83, 93, 97, 98, and 99 have ID indices between 0.20 and 0.29 and are acceptable items. Items 12, 14, 18, 22, 37, 38, 43, 44, 58, 61, 71, 74, 84, 90 and 100 have item discrimination indices of less than 0.15 and are regarded as poor items. There are also two items, namely items 20 and 67, which have negative item discrimination indices. Several reasons might explain an item's negative ID index. At times, the item measures something irrelevant to what it was supposed to measure which makes the test takers too confused to respond appropriately. Additionally, low or high item facility or difficulty indices might result in a negative ID index. Equally important is the ambiguous and unspecific test instructions.

The table also presents adjusted point-biserial correlations of every single item with the total test. According to the criterion proposed by Falvey et al. (1994) and as the table reveals, items 2, 7, 10, 12, 14, 18, 27, 30, 35, 37, 38, 39, 41, 42, 43, 44, 50, 54, 55, 60, 61, 72, 73, 74, 75, 80, 81, 83, 84, 85, 89, 90, 96, 97, and 100 have very low correlations (lower than .2) with the total test. In addition to these items, questions 20, 58, 67 and 71 are considered poor items due to their negative values of ITC. As explicated by Alavi (1997), the negative value of an item's ITC might indicate a different construct of the item. In this study, the low or negative ITC of the listening comprehension questions can further be explained on other grounds. Due to the fact that the test' audio recordings are played in the test setting, and only once, most probably, the administration condition, including the technical faults, noise or poor quality of the tapes, plays a crucial role in testees' performance which, in consequence, results in the items' poor ICT.

Reliability Analysis

The KR20 reliability statistics revealed that the MHLE enjoys a reliability of 0.862, which is considered an acceptable reliability index (Hughes, 2003). Table A2 in the Appendix presents KR20-if-item-deleted of the total test. As the table indicates, the removal of items 10, 14, 18, 20, 38, 41, 42, 43, 44, 50, 55, 58, 61, 67, 71, 73, 74, 80, 81, 84, 90, 97, and 100 results in a reliability higher than 0.862.

Factor Analysis on the Total Test

To determine the component abilities underlying performance on the MHLE, a factor analytic study was undertaken. Before conducting factor analysis, data adequacy and sphericity were examined through KMO and Bartlett's test. Table 2 presents the related findings.

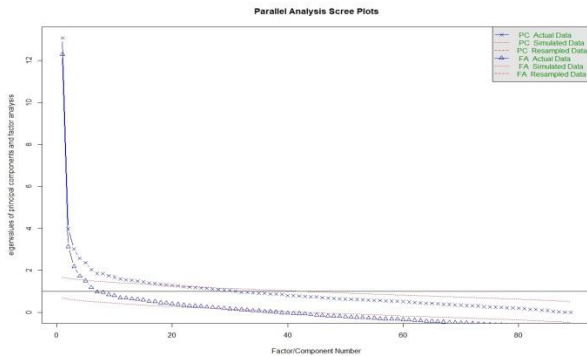
Table 2.
KMO and Bartlett's Test on the Total Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy		.826
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	13565.995
	df	4950
	Sig	0.000

According to Hinton et al. (2004), when the KMO test result is 0.5 or higher, the data are suitable for factor analysis. According to our findings, the KMO test statistics for the present study was equal to 0.82 which was far higher than the critical value of 0.5. Hinton et al. (2004) also believe that a significance level of $p < 0.05$ for Bartlett's test of sphericity indicates that it is safe to continue with factor analysis. Our Bartlett's test digit (i.e. $p < 0.001$) confirmed that the assumptions of performing factor analysis were met.

In order to be able to compare the results of the analysis before and after removing problematic items, factor analysis was first conducted on the whole test, including 100 items, using both parallel analysis and MAP test. The results of parallel analysis suggested overfactoring, i.e. 31 factors, which might be explained for two reasons: First, parallel analysis appears to be sensitive to the number of variables (test items) and some emerged factors may be trivial ones (O'Connor, 2000); second, the heterogeneous nature of the test could also lead to the overfactoring. The MAP test produced five factors. However, scrutinizing items loading on the factors extracted, we found no clear pattern. For this reason, we planned to conduct factor analysis for the second time after removing the problematic items, already identified through item analysis and KR20-if-item-deleted statistics. Since many of the items would have been removed based on item analysis and KR20-if-item-deleted indices, we decided to delete only those items which were problematic according to three of the four criteria. In consequence, items 14, 18, 20, 38, 43, 44, 58, 61, 67, 71, 74, 84, 90 and 100 were removed from later analyses. Again, parallel analysis overestimated the number of factors, extracting 25 factors. Figure 1 illustrates the scree plot of the analysis.

Figure 1.
Parallel Analysis Scree Plot



The MAP test, however, produced results with two, three, four, five, six, and seven factors. Due to logical considerations and our knowledge about the contents of the exam, which was a proficiency test with an average difficulty level consisting of three parts but assessing four types of knowledge- namely listening comprehension, grammar, vocabulary, and reading comprehension- we found the four-factor solution more logical. In the following, each factor is introduced and the logic behind item loadings on each factor is discussed. Table A3 in the appendix details the pattern matrix of 86 items on four factors extracted based on the correlation matrix of each single item with each factor.

Factor One. Table 3 provides information on 24 items; namely items 1, 4, 5, 6, 9, 15, 17, 19, 22, 24, 25, 26, 28, 31, 32,33, 34, 39, 41, 45, 48, 52, 54, and 79 which loaded on factor one. From among these items, the majority, i.e. 13 items, had been included in the listening comprehension section of the test and had higher correlations with the factor (from 0.37 to 0.66) compared with other items. Seven items pertained to the grammar section; three items were related to the vocabulary part, and one item aimed at checking the test takers' reading comprehension skill. The loadings of these items on factor one are not high, however, ranging from 0.32 to 0.45.

Table 3.
Items Loading on Factor One

Listening Comprehension		Reading		Comprehension	Grammar	Vocabulary
Items	Loading	Items	Loading	Items	Loading	
1	.49	31	.38	48	.45	79
4	.46	32	.41	52	.33	
5	.66	33	.35	54	.35	
6	.65	34	.34			
9	.60	39	.34			
15	.45	41	.33			
17	.50	45	.38			
19	.50					
22	.43					
24	.64					
25	.57					
26	.45					
28	.37					

It can perhaps be claimed that most listening comprehension items, including items 1, 4, 6, 9, 15, 17, 19, 22, 24, 25 and 26, assess understanding local linguistic meanings. Item 5 measures knowledge of the sound system, while item 28 seems to have been designed to evaluate test takers' inference of an implied meaning and intention. According to Buck (2001), knowledge of the sound system includes relevant aspects of grammatical knowledge- namely phonology, stress and intonation- and understanding local linguistic meanings includes the whole of grammatical knowledge- not only phonology, stress and intonation, but also vocabulary and syntax, as well as the ability to use that knowledge au-

tomatically in real time. In addition to listening comprehension items, seven items assessing students' knowledge of grammar loaded on factor one (i.e. items 31, 32, 33, 34, 39, 41 and 45, with loadings ranging from 0.33 to 0.41, which is slightly lower compared with the other items related to factor one). Except items 34 and 45, the rest appear to be inference items in which the students have to obtain and infer some information from the stem of the items to be able to answer the questions. All vocabulary items loading on this factor, i.e. items 48, 52, and 54 are open questions which contain an underlined term, the synonym of which the students should select from among the four responses. Due to the point that the students have to infer some information from the stem of the item to be able to answer the item correctly, items of this type might be labeled inference questions. Likewise, the reading comprehension item which correlated with factor one, i.e. item 79, is an inference question measuring students' general comprehension of the passage, not addressing specific information in the text.

As is evident from the table, items from all subsections of the test loaded on factor one. The highest to the lowest loadings belong to listening comprehension, vocabulary, grammar and reading comprehension items respectively. Due to the disparity of item loadings from different divisions of the test, labeling the extracted factor is not an easy task. However, it appears that 10 items (one from listening comprehension, five from grammar, three from vocabulary and one from reading comprehension sections), all, intend to examine the students' inferencing abilities. Nonetheless, the loading of items from different subsections of the MHLE on the same factor was contrary to expectations.

Factor Two. All items loading on factor two, namely items 2, 3, 7, 8, 11, 12, 13, 16, 21, 23, 27, 29, 30, were listening comprehension items. Table 4 shows item loadings on this factor.

Table 4.
Items Loading on Factor Two

Listening Comprehension	
Items	Loading
2	-0.56
3	0.51
7	0.47
8	0.46
11	-0.42
12	0.60
13	-0.46
16	-0.45
21	0.46
23	0.43
27	-0.47
29	0.48
30	0.51

As tables 3 and 4 indicate, listening comprehension items loaded on two separate factors (13 items on factor one and 13 items on factor two). An expla-

nation for this result can be the underlying abilities these items measure. As mentioned previously, listening comprehension items loading on factor one mostly assess the examinees' knowledge of understanding local linguistic meanings. However, listening items correlating with factor two can be claimed to have aimed at measuring students' understanding of inferred meanings in the audio texts. In addition to these inferencing items correlating with factor two, item 28 was also reported above to have been intended for measuring candidates' inferencing abilities. Surprisingly, however, item 28 correlated with factor one. These results are unexpected in two respects. First, it was expected that all items examining testees' ability in inferencing be loaded on the same factor, whereas the findings revealed that the items which aimed at evaluating candidates' inferencing skills were divided between factors one and two. Even if we consider the inferencing items of the listening comprehension section to be a separate factor, there is no logic behind the loading of item 28 on factor one. Second, there is no justification for why listening comprehension questions which addressed learners' knowledge of understanding local linguistic meanings correlated on the same factor with 9 vocabularies, grammar, and reading comprehension items intended to examine students' inferencing skill. Another equally important point about factor two is that this factor appears to be highly related to the difficulty criterion and not just similar content, since items with average and high IF values (i.e. $IF \geq 0.50$) correlate negatively with this factor, while difficult items (i.e. $IF < 0.50$) correlate positively with it. The only explanation for this finding seems to be the tests' administration conditions, including poor quality of audio recordings and the existence of extra noise.

Factor Three. Eighteen items- i.e. items 42, 46, 47, 49, 51, 53, 56, 57, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 68, 69, 70, 76, and 77- loaded on factor three. Fifteen of these items were from what may be considered the vocabulary section of the MHLE, with loadings higher than the items belonging to the grammar and reading comprehension parts of the test. Table 5 depicts items loading on this factor.

Table 5.
Items Loading on Factor Three

Grammar		Vocabulary		Reading Comprehension	
Items	Loadings	Items	Loadings	Items	Loadings
42	.40	47	.53	76	.32
46	.43	49	.42	77	.31
		51	.55		
		53	.53		
		56	.37		
		57	.56		
		62	.33		
		63	.45		
		64	.57		
		65	.73		
		66	.44		
		68	.59		
		69	.77		
		70	.47		

On the other hand, items 42 and 46, which appear to be intended to tap learners' grammatical knowledge (item 42 assesses knowledge about verb sequences and item 46 measures knowledge about prepositions) also load on factor three, which does not appear to be very logical. Scrutinizing the two items from the reading comprehension section which loaded on factor three reveals that item 77 can be considered a vocabulary item inserted in the reading comprehension section, as it requires a synonym for a word in the text. Item 76, however, measures the ability to draw inferences from content; hence, there seems to be no obvious reason why it loaded on this factor. At the same time, there is no justification for why 15 vocabulary items loaded on factor three while three others loaded on factor one.

Factor Four. Items 82, 86, 87, 88, 89, 91, 93, 94, 95, 96, 98 and 99 loaded on factor four. All these items had been included in the reading comprehension section of the MHLE. Table 6 summarizes items loading on this factor.

Table 6.
Items Loading on Factor Four

Reading Comprehension	
Items	Loading
82	.31
86	.56
87	.58
88	.65
89	.56
91	.50
93	.48
94	.54
95	.48
96	.48
98	.38
99	.30

All in all, the reading comprehension questions which loaded on factor 4 seem to have aimed at checking specific information in the text. Items 87, 93, 95, and 96, however, appear to evaluate the test takers' general comprehension skills. Overall, however, it seems that factor four can be considered related to the reading comprehension skill.

Altogether, a detailed account of the whole findings reveals that from among the 86 items included in the factor analysis, 67 had loadings higher than 0.3 with the factors extracted. Nineteen items, including items 10, 35, 36, 37, 40, 50, 55, 59, 60, 72, 73, 75, 78, 80, 81, 83, 85, 92, and 97, however, did not load significantly on any factor. It needs to be mentioned that items 37, 59, 83, and 97 had loadings of 0.14 to 0.25 with factor one; items 35, 36, 50, 55, 60, 72, 73, 75, 80, and 92 had loadings of 0.12 to 0.28 with factor three; and items 10, 40, 78, 81, and 85 had loadings of 0.15 to 0.29 with factor four. Examining the item analysis of these questions confirms that 14 of these 19 items were found to be

statistically problematic in terms of one or two of their item characteristics. Items 10, 50, 55, 73, 80, and 81 did not have suitable item-total correlations or KR20-if-item-deleted indices. Items 10, 35, 37, 50, 55, 60, 72, 75, 80, 85, and 97 did not have satisfactory adjusted point-biserial correlations. Recall that prior to conducting the factor analysis, we made a decision to remove only items which were problematic in three of their four item characteristics so as to retain the most possible number of items for the analysis. This decision might partly explain why 19 items failed to significantly correlate with any of the factors. It is more difficult, however, to explain why the other five items (i.e. items 36, 40, 59, 78, and 92) do not load on any of the extracted factors, although we should perhaps point out that their loadings were somewhat higher (i.e. between 0.20 to 0.26) than the obviously faulty items. Items 40 and 59 had correlations of 0.26 with factors four and one respectively. Items 36 and 78 had correlations of 0.20 with factors three and four respectively. And item 92 correlated with factor three at 0.25.

As the preceding section indicates, the item loadings, did not reveal a precise pattern. Simply put, contrary to our expectation, items on listening comprehension, grammar, vocabulary and reading comprehension did not load on separate factors; Several explanations may be tentatively offered for this finding: First of all, there were many items which were found to be poor based on their IF, ID, adjusted point-biserial correlation and KR20-if-item-deleted indices. However, we only removed those items which were seen to be problematic in three of the four criteria; hence, other problematic items were retained which might have affected the results. Another point which might have affected the results is the heterogeneity of the items of the MHLE which appear to have been collected from different available proficiency tests, instead of having been developed for the purpose of the MHLE exam. Another possibility is the specific background knowledge needed on the part of the examinees to respond to some of the questions, particularly in the listening and reading parts. Regarding the listening comprehension section, as mentioned previously, the administration conditions of the test, such as listening to the audio files without headphones, and, in consequence, the presence of background noise, may also have influenced candidates' performance. Brindley (1998) enumerates a range of factors affecting testees' performance on listening comprehension tests, including lack of background knowledge and the noise of the setting. Other factors he lists like the nature of the input (speech rate, length, background, syntax, vocabulary, noise, accent, register, propositional density, amount of redundancy, etc.), the nature of the assessment task (amount of context provided, clarity of instructions, availability of question preview, whether the task calls for recognition only or synthesis, etc.), and individual listener factors (memory, interest, background knowledge, motivation, etc.) might have affected the MHLE test takers' performance on listening comprehension questions as well. All things considered, we come up with the unsatisfactory conclusion that the MHLE lacks a clear factor structure, not distinct in terms of listening comprehension, grammar, vocabulary and reading comprehension.

Conclusion

This study was an attempt to investigate the construct validity of the Ministry of Health Language Exam. To be more specific, it addressed the distinctness of the test in terms of listening comprehension, grammar, vocabulary and reading comprehension. Based on the view of validity as a unitary concept, an attempt was made to collect various types of evidence to check construct validity of the test. For this purpose, descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, item analysis, and factor analysis were conducted. The low values of the mean and median indicated that the overall performance of the students was not satisfactory. The results of the reliability analysis were acceptable; however, the item analyses detected many problematic items. Finally, exploratory factor analysis, applying parallel analysis and Velicer's MAP test, was conducted on the total test. While results of parallel analysis suggested overfactoring, MAP test produced two to seven factors. Scrutinizing items loading on these factors, we could not find any clear pattern. Exploratory factor analysis was done for the second time with the poor items, i.e. 14 items problematic on three of the four item characteristics, removed. Again, parallel analysis resulted in overfactoring and the MAP test extracted two to seven factors. Having knowledge of the test content which composed of four sections and inspecting the item loadings, we selected the four-factor result as being more logical.

Analyzing the results indicated that the majority of items loading on factor one, i.e. 13 items, were listening comprehension items with high loading values. Eleven items from the grammar, vocabulary and reading comprehension sections also loaded on this factor. A detailed analysis of the items loading on this factor indicated that 10 items required the examinees to infer meaning from the audio or the text. The most number of listening questions, however, assessed understanding local linguistic meanings and one item measured knowledge of the sound system. Another 13 items from listening comprehension section loaded on factor two. Since no other item from other sections of the test loaded on this factor, this factor could be safely labeled listening comprehension. Surprisingly, however, like 10 questions of other sections loading on factor one, all listening items correlating with factor two seemed to have aimed at measuring the test takers' inferencing ability. The majority of items loading on factor three, i.e. 14 items, were related to vocabulary section, with a few grammar and reading comprehension questions. Since the grammar items assessed knowledge about verb sequences and prepositions, there is no logic behind their correlating with factor three. Regarding reading comprehension questions, one item was a synonym question, which could be considered as a vocabulary item inserted in reading comprehension section. Another reading question, however, measured the ability to draw inferences from content; hence, there is no explanation for its loading on this factor. Factor four was an exclusively reading comprehension factor. All the items, i.e. 12, were reading comprehension questions. The items, however, did not share the same underlying component abilities. Four of them appeared to evaluate candidates' general comprehension skills. Hence, they seemed to be more apt to have been loaded

on factor one. Eight other items seemed to have aimed at checking specific information in the text. Nineteen items did not load significantly on any factor.

As the results revealed, findings were rather disappointing. Fourteen items were found problematic based on three criteria. Nineteen items did not load significantly on any factor. A clear pattern of item loading was not found for many items. These findings can be viewed as evidences on the necessity of revising the MHLE. The first point to consider is that item characteristics be closely examined in initial steps of test development, since problematic items seriously threaten the validity of the test. Next, questions comprising future tests of MHLE have to be developed particularly for the purpose of the exam, instead of being compiled from various other available proficiency tests. Also, caution needs to be exercised in including audio and text materials which are not biased in favor of students from particular majors. In addition to the test and individual variables, test administration conditions should be improved in order not to contribute adversely to the candidates' performance. Altogether, it is highly recommended that, prior to all its administration, the MLHE be analyzed in depth in term of its item analysis, reliability and validity. Hopefully, these considerations help turn the MHLE into a highly valid high stakes test capable of selecting English proficient students for furthering their studies at the doctorate level.

Further studies can be conducted on the this nationwide high-stakes test by adopting a mixed-method approach. Future research can include interviews with stakeholders, that is test-takers and test developers, to provide a more comprehensive view of the validity of the test. Other ways of measuring validity can also be employed by comparing the test to other tests that measure similar qualities to see how highly correlated the two measures are, which is an indication of the validity of the test.

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Appendix

Tables A1-A3

Table A1.
IF, ID and Point-Biserial Correlation Estimates of the MHLE

Items	Item Difficulty	Discrimination index	Adjusted Point Biserial
1	0.43	0.46	0.37
2	0.61	0.20	0.16
3	0.20	0.23	0.30
4	0.28	0.32	0.30
5	0.35	0.42	0.35
6	0.35	0.48	0.40
7	0.30	0.16	0.18
8	0.28	0.35	0.33
9	0.32	0.43	0.36
10	0.24	0.16	0.14
11	0.45	0.23	0.20
12	0.16	0.11	0.16
13	0.48	0.31	0.23
14	0.09	0.03	0.07
15	0.54	0.57	0.43
16	0.45	0.31	0.24
17	0.24	0.27	0.29
18	0.35	0.08	0.06
19	0.34	0.45	0.37
20	0.32	-0.01	-0.03
21	0.32	0.38	0.36
22	0.16	0.17	0.24
23	0.53	0.47	0.35
24	0.45	0.49	0.39
25	0.25	0.52	0.49
26	0.56	0.41	0.31
27	0.50	0.23	0.18
28	0.24	0.31	0.32
29	0.30	0.25	0.22
30	0.29	0.19	0.19
31	0.75	0.32	0.25
32	0.44	0.31	0.22
33	0.74	0.29	0.25
34	0.20	0.23	0.25
35	0.40	0.25	0.17
36	0.59	0.36	0.25
37	0.26	0.12	0.16
38	0.22	0.15	0.09
39	0.24	0.18	0.17
40	0.30	0.22	0.23
41	0.36	0.20	0.13
42	0.58	0.21	0.13
43	0.37	0.02	0.00
44	0.17	0.07	0.09
45	0.20	0.21	0.24
46	0.42	0.37	0.29
47	0.85	0.21	0.22
48	0.62	0.41	0.31

Items	Item Difficulty	Discrimination index	Adjusted Point Biserial
49	0.90	0.18	0.20
50	0.37	0.17	0.10
51	0.46	0.61	0.46
52	0.36	0.44	0.35
53	0.49	0.46	0.35
54	0.71	0.25	0.19
55	0.41	0.19	0.15
56	0.53	0.35	0.21
57	0.74	0.39	0.32
58	0.47	0.00	-0.03
59	0.50	0.29	0.22
60	0.69	0.23	0.17
61	0.30	0.13	0.14
62	0.31	0.32	0.32
63	0.47	0.54	0.40
64	0.71	0.34	0.27
65	0.56	0.41	0.31
66	0.58	0.31	0.25
67	0.16	-0.08	-0.12
68	0.55	0.60	0.43
69	0.74	0.32	0.27
70	0.74	0.23	0.20
71	0.68	0.01	-0.04
72	0.85	0.18	0.16
73	0.53	0.26	0.14
74	0.22	0.09	0.06
75	0.20	0.18	0.18
76	0.77	0.31	0.27
77	0.50	0.42	0.29
78	0.59	0.29	0.22
79	0.23	0.21	0.24
80	0.72	0.17	0.10
81	0.25	0.17	0.12
82	0.42	0.37	0.28
83	0.42	0.22	0.16
84	0.05	0.03	0.10
85	0.29	0.19	0.19
86	A0.42	0.52	0.40
87	0.42	0.33	0.27
88	0.56	0.46	0.35
89	0.56	0.19	0.16
90	0.22	0.03	0.04
91	0.34	0.30	0.27
92	0.47	0.30	0.22
93	0.39	0.29	0.23
94	0.36	0.33	0.28
95	0.16	0.18	0.21
96	0.21	0.18	0.18
97	0.49	0.24	0.13
98	0.36	0.28	0.24
99	0.22	0.23	0.20
100	0.08	0.02	0.00

Table A2.
Item Total Statistics

Item	KR20 if Item Deleted	Item	KR20 if Item Deleted	Item	KR20 if Item Deleted
1	0.859	39	0.861	77	0.860
2	0.861	40	0.861	78	0.861
3	0.860	41	0.862+	79	0.860
4	0.860	42	0.862+	80	0.862+
5	0.859	43	0.863+	81	0.862+
6	0.859	44	0.862+	82	0.860
7	0.861	45	0.860	83	0.861
8	0.859	46	0.860	84	0.862+
9	0.859	47	0.861	85	0.861
10	0.862+	48	0.860	86	0.858
11	0.861	49	0.861	87	0.860
12	0.861	50	0.862+	88	0.859
13	0.861	51	0.858	89	0.861
14	0.862+	52	0.859	90	0.863+
15	0.858	53	0.859	91	0.860
16	0.860	54	0.861	92	0.861
17	0.860	55	0.862+	93	0.860
18	0.863+	56	0.861	94	0.860
19	0.859	57	0.860	95	0.861
20	0.864+	58	0.864+	96	0.861
21	0.859	59	0.861	97	0.862+
22	0.860	60	0.861	98	0.860
23	0.859	61	0.862+	99	0.861
24	0.859	62	0.859	100	0.862+
25	0.858	63	0.858		
26	0.860	64	0.860		
27	0.861	65	0.860		
28	0.860	66	0.860		
29	0.861	67	0.864+		
30	0.861	68	0.858		
31	0.860	69	0.860		
32	0.861	70	0.861		
33	0.860	71	0.864+		
34	0.860	72	0.861		
35	0.861	73	0.862+		
36	0.860	74	0.862+		
37	0.861	75	0.861		
38	0.862+	76	0.860		

Note. + indicates that KR20 (0.862) improves if the item is removed

Table A3.
Standardized Loadings (Pattern Matrix) Based upon Correlation Matrix

Item	MR1	MR3	MR4	MR2	h2	u2
1	.49	.09	-.06	.40	.473	.53
2	.27	.10	.04	-.56	.376	.62
3	.29	.03	.14	.51	.462	.54
4	.46	-.05	.14	.09	.279	.72
5	.66	-.05	-.01	-.03	.399	.60
6	.65	.03	.00	.00	.439	.56

Item	MR1	MR3	MR4	MR2	h2	u2
7	.19	-.02	.04	.47	.295	.71
8	.33	.07	.09	.46	.436	.56
9	.60	.01	.01	.01	.373	.63
10	.13	.02	.15	.11	.076	.92
11	.28	.05	.12	-.42	.262	.74
12	-.05	.19	.04	.60	.404	.60
13	.34	.10	.07	-.46	.325	.67
15	.45	.14	.09	.33	.475	.53
16	.29	.10	.12	-.45	.307	.69
17	.50	-.08	.12	.03	.283	.72
19	.50	-.04	.22	.06	.379	.62
21	.32	.15	.04	.46	.438	.56
22	.43	-.09	.12	.10	.234	.77
23	.39	.11	.02	.43	.439	.56
24	.64	-.08	.11	.02	.440	.56
25	.57	.12	.24	.03	.572	.43
26	.45	-.02	.11	.01	.251	.75
27	.17	.29	-.03	-.47	.318	.68
28	.37	-.01	.26	.06	.287	.71
29	.30	.04	-.07	.48	.355	.64
30	.10	.13	-.01	.51	.311	.69
31	.38	.20	-.07	-.12	.214	.79
32	.41	.06	-.09	-.05	.159	.84
33	.35	.33	-.20	-.13	.263	.74
34	.34	.12	.02	-.04	.167	.83
35	.08	.28	-.04	-.02	.092	.91
36	.17	.20	.10	.01	.133	.87
37	.14	.07	.08	.05	.056	.94
39	.34	-.08	.04	.00	.110	.89
40	.10	.12	.26	-.03	.141	.86
41	.33	.00	-.14	-.06	.093	.91
42	.00	.40	-.17	-.01	.147	.85
45	.38	-.02	.10	-.05	.171	.83
46	.14	.43	-.04	-.01	.226	.77
47	-.11	.53	.09	.06	.291	.71
48	.45	.15	-.06	-.01	.249	.75
49	.13	.42	-.06	-.04	.215	.78
50	.11	.16	-.10	.02	.042	.96
51	.14	.55	.14	.06	.475	.52
52	.33	.27	.04	-.07	.260	.74
53	.13	.53	-.04	.03	.338	.66
54	.35	.12	-.12	-.05	.139	.86
55	.07	.12	.07	.10	.053	.95
56	.06	.37	-.01	-.01	.151	.85
57	.09	.56	.02	-.06	.364	.64
59	.26	.03	.13	-.08	.117	.88
60	.20	.28	-.12	-.19	.154	.85
62	.23	.33	.04	.00	.233	.77
63	.13	.45	.18	.02	.360	.64
64	-.06	.57	.06	.03	.335	.66
65	-.07	.73	-.07	.02	.485	.52
66	.00	.44	.02	.00	.204	.80
68	.02	.59	.25	.01	.507	.49
69	-.22	.77	.03	.06	.541	.46
70	.00	.47	-.05	-.06	.215	.79

Item	MR1	MR3	MR4	MR2	h2	u2
72	.20	.21	-.02	-.12	.116	.88
73	.09	.12	.08	-.06	.047	.95
75	.06	.20	.07	.19	.116	.88
76	.03	.32	.24	-.08	.222	.78
77	.12	.31	.14	-.04	.192	.81
78	.09	.16	.20	.00	.115	.89
79	.32	.05	.10	-.04	.153	.85
80	-.03	.17	.11	-.13	.060	.94
81	-.10	.12	.29	.01	.101	.90
82	.24	-.01	.31	-.01	.204	.80
83	.23	.01	.09	-.14	.086	.91
85	.06	.01	.26	.25	.165	.83
86	.10	.15	.56	-.06	.443	.56
87	.06	-.05	.58	-.07	.345	.65
88	.05	.02	.65	-.03	.455	.54
89	-.11	-.09	.56	.05	.274	.73
91	.04	.03	.50	-.01	.280	.72
92	.18	.25	.04	-.18	.151	.85
93	-.10	.13	.48	.06	.261	.74
94	.00	.06	.54	-.08	.306	.69
95	-.05	.06	.48	.04	.241	.76
96	-.02	-.02	.48	.06	.226	.77
97	.25	.11	-.06	-.19	.103	.90
98	.10	.02	.38	-.02	.192	.81
99	.07	.02	.30	.22	.183	.82

Note. The greatest factor loading of each item is shown in boldface.

An Ethnographic Inquiry into Persian and English Education in the School of the Embassy of India in Iran: Marginalization of Persian in its Homeland

Research Article

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Received: 2020-02-25 | Revised (2): 2020-04-04 | Accepted: 2020-04-05

Abstract

Language marginalization is one of the main concerns of many nations. Several driving forces may endanger indigenous languages including globalization, hegemonic ambitions such as colonialism, and the lack of proper language planning and policy at national and international levels. This research is an ethnographic study to explore the status of Persian compared to English among the members of an Indian community residing in Iran. The data of this qualitative study was collected through semi-structured interviews with 18 teachers and parents of the students in the

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School of the Embassy of India in Tehran, Iran, as well as one-year observations of this school, accompanied with detailed field notes, and general investigation of the Persian and English course materials taught at this school. Thematic analysis of the data revealed that English holds the highest status among the members of this Indian community. This is while, on the one hand, members of this community are in urgent need for Persian due to their communicative and educational demands during their residence in Iran, and on the other hand, the Iranian Act of Foreign Citizen's Schools has required quality Persian instruction and supervision in Iranian Schools for International Citizens. This study illustrates how Persian is marginalized in its homeland because of the postcolonial remnants and neocolonial forces of English dominance which lead to over-appreciation of English among members of this community, along with the absence of Iranian language policies' implementation monitoring, and poor Persian instruction.

Keywords: School of the Embassy of India, English dominance, Persian marginalization, ethnographic inquiry, contributing factors

Introduction

With the rapid spread of English throughout the world during and after the postcolonial era, marginalization and devaluation of indigenous languages have become important concerns of many scholars (e.g., Dillon, 2016; Mario et al., 2014; Park, 2017; Sarkar & Lavoie, 2014). Critical sociolinguists have noticed that while the colonial era ended many years ago in countries such as India, the colonial influences are still lingering on languages and education systems of former colonies (Adjei, 2007; Raju, 2011; Sekhar, 2012). There are ample evidences of French and British colonialism legacy in the educational systems and national/official language policies of African, Latin America and Asian subcontinental countries including India (Bhattacharya, 2017; Cogneau, 2003; Dupraz, 2019). Because of this colonial background, many researchers (e.g., May, 2001; Shohamy, 2006; Spolsky, 2009; Wright, 2007) are greatly concerned with the threat of English for other languages inside their borders.

One such case is the declined place of Persian among Indian non-Persian speakers. Despite the good ties between Iran and India and the long history of their close relations, communication between two nations in their indigenous languages is hardly, if ever, possible. This is mainly because of the removal of Persian from Indian schooling during the British colonial reign, and the subsequent intervening role of English (Chandio, Jafri & Ansari, 2014; Stroud & Wee, 2006). This concern sounds to be due in Iran because of the growing prominence assigned to English in academic settings such as an Indian school inside Iran, which is the subject of the present study. Despite the urgent need for Persian which is the national language in Iran, we noticed that Indian learners of Persian cannot meet their daily communicative needs through Persian.

In spite of the sociolinguistic significance of the issue, and the problems it has created for this Indian community in Iran, this subject has not been investi-

gated so far. Accordingly, the present research means to scrutinize into different facets of this issue through exploring, first, how this Indian community viewed Persian and English education, and, second, which driving forces encouraged/discouraged the promotion of any of these two languages in the research context. For this purpose, an ethnographic research was conducted in this Indian school, since this type of research could assure credible reports and trustworthy results through extended “co-presence of observer and events” (Luders, 2004, p. 225). Effort was made to address the aims of an ethnographic research through prolonged observations along with field notes, personal interviews, and course book data analysis in the course of one year. This could give us clues as to a series of forces which contribute to devaluation of Persian among the members of this community, and high appraisal of English instead, as they will be explained in the subsequent sections.

Literature Review

Colonialism, English and Persian in India

European colonialism started out in the 15th century and by the late 19th century, more than three-quarters of the earth belonged to some European countries. This was reinforced by colonizers' plots to discourage local people from their linguistic and cultural heritage, hoping that they would not resist the colonial powers if they willingly adopted the colonizers' way of life, language and culture (Rajasekhar, 2012). As far as India is concerned, soon after it was occupied by Britain, the British East India Company was founded. Despite its claim of being a “commercial company,” it started to recruit chaplains to spread Christianity in India and *ministers of religion and schools* were assigned for all their factories in India (Venkatanarayanan, 2013). As the colonizers expanded their power, they kept introducing traditional indigenous knowledge as “backward and outdated,” which resulted in “segregation of indigenous people” and encouraging them to assimilate British life style (Pratt et al., 2018, p. 5). This was the time when the English language was introduced into Indian educational system (Rajasekhar, 2012), annual grants were allotted to English-based schools while British missionaries observed the schools regularly (Venkatanarayanan, 2013). In a course of about two decades, English was officially recognized as the medium of instruction from the 6th year of schooling, taking the place of Persian, Arabic, and Sanskrit (Venkatanarayanan, 2013).

Before colonialization, the Indian education system had an “oriental pattern” (Chandio et al., 2014, p. 76). There were three types of schools, namely, Pathshalas, Madrassas, and Maktabas. Pathshalas were conventional Indian schools, Madrassas were the schools for Muslims, and Maktabas were Persian schools where the mediums of instructions were Arabic, Persian, and Sanskrit. Persian had a great influence on Indian languages like Urdu, Punjabi, and Sindhi, and other Indian languages like Marathi, Hindi, Rajasthani, and Gujarati have borrowed a large number of words and phrases from Persian (Khansir & Mozafari, 2014).

After British colonization, some primary schools in India continued to use mother tongues as the medium of instruction and Sanskrit was extensively used in schools, but higher education was strictly decided to be in English. With the development of British rule in India, oriental-patterned schools as well as the funds for printing books in Arabic, Persian, and Sanskrit were eliminated, and Persian in office, court, and administration was replaced by English (Chandio et al., 2014). Consequently, regional languages were replaced by English which was recognized as the language of "upper and middle class" (Singh & Singh, 2014, p. 128). This was while no official effort was made to translate the imported western literature into local languages, nor to standardize Indian scripts (Kumar, 2015).

English became the official and academic language of India by the early twentieth century, and it increasingly gained the status of the language of "government, the social elite, and the national press" (Singh & Singh, 2014, p. 128). From the time that English was introduced in India, it has had impacts on various domains such as business, literature, education system as well as Indian culture and civilization (Sekhar, 2012). English has even been recognized as the "means of personal achievement and the language of necessity" and the traditional languages including Persian have been removed because of the imposed superiority of English (Singh & Singh, 2014, p. 128).

"Imperialism of the English language is still evident in the modern world followed by colonialism" (Sekhar, 2012, p. 113). The power and authority of (neo)colonialism, which was originated in the west, exists in the form of soft power today; "unlike ordinary military conquest, colonialism involved a cultural conquest; through the mind" (Raju, 2011, p. 147). English, which was once imposed on the Indian society by colonizers, maintained and promoted its place in India, through *globalization* since, as the following discussions reveal, globalization is an extension of colonialism (Fukuyama, 2006).

Globalization and the Marginalization of National Languages

As "the interconnections of global economic, political, cultural and environmental processes" (Steger, 2013, p. 7), globalization shapes new ways of life, identities and institutions (Giddens, 2000), and associates, more than everything, the power and dominance of the English language (Chang, 2006). As such, Tsui and Tollefson (2007) hold, "globalization is effected by two inseparable mediation tools, technology and English; and to respond to the rapid changes brought about by globalization, all countries have been trying to ensure that they are adequately equipped with these two skills" (p. 1). Armed with technological, scientific, military, political, economic, academic, and cultural powers, English has become a golden key to keep pace with technological, economic and social advancements and has assisted in integration with the rest of the world (Jenkins, 2006). This is more significant in post-colonial countries, like India, where information about power, status, and identity are embedded in the patterns of English language acquisition and use (Bhatt, 2010).

In fact, the spread of English as a global language is a major consequence of globalization (Crystal, 2000), which acts as a “driving force to strengthen” this position (Chang, 2006, p. 515), and has succeeded in introducing English to the world as official, foreign, and second language as well as the lingua franca (Salö, 2017). The evidence that English has achieved the *unrivaled* status of global language (Pennycook, 2007; Park & Wee, 2012) is the reality that “only one-fourth of all English users worldwide are native speakers, and most non-native speakers using English do so in the absence of native speakers” (Seidlhofer, 2011, p.1).

Despite being a fact, the global spread of English is a controversial issue among various thinkers (Bhatt, 2010). *Proponents* of the global status of English believe that it is an “exceptional” (Ammon, 2001, p. 345; Baker, 2006, p. 12; Graddol, 1997, p. 3) language in that it is favored as the language of education, occupation, and communication throughout the world. In this sense, English is regarded as a gateway through which economic activities and information exchange are done globally (Graddol, 1997; Harmer, 2007). Seidlhofer (2005) states that English as a “global” or “International language” can reduce the misunderstanding and misinterpretations among people (p. 339). Similarly, Mufwene (2002) holds that the local populations benefit from the language shift which occurs through colonization and globalization. He contends with viewing the world’s major languages as the “killer languages” declaring that language endangerment and extinction can simply occur under “peaceful conditions” due to language shift (p. 162). Moreover, English as a single global language is assumed to bring peace to the countries around the world, and linguistic diversity can arise conflicts among ethnic groups in societies (Brewer, 2001).

Although considerable benefits are attached to having a global language, the potential threats of the phenomenon have been discussed by many commentators (Crystal, 2000 & 2003). As a result of global language, an “elite monolingual linguistic class,” who is quite satisfied with its mother tongue and reluctant to learn other languages, will grow (Crystal, 2003, p. 14). Moreover, the recognition of a global language accelerates the disappearance of languages with relatively smaller number of speakers, since many people think that one language suffices and they do not need to learn other languages (Crystal, 2000). Another observation is that through the flows and interactions of globalization, national “self-reliance” has diminished as people interact across borders to a far greater degree (Wright, 2007, p.167).

One other concern about English globalization is that even as a foreign language, Crystal (2003) observes, English is being used in more than 100 countries and in many cases other foreign languages are being replaced by English. This, will change the big world into a small village (Crystal, 2003), which in turn, leads to English hegemony, and the dominance of English endangers the smaller languages around the world (Tsuda, 2008). Phillipson (2008, p. 4) points out that “global English” seems to be an appropriate term since English is widely used in the “global linguistic market” and its purpose is becoming “the

dominant language of international communication in an increasing number of countries worldwide,” which itself results in the extinction of many languages (Crystal, 2000). In other words, the value of national languages declines in transnational communications, to the extent that the global language prevails (Salö, 2017). In a nutshell, opponents of English globalization, hold that English language growth is a policy which intends to destroy the smaller languages in the world, to homogenize the world culture, and to inject the beliefs, dispositions, values, and practices of English native speakers to the communities of English users (Bhatt, 2010). No matter how many proponents or opponents global spread of English has, it has influenced the world generally, and many nations like India particularly.

Language Planning and Policy in the Globalized World; the Case of Iran

As the above discussions reveal, institutionalizing national and foreign language policies is essential for all nations to preserve and promote their indigenous language(s) and to access foreign/second language resources and potential revenues. Keeping in mind all the contemporary demands of English as the lingua franca of global communication, language policy makers in all countries need decide on series of issues including the national, official, second or foreign language; medium of instruction language(s); the place of indigenous languages in educational systems, the time and quality of introducing and institutionalizing English as either the subject or medium of instruction, and so on. This has led to a variety of language polities which can very broadly be recognized as: 1. monolingualism in countries like Britain, South Korea, and France where one language is recognized by their constitution as the single national and official language, mainly due to the ideology of “one nation, one state, one language” (Spolsky, 2004, p. 133); 2. bilingualism in countries like Canada, Finland, and New Zealand where two languages are recognized as the official languages throughout a country; 3. multilingualism in countries such as Singapore, India, and South Africa where more than two languages are decreed by the constitution as the national and official languages.

In this broad category, Iran falls in the first group. Chapter two of Iran’s constitution (Article 15) proclaims Persian as the single national language which is bound to be used for all official and educational affairs. However, tribal and regional languages are free to be used in local media, and their literature can be taught at local schools besides Persian. Moreover, Iranian universities are allowed to offer optional courses of *local language and culture* of the place wherein they are located (Supreme Council of Cultural Revolution, 2009). With regard to foreign language policy, Article 16 of the Iranian constitution declares that the Arabic language is bound to be taught during the junior and senior high school, since it is the language of the holy Quran and Islamic teachings, and is much intermingled with Persian literature. So far as English education is concerned, there is no policy overtly stated in the Iranian constitution.

Historically speaking, English received attention in Iran due to strong ties between Iran and the US in 1925 as a result of which Iran-America Society was established in Iran. "The Society set up branches in major cities such as Tehran and Shiraz, with instructors mostly from the United States and Britain" (Hayati & Mashhadi, 2010, p. 30). Later in 1934, English was introduced into the formal educational system of Iran, and since then it kept functioning as a school subject at junior and senior high school up to now. English education continues at university level with general and specific English courses. In addition, private English institutes are allowed to teach English for a variety of purposes, from general English to English for specific and academic purposes.

According to National Curriculum of Iran (2009, p. 38), the linguistic objective of general English at school level is declared to be development of the four language skills for communication purpose. Beyond language objectives, National Curriculum (2009, p. 38) states that foreign language education should enhance "national culture and values," through including local issues in foreign language course books. This can be addressed via introducing concepts such as health, environment, and everyday life of students at elementary levels, and cultural, scientific, economic, or political issues at more advanced levels.

Regarding international citizens' schools, which is a case of the present research, Iranian Act of Foreign Citizen's Schools (2007, Article 7) has proclaimed that such schools "are committed to devote at least 4 hours of their weekly schedule to teaching the Persian language and [Iranian] socio cultural studies in accordance with the regularities established by the Iranian Ministry of Education." The same act declares that "the Iranian Ministry of Education is required to provide appropriate curriculum and qualified teachers" for international schools (Article 8). According to this act, "the Iranian Ministry of Education is in charge of supervising the international citizens' schools. It can even appoint, at its discretion, an agent at school for the exact monitoring of school affairs. The Ministry of Education is also required to submit biannual reports of its supervision to the High Council of Education" (Article 13). Above all, "the Ministry of Education reserves the right to amend or reject any programs, educational resources and textbook content which are in contravention of the values and interests of the Islamic Republic of Iran" (Article 14).

Taking into account the national and foreign language policies of Iran, and viewing India in the pretext of being a former British colony and influenced by the global status of English, we studied the Indian community residing in Iran with regard to its appreciation of either of English and Persian languages. Since different forces in a community including social, cultural, economic, and military demands may end up in language appreciation, marginalization, endangerment or replacement (Nettle & Romaine, 2000), driving forces contributing to the participants' standpoints towards these two languages were discovered in the course of a one-year ethnographic inquiry. The following sections are devoted to the detailed description of this inquiry.

Method

Since we needed explore the participants' views and practices, our extended and informative presence in the research context along with other data collection tools, as suggested by ethnography, could best address our research goals. In fact, ethnographic studies allow the researcher investigate "the perspectives of participants, the nature and forms of their knowledge, their interactions, practices and discourse" (Luder, 2004, p. 225) through participation in their activities for an extended time, "watching what happens, listening to what is said, and asking questions; in fact, collecting whatever data are available to throw light on the issues" (Hammerseley & Atkinson, 1983, p. 2). Such an ethnographic approach, as we adopted to carry out the present inquiry, will be elaborated in the subsequent parts.

Context

The research setting is the School of the Embassy of India neighbored by Gurdwara, a worship place for Indian Sikhs. The school was founded in 1952 by an Indian Sikh businessman, and is, at the moment, affiliated with Central Board of Secondary Education, New Delhi (CBSE). It has classes from Lower Kindergarten (LKG) to the last grade of high school, with almost 220 students on its roll, with an average of 12 to 18 students in each class.

The school is located in a downtown business area in Tehran. While you walk in the street where the school is located, you see Iranian businessmen who work there and Indian residents who live in that neighborhood. Since fifty years ago when the school was first established, many Indians have settled in that neighborhood because both the school and Gurdwara are located there. As you walk down the street for some blocks, you reach the ally in which the school is located. What you see from the outside is an almost huge four-story building with a wooden door. The gray building with closed windows could hardly make you understand what this place is unless you notice a big board with the Persian script on it: " مدرسه سفارت هند ", i.e., "the School of the Embassy of India."

When the door is opened by the janitor, you enter the first floor. Then, you are invited to the guest room on your right. Other rooms on the first floor are the principal's and staff's rooms, accounting office, and kitchen. Everything in the hall of the first floor gives a sense of India. The smell of spicy food that teachers who live on the fourth-floor cook, the color of furniture, the ceiling fan that is seen in most Indian buildings, and the smiling people dressed in Indian clothes who reach you to help. While you walk there in the school, you feel that people have brought here a pinch of everything from India to create a sense of being in a little India.

If you walk down few steps in the same hall, you will notice a large assembly hall where the students line up to chant the national anthem of India every morning before they go to classes. The light green walls of the hall and the red

decorative curtains of the stage are there to remind you that you are in an Indian school. India is a culturally vibrant country where people of various cultures, religions, and traditions live together. Therefore, various colors in India and Indian contexts symbolize the multitudes of outlooks, lifestyles, and traditions. Down the assembly hall, a door opens to the yard where students can play.

In the basement of the school, there is a large hall with five rooms. The rooms are devoted to French, Hindi and Punjabi classes, the janitor's room, storage room, and bookshop. While there is a classroom specified to each language, no classroom has been predicted for the Persian language. In the classrooms of different languages, you can see various instructional materials of that specific language on the walls. For instance, in French class, there are wallpapers about pronouns, parts of the body, and some verbs on the walls. In the large hall of the basement, there are sport facilities such as tennis tables, fixed bikes, and treadmills.

There are seven rooms on the second floor including the library, study hall and six rooms are classes from the first to the sixth grade. On the third floor, there are classrooms for the seventh to the twelfth grade, biology and chemistry laboratories, and a studio with a large screen to watch films. On the fourth floor of the school, there are five furnished suits that native Indian teachers can reside within the three years of their missions in Iran. There are 20 teachers teaching in the school. Seven teachers are India-based teachers who are sent from India to Iran for a period of three years. Among the other teachers, 11 are the local teachers who are originally Indian but they permanently reside in Iran. They teach subjects such as English, environmental studies, French, Hindi, and Art. There is an Iranian female teacher who teaches Persian to the students of third to eighth grade.

Participants

The participants consisted of eight teachers including one Iranian teacher, four local and three India-based teachers, who were willing to cooperate with the researchers. The Iranian teacher has been living in India for 17 years before she comes to Iran, so she is fluent but not perfect in Persian. The four local teachers have learnt daily Persian conversations due to their residence in Iran, but the Indian teachers do not know Persian at all. The interviews with the Iranian teacher were conducted in both Persian and English at her convenience, but the Indian teachers were interviewed only in English. Brief introduction of the teacher participants is as follows (all names are pseudonyms):

- Harjit Madam; 45 years old, 11 years of teaching experience
- Gloria Madam; 40 years old, five years of experience
- Maria Madam; 42 years old, local teacher, five years of experience, born in an Indian family in Tehran
- Farhat Madam; 41 years old, local teacher, three years of experience, living in Iran for 15 years

The three India-based teachers were as follow:

- Neela Madam; 41 years old, two years of experience at this school
- Mr. Malik; 50 years old, on a three-year mission from Bangalore
- Mr. Rampal; 55 years old, on his mission for one year and a half
- Razavi Madam; 55 years old, originally Iranian, Persian teacher of students at all levels

In addition to teachers, ten Indian-Iranian parents were interviewed. There are three types of families whose children are studying in the school. Some are Indians who have temporary jobs in Iran, and they leave the country usually after three to six years. The second type of Indian families are those who have immigrated to Iran in the past. They have married to Indians from India or Indians who reside in Iran and have stayed here in Iran. The last group includes families who live in Iran and one of the parents is Iranian and the other is Indian. The ten parents who participated in this study are among the third group since their need for Persian seems more urgent. Except for Ms. Sadeqi who is Iranian and Knows only Persian, other parents know either Indian, Persian and English, or at least Persian and English. Accordingly, the interviews were conducted in Persian and/or English at the participants' convenience. They are briefly introduced as follows (all names are pseudonyms):

- Mrs. Mataro; 34 years old from an Indian father and an Iranian mother. Her son is studying in Upper Kindergarten (UKG).
- Mrs. Gorji; 30 years old. Her father is Iranian and her mother is from India. Her son is at first grade.
- Mrs. Sadeghi; 45-year-old Iranian mother who is married to an Indian man. Her son has studied in this school up to grade 10 before he was sent to India to continue his education. Her daughter is studying in class seven.
- Mr. Vahidi; 36-year-old father whose daughter is studying in UKG. He was born in Iran in a family with an Iranian father and an Indian mother.
- Mr. Malhotra; 38 years old. He has studied at the same school and has got his B.A. in Delhi. His father is Indian and his mother is Iranian. His daughter is at first grade.
- Mrs. Anand; 37 years old. She is Iranian and married to a man from Bangladesh. Her two sons are studying in UKG, at grade two and seven.
- Mrs. Varma; 40 years old. Her father and husband are Indian but her mother is Iranian. Her two sons are studying in grade three and seven.
- Mrs. Patel; 35-year-old Iranian lady who is married to an Indian man. Her daughter is studying at grade four.
- Mrs. Maharati; 38-years-old mother who has studied in this school. Her father is Indian and her mother is Iranian. Her daughter is studying at grade two.
- Mr. Sharma; 37-year-old father who has studied in this school. He is from an Indian father and an Iranian mother. His daughter is studying at grade three.

Procedure

After we managed to obtain the school principal's permission for class observations and teacher interviews, we started observing the classes from grade three, where the Persian language education starts, up to grade eight, where it ends and the students will have the choice of a second language. Observations of Persian classes were not conducted consecutively because they were occasionally canceled for various reasons such as air pollution, other teachers taking Persian class time to make up for subjects such as math, or for practicing performances for school festivals and extracurricular programs. However, effort was made to observe all Persian classes which happened over the course of this study. Adopting an etic perspective in a whole year, we observed the school and language classrooms settings and activities, and took field notes in a meticulous manner, as a non-participant observer. In addition to physical atmosphere of Persian class, several aspects of Persian teaching including methods and techniques; classroom activities; teacher's expertise; student-teacher interactions; students' collaborations, interactions, and reactions to learning Persian, as well as educational materials and course book were probed. The observed classes were audio recorded and field notes were taken.

Winning the trust of school manager, teachers and parents, we could carry out semi-structured, face to face interviews for six months. Long term presence of one of the researchers at school and her prior familiarity with this community made it easier to establish rapport with teachers and parents. This familiarity and new observations had created in our minds many questions regarding the status of different languages at this school, the participants' viewpoints about current language policies and language teaching practices, their motivations for selecting this school, their language-related expectations and personal experiences, the advantages and challenges of the present language programs, the quality of language instruction, suggestions for enhancing their language skills and addressing their linguistic needs, and the like, all with specific concern about Persian as compared to English, which generally guided our interviews.

Since teachers had to be present in classes, they rarely had enough time to participate in interviews, yet we managed to arrange some times for this purpose. Moreover, parents were not allowed to stay at school during the school hours, so finding parents who were available and willing to cooperate with us took a period of almost 6 months. Each participant was separately interviewed for about 30 minutes, and some participants were interviewed more than once for more clarification and validity in reporting the results. All interviews were recorded, transcribed, and made up a huge body of research data.

Data Analysis

The analytic approach was used for data analysis, through implementing different types of coding. During "initial" or "open" coding, the data were read several times for tentative codes, which were later compared for more similarities in a

process of “focused” coding through which major codes were formed and main categories were developed. The resulted categories were reexamined several times through “axial” coding until the categories and subcategories were finalized (Charmaz, 2006, p. 42). After the recognition of the categories, the themes were initially extracted out of the specified categories. The themes were placed in the context of the data several times to see if they actually made sense and the main themes were decided upon. Then, the main themes were rechecked with the participants and it resulted in more accurate recognitions.

In addition, all during the observations, field notes were taken to make sure that no piece of relevant information was missing. In the course of our observations, as we came across new findings and referred back to our field notes, we occasionally doubted if we had true understanding of the points raised in the interviews. Accordingly, we rethought our understanding of the interview themes and revised them according to new observations and consequent interviews. In this sense, intensive field observations informed our understanding of the accuracy of the themes obtained from the interviews. In addition, our control over the school setting achieved through observations, helped us revise and modify the initial guiding questions and formulate more accurate interview questions, hoping to get more trustworthy results out of the interviews. Eventually the whole process of thematic analysis helped us find similar themes and their subthemes as they are introduced in the following parts.

Credibility

According to Tracy (2010), credibility refers to the “trustworthiness, verisimilitude, and plausibility of the research findings” (p. 842). Credibility is achieved “through practices including thick description, triangulation or crystallization, multivocality and partiality” (Tracy, 2010, p. 843). The present study enjoys credibility for series of reasons. The first important feature is the researchers’ familiarity with the context, especially since one of the authors had lived with this community for almost 15 years. This means living the experience and absolute control over the context, teachers, students, and course books which facilitated providing of a *thick description*. To this, we added the presence at this school almost four hours a day, five days a week, for an entire year for the mere purpose of exploring the context, observing the classes, establishing rapport with teachers and parents, and conducting interviews.

To address *triangulation*, several interviews and extensive observations were made. Moreover, to achieve *crystallization*, data obtained from the interviews were recorded, observations were accompanied with field notes to make sure that every aspect of the research is quite transparent. *Multivocality* which refers to “including multiple and varied voices in the qualitative report and analysis” (Tracy, 2010, p. 844) was achieved in two ways: First, the interviews were carried out with both teachers and parents and their views were similarly investigated and reported. Second, in addition to the researchers, two individuals with prior experience and vast knowledge of qualitative enquiry analyzed

the whole data a couple of times in several phases of the research. This yielded high consistency among the analyses and enhanced the credibility of the results (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Results

In this section, the thematic patterns that emerged from the exploration of data are presented, exemplified and explained. Table 1 displays an overview of the obtained themes and subthemes:

Table 1.
Themes and Subthemes Obtained from Data

<i>Themes</i>	<i>Subthemes</i>
Theme 1: Persian instruction deficiencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of Persian classroom discipline, organized syllabus and assessment • Inappropriate teaching techniques and procedures • Learning resources insufficiency • Untrained Persian teacher • Challenges of and needs for Persian
Theme 2: High status of English	Job opportunities provided by English <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher education prospects through English
Theme 3: High appreciation of CBSE due to its reliance on British education system	—

Persian Instruction Deficiencies

Our observations revealed that this school is very strict about classroom discipline and instruction quality. This was evident in the rules present and implemented in different facets of schooling and management such as on-time presence of teachers and students; requirement of teaching according to pre-designed syllabi, and reporting the teaching progress and problems in a timely manner; close monitoring of students' learning and assignments; adopting particular rubrics for qualitative and quantitative assessment of students; regular meetings among teachers, parents and the principal, as well as professional meetings among teachers of the same subject, and the like. Although the school tried to provide well-organized educational programs for all subjects and extracurricular activities, it did not seem to be the case with Persian classes. This deficit was traced in four major subthemes which are as follow:

Lack of Persian Classroom Discipline, Organized Syllabus and Assessment.

In Persian classes, the teacher is on time, but the classes start with few students. Then, after about 10 minutes, the students join the class one by one. Almost half of the class time passes before all the students join the class. Another issue regarding the Persian class is related to its location. Persian classes are held after 11 A.M. in the LKG room. The class is for children who are three to four years old and, therefore, the chairs are too small and do not fit older stu-

dents. The class is surrounded by lots of colorful paintings and photos which naturally distract Persian learners. If Indian teachers are interested in learning Persian, they join the same classes. So, in each class, one or two Indian teachers are present along with the students. The teachers' presence can make the class seem more disorganized since these teachers talk to the Persian teacher and they freely express their opinions about the students and Persian teacher, as it is evident in the following dialogues:

- How bad your handwriting is.... Teacher, please give him a minus. (Farhat Madam)
- The best student is Farhat Madam... (Persian teacher)

Among the factors which make the class informal and chaotic are the short time dedicated to the class and the absolute absence of any exams and grading systems for Persian. Moreover, the class is held only one session of 35 minutes a week for each grade, which is cancelled very often. The Persian teacher expressed her dissatisfaction with all these in the interviews:

- The time which is dedicated to teaching Persian is not enough. All languages such as French are taught here at least three times a week. It is just Persian language classes which are held once a week for just 35 minutes. That would be very good if the Education and Training Ministry of Iran required the school to specify more time for Persian.
- The class is canceled for several weeks some times and the students forget what I have taught in class. Moreover, since there is no exam and grading system for Persian, students think it is not serious, therefore, they don't try to learn, practice, and even be present in class.
- According to the planning of the Ministry of Education and Training of Iran, we must have Persian teaching once a week for each class. No more details about teaching or testing the language is declared,... and the teaching and testing process is not observed and monitored.

Inappropriate Teaching Techniques and Procedures. Students at various levels of Persian language proficiency sit the same class; those who were born in Iran are fluent in Persian although they do not know how to read and write. Others who have recently entered the country do not know Persian at all, except for a few who know a little since they have been living in Iran for a while. Hence, the teacher interviews each child and decides on their levels, and teaches them individually according to their Persian level. Nothing is taught to the whole class and nothing is written on the board for all the students. Students bring their notebooks to the teacher one by one and the teacher assigns them their tasks. In the whole class period, all of the students do their writing assignment on their seats, except for moving a few steps to receive a new assignment from the teacher.

During the interviews, the Persian teacher explained about her teaching procedures as follows:

- I start teaching Persian by teaching the letters of alphabet, sentence making, interrogatives, tenses, translation, comprehension and finally story reading, all at the same class.

One major problem is that the teacher teaches students individually according to her intuitive understanding of their levels, all at the same class. In addition, since the students are taught individually, no interactions take place among them in the class. We noticed in our observations that while one student was working on a sentence making exercise, another one was translating some sentences from English to Persian.

Moreover, there is no creativity or incorporation of new teaching techniques in this class. Our interviews with English teachers at different levels revealed that they were concerned with bringing joy, creativity and variety to their classes:

- We don't teach them only from the books, because it becomes boring. To motivate them, we have to do some other things: playing games, telling stories, showing them outside and nature. We have a room upstairs with a video projector..., they watch and listen to stories there. (Farhat Madam)
- I am very good at sketches, I do that. I draw many things on the board. (Neela Madam)

In English classes, as well as classes for other subjects, things are more systematic. The teachers follow the syllabi and teaching procedures of the CBSE system. There are meetings held every week at school where the school English team consisting of English teachers and the school principal explore the teaching methods and procedures, and offer various teaching techniques to help students improve. For the Persian course, on the contrary, there are no meetings, observations, and monitoring of teaching materials, methods and procedures. The only person in charge of planning and teaching Persian is the Persian teacher.

Learning Resources Insufficiency. Another major issue, we came across during our observations, was the astounding fact that students did not have any Persian course books; they just had their notebooks and drill copies. The teacher taught an old Persian book published almost thirty years ago. The book was always kept by the teacher; hence, students needed copy it in the classroom. To give them more practice, however, the teacher had prepared them *handwritten*, poor-quality copies of exercises as homework. General evaluation of these exercise copies by the researchers uncovered problems such as several misspellings and unintelligible handwriting of the teacher.

To our astonishment, we noticed that a single Persian book is taught at all levels from the third to the eighth grade. For upper-level classes, the teacher provided some supplementary materials. For example, in the eighth grade, the teacher worked on a poem by an Iranian poet named Parvin Etesami. It was a dialogue between thread and needle. Some students had managed to read the poem and were trying to answer the comprehension questions, while constant-

ly nagging about its high difficulty level. Many of them were not able to answer the comprehension questions and they asked the teacher for more clarification. In all, it was evident that the difficulty level of the materials and the tasks did not fit their Persian level.

An overall investigation of the book used for teaching Persian in this school revealed that it was the Persian course book published by the Iranian Ministry of Education and Training in 1989 to teach literacy to Iranian, Persian-native students at the first grade of elementary school. In the school, it was just the Persian language teacher who had the book and no Persian course books were available, nor had any source books been developed particularly for the students of this school.

One major problem with the book is that it was published almost 30 years ago and during all these years many changes have been made in the books of the Iranian elementary schools, but the School of the Embassy of India and the teacher who is responsible for teaching Persian language have not kept up with the changes. The second weak point related to the book is its content. This book is written for Iranian students with Persian as their L1, so it does not address the needs of Persian as the second/foreign students. Evidently, when a book is developed to be taught to native students of a language, it is taken for granted that these students speak the language before they start the school. In other words, they know the spoken form of their mother tongue, and they are at school to obtain literacy in terms of the written form of their native language. On the contrary, the books which are designed and provided for the students who are non-native to a language mean to develop learners' skills in both spoken and written forms of a foreign or second language. Therefore, it is evident that Persian course book designed for Iranian students does not fit the needs of non-Iranian Persian learners. In the course of our inquiry, we learnt that in many families, no parent is Iranian and they have learned Persian through interactions in the society. It is obvious that what they have learned themselves and what the children learn in those families cannot be compared to the language competency of Persian native speakers. So, teaching them the elementary school Persian book which targets Iranian native students, is by no means logical.

This was the concern of several interviewed parents who raised the point, as in the following excerpts:

- Actually Persian is not taught in this school. What is taught is the books of the first grade of [Iranian] elementary school[s]. So, when the students graduate, what they know is how to write their names and address. (Mrs. Mataro)
- They have Persian classes but the students don't learn anything because they don't teach grammar. (Mrs. Sadeghi)

In upper-grade classes such as seven and eight, although the students have been reading Persian for three to four years, they were not able to reply in complete sentences. They answered all questions in the shortest forms possi-

ble, often in one- word responses, and they were no longer able to comprehend and answer the questions if they were a little complicated. For instance, when the teacher asked the students to summarize the reading passage which was related to thread and needle, none of the students could reply. Then, the teacher asked the students “who is Parvin Etesami?” and their only reply was: “a poet.” This was while she had explained about this poet’s life rather extensively. In addition, Persian learners were expected to read Persian classic literature, memorize ancient words and their meanings in modern Persian while they were not proficient enough to do so.

It is noteworthy that, contrary to Persian textbooks, English textbooks are graded according to students’ proficiency level, include CDs to enhance the four skills, are up to date and enjoy attractive graphic designs, and every student has his/her own course books and activity books. Moreover, according to English teachers’ statements, any comments regarding the English course books are reported to CBSE, and the books are revised in a regular manner. Sample pages of the Persian and English course materials are provided in the appendices.

Untrained Persian Teacher. Persian teacher was recruited by the school. She is an Iranian who knows Persian, and has learnt English and Hindi in India where she has lived for 15 years. She has not passed any teacher training courses, and even her knowledge of Persian is under question. She has started learning Persian after coming back to Iran from India, when she was 17, and Persian was not her first language when she started literacy in India. As we noticed, the teacher did not have enough mastery over Persian herself, and felt more comfortable with using English in Persian classes. She even misused some words when speaking Persian, like, for instance, taking the word اشتغال زدایی (removing job opportunities) for اشتغال زایی (creating job opportunities). The Persian teacher’s educational background and knowledge of the Persian language proved that she was not qualified enough to manage Persian language instruction, nor to decide on the levels of learners, to plan programs, and to prepare materials and activities for the classes.

This was pointed out by some parents like Mrs. Varma:

- The Persian language teacher is not educated in [the] related field. She is teaching Persian just because [she] knows it.

Challenges of and Needs for Persian. The poor quality of Persian instruction in this school as well as the tendency and need for learning Persian was evident in teachers’ and parents’ interviews. Almost all teachers believed that it was absolutely an advantage, and very often a need to know Persian:

- After coming to a country, it is an asset for us if we learn their language. (Mr. Malik)
- We should always learn the native language wherever we go because that is the base actually. (Neela Madam)

Notwithstanding their tendencies and needs for Persian, they stated that they encountered many difficulties while living in Iran because they were not

proficient enough in skills such as speaking, reading and writing, and the school does not address their Persian language needs:

- Although I was born here and I am [an] Iranian national [native], I cannot write in Persian, therefore I can't do any official jobs. (Maria Madam)
- I have made an effort to learn Persian but I can't write that much. So, bills and things are paid and done by my husband. (Gloria Madam)

Lack of quality Persian instruction in this school had made problems for those interviewed parents who used to study at this very school:

- I've always had problems at work. Since I cannot read or write in Persian, I have faced many problems regarding reading or writing letters in my workplace. (Mr. Malhootra)
- When I'm somewhere that I have to write in Persian, I start trembling and sweating. My greatest problem is writing. You can't imagine how I feel when I have to go [to] the bank. (Mrs. Maharati)

The last point we came across regarding Persian instruction was that students at this school learn Persian from the third grade of primary school for five years. At grade nine, Persian is offered as an optional language, besides Hindi, Punjabi, and French, by CBSE. It was learnt that very few students in each class take Persian courses at this level since their prerequisite Persian obtained during the five elementary years at this school does not meet the requirements of Persian course offered by CBSE. Thus, even the students' need for the minimum Persian ability which enables them to select this course at grade nine of this very school is hardly fulfilled through this Persian instruction.

High Status of English

School observation and curriculum overview revealed that there were five languages in the school program; namely, English, Hindi, Punjabi, French, and Persian. Each of these languages had their specific time in the school schedule, except for English which was used all the time, at all sites, and for the teaching of all school subjects. It was not just in the staff room that English was spoken, it could be heard in the hustle and bustle of the students who flock for the yard to enjoy their break time. The prevalence assigned to English was confirmed by teachers in the interviews, as the following samples reveal:

- English is the central language. English is the global language; you see English is the only language which keeps the students together. (Neela Madam)
- ...During the break time if they speak...Hindi or Persian, we don't object but in the class it has to be English only. (Maria Madam)

English privilege at this school was admired by parents too. They declared that it was so important to have their children study in an English-centered system through which English learning would be guaranteed. They were dissatisfied with Iranian schools, where their children could master Persian, for they

did not emphasize on English as this school did. Some of their narratives are as follow:

- English is a gun which arms you against life. Even in Iran if you know English, everybody respects you more. (Mrs. Anand)
- ...They (Iranian schools) should start teaching English from very early ages. (Ms. Gorji)
- When we travel, we are like deaf and dumb people. When we don't know English, we are deaf and dumb. (Ms. Sadeghi)

Even the Persian language teacher did not value Persian instruction when compared to English teaching:

- Actually even [if] there is enough time for studying Persian, it is felt that it is useless to study this language since it is not an international one.
- Only people who stay in Iran may take the course because knowing Persian beside their English knowledge can boost their money-making ability.

The English-only attitude along with downgrading other languages, be it Persian or Indian indigenous languages, was stressed by nearly all the teachers, as the following excerpt displays:

- We give them examples of their parents [who knew just their mother tongue]. We tell them, "you don't want to grow up like your father and mother. So, you should learn your language [English] well.... (Razavi Madam)

Job Opportunities Provided by English. One of the frequent themes in our respondents' talks was their common tendency to live, work and pursue studies in India or other countries rather than in Iran. This naturally discouraged them from learning Persian and encouraged learning of English instead.

- I could find a job when I was eighteen. It was just because I knew English and I had studied in this school. (Mrs. Mataro)
- There are a lot of competitions in India. Competitions by multinational companies, you don't have much of them in Iran... these days, they just need young people and people who know English. (Mr. Malik)
- ...There are some English or German companies in India which employ young educated people who know English.... They select a workforce with high qualifications and offer high salaries. (Razavi Madam)

Higher Education Prospects through English. Through our interviews and observations, we found out that the students of this school can join high schools in India after the tenth grade when they pass a boarding exam. They join the high schools, which are known as 10 +II, in India for two years. Afterward, if they get the *distinction*, i.e., more than seventy-five percent of the total score, they can get admissions in the top fifteen Indian universities. Then in future, they can continue their education in the foreign branches of those universities

in countries such as the UK, Canada, and Australia. This opportunity is a hope in horizons that attracts to this school many of the Indians who were born in Iran and have Iranian nationality. This will naturally discourage learning Persian as the following examples from interviewed parents reveal:

- I will send my son abroad. Because he studies here, he has the opportunity to go. I know if he doesn't go, he can't be successful in university entrance exam because he doesn't learn Persian in this school. (Mrs. Gorji)
- I would like my daughter to go to France to continue her education because she learned French here and she really likes it. (Mrs. Patel)

High Appreciation of CBSE due to its Reliance on British Education System

During our observations, it was found that all books and teaching materials such as workbooks, activity books, and exam questions were sent to Iran from CBSE in India. Every year, the school is provided with books based on the number of the students. The only book which does not belong to CBSE is Persian language course book from grade three to eight, which is provided by the Persian language teacher. During the observations, we found out that students need pass the boarding exams of CBSE system, at the end of the eight and twelfth grades, so that they can receive admission at the top 15 Indian universities. Overall, the school is highly observant of the rules and guidelines prescribed by CBSE.

In line with our observations, one of the most frequent teacher narratives was the attribution of CBSE to western educational systems, rather than to Indian national educational values and standards. Here are some examples:

- We strictly, completely follow the British system of pronunciation and everything. (Harjeet Madam)
- It's a famous system in India and recognized abroad in Canada, London, and many other places. (Gloria Madam)
- CBSE is recognized all over the world. Anywhere in Dubai or London, they accept it. (Farhat Madam)

In their interviews, the participants valued CBSE for reasons such as its adherence to an international system recognized in western countries, offering a curriculum which is compatible with that of "developed countries," facilitating migration to "first world countries," and being directly supervised by "British" educational system. The only exception was Neela Madam who mentioned that:

- It's a governmental system and teachers who are sent to different countries are the best teachers in India. There is a huge competition and only a few are sent to other countries....

Discussion

As the research findings reveal, the members of this Indian community view English, more than other things, as the language that promises them better life and job opportunities. Besides the global demands for English which is part of the “linguistic neocolonial” project of the day (Dillon, 2016, p. 97), this extraordinary overemphasis on English which leads to marginalization of their indigenous languages, as well as Persian, could be viewed as the lingering essence of what has been created in colonial era in India, the time when British colonizers offered better jobs to those who knew English (Rajasekhar, 2012). This adherence to English supports Stroud and Wee’s (2007) findings which report the decline of Punjabi among Indian adolescents due to the dominance of English, to the extent that they prefer even not to learn and speak their ethnic mother tongue.

Another major finding was that both teachers and parents admired this school, not because of its attachment to Indian culture, language and history, but because of its orientation to CBSE; an enthusiastic appreciation of British educational system, which associated modern remnants of colonialism. This reminds Raju’s observation (2011) that one of the purposes of the colonial education had been to create Indian educated “elite class” who were loyal to Britain. This loyalty was achieved through an education system which “implanted the desired attitudes and values and also instilled an unshakeable belief in Western superiority.” (p. 147).

Despite the dominance and overappreciation of English, the majority of the interviewed teachers believed that knowing Persian was as an asset especially since they were living and working in Iran. Similarly, the interviewed parents declared that their children should know Persian to be able to communicate with Iranian people, to do official jobs, and to handle their lives in Iran. When comparing Persian to English, however, the story changed; they attached supremacy to English, even over Hindi. In line with this expectation, most of the students’ time at school was devoted to the study and practice of English language skills. This accentuated the point that students, teachers and parents were the core of British colonial mission where their new mentality was being formed in a course of about a century (Bhattacharya, 2017, Dupraz, 2019).

In an effort not to be misled by colonial, postcolonial and globalized world ideologies, we triangulated for more factors contributing to the low appreciation of Persian. One major finding was that Persian education was offered in the poorest form one could ever imagine. The time devoted to Persian was very limited; while languages other than Persian were taught three to five sessions a week, Persian was taught only once a week. It was even more disappointing to learn that students were not provided with any sources for learning Persian, while they enjoyed up-to-date materials supplied directly by CBSE for other school subjects. More regrettably, we found that Persian language teacher was the only person who kept an old Persian text book, which had been published 30 years ago for Iranian primary school first graders. In addition to being outdated, it is evident that this book suffered several inconveniences mainly be-

cause it had not particularly been developed for teaching Persian to non-Persian speakers. Moreover, compared to English courses _which are held with high discipline, definite syllabi, and accurate exam dates_ absolutely no syllabus, no exam or evaluation of any type had been planned and executed for Persian. Another factor which decreased the quality of Persian instruction was that, while teaching Persian to non-Persian students requires academic knowledge and expertise, the Persian teacher had never been trained or certified for this purpose, nor was she proficient enough in Persian.

Another facet of this study investigated the related *rules and regulations passed by the Iranian Act of Foreign Citizen's Schools* (2007). Article seven of this rule stated that these schools must devote at least four hours of their weekly curriculum to Persian language education as well as to cultural and social studies. It was also declared that the Iranian Ministry of Education and Training is required to provide appropriate teaching schedule as well as teacher training programs for this purpose. What we explored within our full-year presence at this school revealed that this article was not implemented; this school never devoted four hours per week to Persian language and culture, nor did we see any monitoring on the side of the Iranian Ministry of education

In a nutshell, Persian marginalization in its homeland among the members of this Indian community is the outcome of several forces such as globalization and its new demands for English, British colonial remnants and its neocolonial requirements, joint with internal deficits including lack of proper instruction, evaluation and monitoring on the side of the Iranian Ministry of Education. Accordingly, this study highly recommends more funding and deliberate monitoring of Persian education in international schools. The results of the study may prove useful for critical thinkers, language policy makers, international centers for teaching Persian to non-Persian speakers, English and Persian language teachers and learners.

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A Critical Analysis of the *Iranian Charter of Professional Ethics for Translators*: A Case for Revision

Research Article

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Received: 2020-04-01 | Revised (1): 2020-05-12 | Accepted: 2020-06-09

Abstract

Ethical issues are gaining more importance in the realm of Translation Studies. Ethics charters or codes of professional conduct for translators produced by professional associations seek to establish a set of ethical principles and to ensure that all members are adopting those principles in practicing their profession. The present study aims to examine the fundamental assumptions underlying the approved *Iranian Charter of Professional Ethics for Translators* in Iran and to explore the limitations of

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the *Charter*. Eighteen English codes of ethics for translators or translators and interpreters from countries located in various parts of the world were downloaded and analyzed to find the overall values and underlying principles commonly shared by the codes. Then, the principles underlying the *Iranian Charter of Professional Ethics for Translators* were analyzed to reveal the main points of similarity and difference between this *Charter* and the analyzed codes from around the world. Finally, the limitations of the *Charter* were discussed. The analyzed data revealed that the approved *Iranian Charter of Professional Ethics for Translators* is not very practical and could not be successful in regulating ethical practice across the translation profession in the Iranian context. Hence, it requires further modification before application.

Keywords: charter of professional ethics, code of ethics, ethics, translation ethics, translator ethics

Introduction

Ethics

The question of ethics has long been addressed in various professions such as medicine, engineering, law, business, and so forth¹. This issue has also been raised in the context of interpreting profession, especially in community interpreting (Williams, 2013). Generally, ethics is “the philosophical study of morality” (Audi, 1999, p. 284). The term is also frequently used as the equivalent of ‘morality’ as well as “the moral principles of a particular tradition, group, or individual” (Audi, 1999, p. 284). Although both ethics and morality refer to right or wrong actions in particular contexts, the distinction between them is that morality is a ‘characteristic of individuals’ (Koskinen, 2000, as cited in Baker, 2011, p. 276) and ethics is considered as ‘a collective effort of a community’ to draft a set of rules of established moral behavior (Koskinen, 2000, as cited in Baker, 2011, p. 276). Therefore, ethics is more associated with institutions or professional contexts that enforce codes of ethics, rather than codes of morality to constrain the behavior of those obliged to obey by them (Baker, 2011).

As Pym (2001, p. 129) mentions, “Translation Studies has returned to questions of ethics”. House (2016) also considers the question of ethics as a recent influential issue in Translation Studies, which is directly related to the transla-

1. Balkas (2006) analyzed the content of creative advertisements in Turkey to understand the ethical point of view of such ads. It was revealed that in order to be more creative, the figures and messages in the analyzed ads are full of non-ethical characteristics. It was also suggested that the self-regulation system has to be more effective in advertisers’ practice. Kovacic and Van Putten (2011) made an attempt to find a solution to the so-called dilemma about whether formulating a universal journalist’s code of ethics is necessary for a national context. It was suggested that if a code is to be accepted by journalists, it must respond to the needs understood in a specific environment, based on a specific problem recognized by all parts of the society, including journalists. Upton (2011) also investigated the role of philosophical, moral theory in an attempt to solve the ethical issues that arise in health care. It was argued that the absence of a generally accepted method of resolving moral issues, plus the improbability of philosophy achieving a determinate theory, should lead us to approach the issues in a spirit of agnosticism.

tor's responsibility in their translation tasks. Chesterman (2001) describes 'four current models of translation ethics' as 'an ethics of representation' (being faithful to the source text or the writer), 'an ethics of service' (being loyal to the client), 'an ethics of communication' (communicating with others), and 'a norm-based ethics' (behaving according to neither the reader nor the client but to the norms).

An 'ethics of representation' emphasizes the values of 'fidelity' and 'truth', that is, a translator is considered to act ethically if s/he represents the source text, the source writer's intention, or the source culture faithfully; without any addition or deletion (Chesterman, 2001). Another line of this ethics has to do with the German Romantic movement and those theorists who valued the representation of the Other (Chesterman, 2001). Schleiermacher's preferred method was foreignizing translation, which suggested close adherence to the foreign text to evoke a sense of foreignness in the translation (Venuti, 2008). Antoine Berman considered Schleiermacher's discussion as an ethics of translation (Venuti, 2008). For Berman, translation ethics is being 'in the service of foreigners', that is, "to bring the foreign work in its pure foreignness to the shore of the translating language" (Berman, 1999, as cited in Nous, 2001, p. 288). In a similar vein, Venuti (1999) calls for translation projects motivated by an 'ethics of difference' which must consider the original culture of the foreign text and address different domestic constituencies. Such translations change the reproduction of dominant domestic ideologies and institutions and marginalize other domestic constituencies (Venuti, 1999).

For 'an ethics of service', an ethical translator "complies with the instructions set by the client and fulfills the aim of the translation as set by the client and accepted or negotiated by the translator" (Chesterman, 2001, p. 140). The concept of loyalty as an ethical concept is an interpersonal relationship that was initially introduced into the 'Skopos theory' by Nord in 1989 (Nord, 2001). Loyalty, in this sense, goes beyond the conventional intertextual relationship of 'fidelity' or 'faithfulness', which "refers to linguistic or stylistic similarity between the source and the target texts, regardless of the communicative intentions involved" (Nord, 2001, p. 185).

In an ethics of communication, communicating with others is emphasized, not the representation of the Other as in Levinas' work (Chesterman, 2001). Levinas (1989, as cited in Murray, 2000, p. 136) believes that ethics originates in the Other. The self is not responsible to the Other by itself, but rather, it is called to responsibility by the other person (Murray, 2000).

Pym has recently emphasized the ethical aspects of this kind of communication. For him, the aim of translation is to promote cooperation between groups that are 'Other to each other' (Chesterman, 2001, p. 141). If this cooperation is not possible, an ethical translator may decide, adds Pym (2012), not to translate at all. Thus, a basic proposition for translator ethics is translators' initial responsibility for their decision to translate (Pym, 2012). Pym (2012, p. 12) believes that "if we know *why* we translate, then we can deduce *how* we should translate and perhaps even *what* we should translate in each situation".

Finally, a norm-based ethics arises from Descriptive Translation Studies (DTS) and ‘norm theory’ (Chesterman, 2001). This model implies that, generally, trusting a translator and the profession is much simpler if the translator behaves in predictable, norm-conforming ways (Chesterman, 2001).

Codes of Ethics

General ideas about ethics that apply across all professions manifest in ethics charters or codes of professional conduct produced by professional associations. A code of ethics established by a corporation “is the documented, formal, and legal manifestation of that organization’s expectations of ethical behaviors by its employees” (Adelstein & Clegg, 2016, p. 55). What makes a corporation to be considered as ‘ethical’ “is the visibility that a code offers” (Adelstein & Clegg, 2016, p. 55). Charters or codes aim to establish a set of standards of behavior or conduct and ethical principles for all members of a profession that guide their actions. Every association tries to make sure that it is committed to the highest standards of ethics and business conduct. In addition to stating rules that govern their actions, the charters are an expression of fundamental values. In fact, adopting a code of ethics by a profession serving to unite its members is one of the factors that differentiates a profession from an occupation (Cokely, 2000).

Codes of ethics are different across professions; however, there are some commonly shared values among all the codes. These common values are ‘solidarity’ among the professionals; ‘neutrality’ as well as ‘commitment’ to offering good service; disallowing competition through ‘price-cutting’ or ‘advertising’; and prohibiting violation of ‘confidentiality’ (Sook, 2015). Like other professions, there are different ethics charters or codes of ethics for translators becoming members of professional associations too. These charters establish clear expectations of ethical behavior for translators and clients. They aim at ensuring that every member is adhering to a common set of ethical principles in practicing their profession. Hence, these charters, which include the necessary aspects for an ethical and professional performance, try to maintain public trust.

Literature Review

Although the issue of translation ethics is one of the recent influential concerns in the field of Translation Studies (House, 2016), which is achieving a dominant position in the theoretical accounts and professional practice of translation, it seems that only a few studies have investigated ethical issues in general and ethics charters or codes of ethics for translators in particular. In a number of such studies, limitations and shortcomings of some of the codes have been discussed. In this relation, Dolmaya (2011) conducted comprehensive research on seventeen professional codes of ethics for translators from fifteen countries. Common principles of the codes were compared and their gaps were highlighted. Then, the issues discussed in the *Ethics and Professionalism forum of Trans-*

latorsCafe.com were used to show how the guidelines could apply to ethical dilemmas translators have in their profession. It was shown that all seventeen codes addressed only two principles of ‘confidentiality’ and ‘competence’. Other principles including ‘impartiality’, ‘accuracy’, ‘conflict resolution’, ‘professional development’, ‘advertising’, ‘translator rights’, and ‘working conditions’ were stipulated by only some and not all the guidelines (Dolmaya, 2011). It was also revealed that these common principles apply to all professions that provide services, not just to translation profession. When the guidelines focus on issues specific to translation, the codes are sometimes not very clear and might be conflicting (Dolmaya, 2011).

Focusing on new and developing forms of community translation operating outside the professional realm, Drugan (2011) also discussed the relevance of professional codes in these new challenging contexts. The aim was to highlight the differences that exist between the two approaches and to demonstrate how far these codes are helpful in the new, challenging nonprofessional contexts. In so doing, ten of the codes considered by Dolmaya (2011) and fourteen other translation-specific codes, covering nineteen countries and three international corporations, were studied (Drugan, 2011). A comparison was made between the content of the professional codes and a broad range of community approaches to identify themes common across them. It was shown that community translation initiatives had found novel solutions to some ethical challenges, improved interpretation of code content, and were developing their ‘own codes’ (Drugan, 2011, p. 112) of ethics and practice.

Referring to the critical areas of weakness of the codes of ethics for translators, Lambert (2018) also asserts that “these codes can also function as client-facing documents that indirectly help translation agencies and associations to sell translations and memberships” (p. 269). This ‘selling point’ (p. 282) is reached through creating a sense of trust in ‘neutral’ translators on the part of clients (Lambert, 2018). Similarly, he also made an attempt to suggest some changes in the current codes of ethics toward a code that presents “an empowering image of translation as an active, multi-faceted activity” (p. 269).

In another study, the practical application of the codes of ethics within an Iranian context was also referred. Applying Chesterman's (2001) five models of translation Ethics (ethics of representation, ethics of service, ethics of communication, norm-based ethics, and ethics of commitment), Naderi and Farahzad (2016) investigated ethics of translation in the context of Iran. The data in their research were collected from thirty randomly selected Iranian publishers' contracts with translators. The genre and the type of the texts, the *skopos* and briefs, as well as the name and fame of the translators, were not taken into account in their study. However, the codes included in the contracts, their model and typology, and the values and norms governing each code were examined to extract codes of ethics in Iran. It was observed that ethics of service was the most frequent type of ethics in the articles and notes of the analyzed contracts. ‘Ethics of representation’, ‘ethics of communication’, ‘norm-based ethics’, and ‘ethics of commitment’ came in descending order. The results suggested that

translation in the context of Iran is not conducted based on balanced, professional, ethical principles. Rather, translation “is seen as a service to meet [the] demands of its initiators and earn money” (Naderi & Farahzad, 2016, p. 69).

Although codes of ethics suffer from potential shortcomings, some of which were mentioned above, Sook (2015) notes that the strict adherence to a set of codes of ethics by members of translation associations is a critical component in turning the translation industry into a well-developed profession. In the same vein, Kafi et al. (2018) also considered the absence of a unified code of ethics as an ongoing challenge facing the translation industry in the context of Iran. Referring to the approved statute in 1393 for official Iranian translators, they asserted that this statute shows a 60% overlap with that of the *International Federation of Translators* and is not applicable nowadays. However, this estimation was without presenting a detailed comparison between the principles of the Iranian statute and the ones included in the *International Federation of Translators’ Charter*.

If the absence of a consistent code of ethics to be followed by translation associations is one of the main issues that hinders the development of the translation profession in Iran (Kafi et al., 2018), it would be recommended that Iranian translation associations be reinforced to follow such regulations. Furthermore, if there is an overlap between the approved *Iranian Charter* and that of the *International Federation of Translators*, it should be necessary to examine the underlying principles of the latter or other charters and codes to find out whether these codes have been successful in regulating ethical practice across the translation profession. This analysis would reveal whether or not the approved *Iranian Charter* could fit for the complex and changing world of the translation profession in which Iranian translators work. The review of the literature on ethical codes for translators revealed that they were investigated from different viewpoints, including the limitations as well as the application of the codes in different contexts. However, it seems that none to date has clearly delineated the fundamental assumptions underlying the approved *Iranian Charter of Professional Ethics for Translators* and its limitations. Hence, the present study seeks to analyze the *Iranian Charter* to show the main points of similarity and difference between this *Charter* and some codes of ethics for translators from around the world. Such a comparison would reveal its limitations before it is enforced on the translation profession in Iran.

Research Method

The Corpus

English codes of ethics for translators or translators and interpreters freely available on the Internet comprised the corpus of the study. Eighteen codes from countries located in various parts of the world, namely the US, Europe, Africa, Australia, and Asia, were downloaded. The content of the codes was analyzed to find the general values and underlying principles commonly shared by the codes. The sample includes the following codes of ethics:

1. ATA (*American Translators Association Code of Professional Conduct and Business Practice*)
2. ATIA (*The Association of Translators and Interpreters of Alberta Code of Ethics*)
3. ATIO (*The Association of Translators and Interpreters of Ontario Code of Ethics*)
4. ATPP (*The Peruvian Association of Professional Translators Code of Ethics*)
5. AUSIT (*The Australian Institute of Interpreters and Translators Code of Ethics for Interpreters and Translators*)
6. CFA Institute *Code of Ethics and Standards of Professional Conduct*
7. *Code of Ethics for Interpreters and Translators Employed (enforced by the Special Court in Sierra Leone)*
8. FIT (*International Federation of Translators Issued Translator's Charter*)
9. IAPTI (*International Association of Professional Translators and Interpreters Code of Ethics*)
10. ITI *Code of Professional Conduct (The Institute of Translation and Interpreting, a membership organization and the professional body for translators and interpreters in the UK)*
11. *International Association of Conference Translators Professional Code*
12. *Language Interpreter and Translator Code of Professional Conduct Code of Professional Conduct (Washington State Department of Social and Health Services)*
13. NAATI (*National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters Code of Ethics*)
14. NAJIT (*National Association of Judiciary Interpreters & Translators Code of Ethics*)
15. NZSTI (*New Zealand Society of Translators and Interpreters Code of Ethics*)
16. SATI (*Code of Ethics for South African Translation Institute*)
17. STIBC (*Society of Translators and Interpreters of British Columbia Code of Ethics*)
18. *Translations.com Code of Ethical Business Conduct*

Regarding the ethical codes for translators working in Iran, it seems that there have been some efforts to draw up a set of codes of ethics and professional conduct for these translators. The only approved Iranian code found on the Internet is titled *منشور اخلاق حرفه‌ای مترجمان* or literally, the *Charter of Professional Ethics for translators*, written in Persian. To facilitate the analysis, the *Charter* was translated by the researchers from Persian into English, and it was added to the corpus too. This short *Charter*, which was approved in 1393, includes nine principles. The principles will be elaborated in the following section.

Also relevant to the analysis was the classification of the codes provided by Hale (2007). According to Hale (2007, p. 108), the codes could be divided into three general categories:

1. translators' responsibility to the authors of the utterances, which includes accuracy, impartiality and confidentiality;

2. translators' responsibility to the profession, which includes professional conduct issues such as solidarity; and
3. translators' responsibility to self as a professional, including the need for professional development, role definition, adequate working conditions and pay rates.

In order to reveal to which category each tenet belongs, the principles of the *Iranian Charter* were also analyzed according to the classification mentioned above.

Procedure

Three steps were taken to analyze the codes of ethics for translators or translators and interpreters. First, the *Iranian Charter* was translated by the researchers from Persian into English. Second, since all the codes do not share the aspects mentioned in the classification of the codes provided by Hale (2007), the English codes of ethics from countries located in various parts of the world were analyzed and compared to determine those shared principles. In so doing, the codes were compared sentence by sentence to determine those principles which occurred most frequently. Then, the principles underlying the *Iranian Charter of Professional Ethics for translators* were thoroughly analyzed to reveal the main points of similarity and difference between the *Iranian Charter* and the analyzed codes. Finally, the limitations of the *Charter* were discussed.

Data Analysis

In what follows, the analysis of eighteen codes from around the world is provided. Table 1 allows the comparison of these English codes. It should be mentioned that not all the values and principles underlying the codes were outlined here; rather, those general themes commonly shared by the codes were highlighted. The shared principles were categorized into eleven groups, including accuracy, faithfulness, confidentiality, impartiality, competence, professional development, integrity, employment, professional conduct, professional solidarity, and maintaining professional relationships.

The American Translators Association requires professional translators to have sound knowledge of the source language and reasonable familiarity with the subject matter. Faithfulness, confidentiality, and professional development are highly emphasized by the code too. *The Association of Translators and Interpreters of Alberta* generally focuses on integrity, confidentiality, as well as faithfulness.

The Association of Translators and Interpreters of Ontario focuses attention on professional conduct, avoidance of conflict of interest, professional competence, integrity, faithfulness and accuracy, responsibility, confidentiality, as well as professional relationships, including sharing knowledge with colleagues in a spirit of mutual assistance.

Table 1.
Comparison of English Codes of Ethics for Translators

	Accuracy	Faithfulness	Confidentiality	Impartiality/Conflict of Interest	Competence/Proficiency	professional development	Integrity/honesty	Responsibility/Employment	Professional conduct	Respecting colleagues/Professional	Mutual assistance/ Cooperation/ Sharing
<i>ATA</i>		*	*		*	*					
<i>ATIA</i>		*	*				*				
<i>ATIO</i>	*	*	*	*	*		*	*	*	*	*
<i>ATPP</i>	*		*		*	*				*	
<i>AUSIT</i>	*		*	*	*	*		*	*	*	
<i>CFA</i>	*		*	*	*		*		*	*	
<i>Sierra Leone</i>	*		*	*	*		*				
<i>FIT</i>		*			*			*			
<i>IAPTI</i>			*			*		*		*	
<i>ITI</i>	*	*	*	*	*		*			*	*
<i>Conference Translators Code</i>			*		*					*	
<i>Language Interpreter Code</i>	*		*		*						
<i>NAATI</i>	*		*	*	*						
<i>NAJIT</i>	*		*	*		*					
<i>NZSTI</i>			*	*	*				*		*
<i>SATI</i>	*		*			*		*	*		*
<i>STIBC</i>	*	*	*		*			*			*
<i>Translations.com</i>	*		*	*			*		*		

According to the *Peruvian Association of Professional Translators code of ethics*, translators have to be competent, constantly strive for excellence, and be respectful to their clients and colleagues. They also intend to contribute to the use of accurate and uniform terminology to facilitate communication and promote recognition of the translators as high-ranking professionals. The code also emphasizes confidentiality. The *Australian Institute of Interpreters and Translators* considers impartiality, disclosing personal or financial conflicts of interest, accuracy, competence, employment, professional development, and professional solidarity as fundamental ethical issues.

The *CFA Institute Code of Ethics and Standards of Professional Conduct* attaches great importance to conflicts of interest, competence, integrity, confidentiality, accuracy as well as professionalism, independence, and objectivity. The code of ethics for interpreters and translators who work for the special court in Sierra Leone also includes competence, integrity, confidentiality, impartiality, and accuracy. *The International Federation of Translators Issued Translator's Charter* talks about the general obligations of translators and focuses on the responsibilities of translators. According to the *FIT*, bilingual and thematic competences are the main competences translators need to possess. Responsibility and faithfulness, which is different from a literal translation, are also emphasized.

Responsibility, improvement of skills and knowledge, confidentiality, and respecting colleagues are also focused by the *International Association of Professional Translators and Interpreters Code of Ethics*. This code mainly talks about general duties, duties related to the performance of professional activities, duties related to the protection and promotion of the translating Profession, as well as duties related to relationships among colleagues, none of which includes accuracy or faithfulness.

The principles introduced by the *Institute of Translation and Interpreting Code of Professional Conduct* are honesty and integrity, professional competence, client confidentiality and trust, respecting and having relationships with other members. Dominant Professional values members are required to act in accordance with include faithfulness, accuracy, and impartiality.

The *International Association of Conference Translators Professional Code* mainly talks about professional secrecy, competence, friendly relations with colleagues, and not accuracy or faithfulness. *The Language Interpreter and Translator Code of Professional Conduct* also focuses attention on accuracy, confidentiality, proficiency, impartiality, avoidance of conflicts of interest, and professional development.

The *National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters Code of Ethics (NAATI)* provides information on two primary codes of ethics: the *AUSIT Code* and the *ASLIA Code*. The *AUSIT Code* was initially developed by the *AUSIT* in consultation with the *NAATI*. It is a collection of rules and regulations that must be followed by interpreters and translators in Australia in their pursuit of professional practice. The *ASLIA Code* articulates ethical values, principles, and standards of conduct to direct *Australian Sign Language* practitioners while carrying out their duties. According to the *NAATI*, the general principles contained in the different ethical codes includes privacy and confidentiality, conflicts of interest, accuracy, impartiality, maintaining professional detachment and refraining from inappropriate self-promotion, as well as guarding against misuse of inside information for personal gain.

Accuracy, impartiality and conflicts of interest, confidentiality, as well as maintenance and development of skills and knowledge, are included in the *National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators Code of Ethics* too.

The *New Zealand Society of Translators and Interpreters Code of Ethics* requires translators to be competent, have mutual assistance with their fellow members, respect confidentiality, and not to exploit the acquired knowledge.

The *Code of Ethics for the South African Translation Institute* talks about the general obligations of translators and focuses on the responsibilities of translators. According to this code, translators are required to transfer the information as accurately as possible, continually pursue self-improvement to ensure the quality of their translations, and observe confidentiality. They are also expected to uphold the highest ethical standards and share their professional knowledge with other members.

The *Society of Translators and Interpreters of British Columbia Code of Ethics* includes professional competence, faithfulness and accuracy, responsibility, confidentiality, and professional relationships as ethical principles. Finally, the principles introduced by the *Translations.com Code of Ethical Business Conduct* are accuracy, integrity, confidentiality, professional conduct, and conflicts of interest.

Similar to other translation associations all around the world, Iranian associations of translators have recently recognized the need for the existence of professional charters or codes of ethics. The Iranian code used for the purpose of the study was the *Charter of Professional Ethics for translators*. The *Charter* was approved in 1393 and includes nine principles (see Appendix for the English version of the *Charter*).

The analysis of the first principle of the *Iranian Charter* shows that, similar to other analyzed codes of ethics, it states the need for complete fidelity to the meaning and message of the text. However, the *Iranian Charter* immediately requires “reproducing the translation in accordance with the cultural and specialized context of the target language”. According to the following principle, translators must accept full responsibility for their translations, consider all the written or oral obligations binding, and meet the deadlines.

The principle of confidentiality also expects translators to avoid disclosing any information about the text unless the owner of the text or a legal authority allows them to do so. Besides, the fourth principle, the principle of adherence to the agreements and contracts, prevents translators from canceling the contracts without giving valid reasons or having customer satisfaction.

Under the principle of honesty and integrity requires “providing honest services to clients and avoiding false or misleading statements about professional competence and professional and specialist qualifications or advertising in a manner that would undermine the competence of other colleagues” is required of the translators.

The analysis of the next principle of the *Charter* reveals that maintaining ethical standards, respecting the translation profession, and avoiding hurting the reputation of the organization or other institutions involved in the field of translation are emphasized by the *Charter* too. Cooperation with colleagues

and avoiding destructive competitions are also emphasized by the seventh principle.

To provide high-quality translations, translators are required by the *Charter* to maintain and develop their language skills. Finally, translators are expected to demonstrate ‘customer orientation’ in that they should respecting clients’ trust, notify clients of any changes to the text that result in any distortion of the text or altering its originality. Translators are also required to satisfy “customers prior to the assignment of the relevant order” and respond “appropriately to their needs that are related to the translation services”.

To better analyze the principles of the *Iranian Charter*, they were examined according to Hale’s (2007) classification to show to which category each tenet of the *Iranian Charter* belongs. Regarding the tenets belonging to the first category of responsibility to the writers of the texts offered by Hale (2007), the *Iranian Charter* speaks of accuracy and confidentiality, but not impartiality.

The second category of Hale’s (2007) classification talks about translators’ responsibility to the profession, which includes professional conduct issues such as solidarity. The principle of cooperation and assistance in the *Charter*, which focuses attention on maintaining cooperation and assistance, as well as avoiding destructive competitions among colleagues, refers to translators’ responsibility to the profession.

And finally, regarding the translators’ responsibility to self as a professional, including the need for professional development, role definition, adequate working conditions, and pay rates (Hale, 2007), the *Iranian Charter* requires continuing knowledge and skill development as well as the adherence to the agreements and contracts too.

Discussion

The analysis of eighteen codes from around the world revealed the main priorities of these codes. It was observed that confidentiality was almost emphasized by all the codes except for the *FIT (International Federation of Translators Issued Translator’s Charter)*. This finding is in line with the findings of Hale (2007), who analyzed and compared sixteen codes of ethics for translators and interpreters from nine countries to explore the purpose and applicability of these codes for interpreters. She found out that the most prominent tenet was confidentiality, with 81.25 percent of the analyzed ethical codes including it, followed by accuracy with 75 percent and impartiality with 68.75 percent. Similarly, analyzing seventeen codes for translators from fifteen countries, Dolmaya (2011) showed that two principles of confidentiality and competence were stipulated by all seventeen codes. Hence, confidentiality, which requires that translators not disclose information received or acquired without authorization during their professional practice, is of utmost importance for the translation profession.

Accuracy, which is generally considered equal to faithfulness, seems to be the next critical requirement of the codes of ethics for translators in general. However, some sort of terminological variation was observed. While thirteen codes used the term accuracy, six codes used faithfulness to refer to the translators' requirement by the codes to reproduce the closest natural equivalent of the source language meaning and message in the target language. On the other hand, the *ATIO*, *ITI*, and *STIBC* used both terminologies as synonyms under the same principles. And three codes (*IAPTI*, *NZSTI*, and *the International Association of Conference Translators Professional Code*) talked about neither accuracy nor faithfulness.

The third common feature observed in the codes, competence, requires that translators have a thorough knowledge of both the source and the target language. According to the next most frequent tenet, translators are supposed to be neutral, impartial, and objective during their practice. This is to ensure that their personal feelings, opinions, beliefs, or interests do not interfere with the primary objective of providing an accurate and faithful translation of the original. The next most common feature among the analyzed code was professional solidarity, according to which translators have to respect and support their fellow professionals.

Professional development, integrity, employment, and professional conduct all stood in ranks next to each other. Professional development requires that translators continue to develop their professional knowledge and skills. According to the principle of integrity, translators must act with honesty in all their professional practice. The principle of employment states that translators will be responsible for the quality of their translations, and they have to accept full responsibility for their translations. In the exercise of their profession, translators are also expected to act according to the high standards of conduct and maintain a professional attitude at all times. Finally, the least common principle among the analyzed code was about maintaining professional relationships. It includes mutual assistance, which requires that translators cooperate with and assist each other in every practical way and share knowledge with other members.

Examining the common themes in the analyzed English codes comparatively with the *Iranian Charter* highlighted both some similarities and differences between the two. It was observed that the *Iranian Charter* talked about almost all the common tenets found in the analyzed English codes from around the world except for impartiality. Hale (2007) believes that this exclusion from some codes could mean that this tenet is taken for granted, or it is not considered necessary. Also, while the first principle of the *Charter* refers to the translator's obligation to remain faithful to the original, it does not support a literal, word-for-word translation. However, this non-literal translation advised under the first principle of the *Charter* does not refer to any personal judgment from translators. It merely reveals the priority of a norm-based ethics of translation in the context of Iran, which in turn reflects the importance of cultural or social values while translating in an Iranian context. Social or cultural context condi-

tions the decision-making process in translation. In other words, translators are not mere linguistic experts; in order to make conscious decisions, they need to have social and cultural expertise. However, it seems that the *Iranian Charter* does not provide a detailed description of what translators should do when they encounter cases that are contrary to the cultural interests of Iranian society. Instead, it provides a broad guideline that tries to help them to decide on an appropriate course of action when encountered with an ethical problem.

Now the question is whether the codes have been successful in regulating ethical practice across the translation profession in general. And are they really practical nowadays? In order to answer these questions, opposing views in favor and against such codes are presented. First, they might be looked positively, as a means of professional performance and maintaining public trust. A code provides guidelines that help translators to make the right decisions in their work in that it protects them from making ‘arbitrary choices’, which could yield ‘negative results’ (Solow, 1981, as cited in Hale, 2007, p. 104). Following the same code by all translators, as Hale (2007) notes, makes all participants in the process of translation have the same common expectations of the translator’s role, which in turn lessens the possibility of conflict. A code protects translators and elevates the dignity and status of the profession (Hale, 2007). It not only helps to win ‘public trust’ but also acts as ‘an internal control mechanism’ (Tseng, 1992, as cited in Hale, 2007, p. 104).

Despite arguments in favor of the existence of a uniform code of ethics for translators, some of which were mentioned above, some have questioned whether to adhere to such a code. Wallmach (2002, as cited in Hale, 2007, p. 104), for example, states that the mere presence of an ethical code does not guarantee that translators will follow it. This could be due to the following reasons: non-professional translators might simply not be aware of the existence of the code; they might find it inapplicable to their practice, or they may not be competent enough to adhere to the principles of the code. Some translators may disagree with the prescriptions in it and may see no reason for complying with them (Hale, 2007).

Lambert (2018) also believes that ‘good’ translation (p. 283) suggested by the codes, which means complete, impartial meaning transfer or a ‘neutral methodology’ (p. 284), is neither realistic nor desirable and is potentially harmful in the actual translation practice. Similarly, House (2016) also asserts that the very notions of fidelity and impartiality necessitated by the codes are problematic in the present climate in Translation Studies. House here refers to the major shift that happened in the ethics of translation in the twentieth century from a primary focus on the traditional terms of fidelity and invisibility toward more significant ethical issues such as the ‘agency’ and ‘power’ of the translators (Tymoczko, 2014) and challenged the role of the translators as prescribed by the codes.

Similarly, Baker (2011) lists three reasons why it is essential for translators “to develop critical skills that enable them to make ethical decisions for themselves, rather than have to fall back uncritically on such abstract codes” (p.

274). First, in actual practice, it is likely that translators encounter situations in which it is difficult to decide to apply the related code. This is because codes cannot predict all concrete ethical issues that might arise in real situations (Baker, 2011). Second, since such codes are provided by people like us, they are prone to error. Finally, following unquestionable codes of ethics would weaken accountability for decisions made by translators as individuals in society.

Regarding the first reason mentioned by Baker (2011), like all human activities, there are occasions throughout translators' professional life when codes are not applicable in full. For example, the *Iranian Charter*, as well as the majority of the analyzed codes by different researchers, do not stipulate how translators should make ethical choices while working with technology such as CAT software (Dolmaya, 2011). As another ethical dilemma, a translator might also encounter during translation practice, Dolmaya (2011) refers to a situation where a translator translates utterances that might be used to interrogate or intimidate detainees during wartime. She states that the seventeen codes of ethics she analyzed covered such a situation only to a limited extent. There are, of course, more examples of such dilemmas that are ever-present in the translation profession. Part of becoming a translator is accepting and, indeed, embracing uncertainties and dilemmas. Translators need to develop critical skills on these occasions and translate according to the specific situation. In the same vein, House (2016) encourages translators to cease acting in conformity to these standards of conduct, stop to be invisible, and play a more significant role in their business of translating. This means that whenever the expected neutrality and impartiality comes into serious conflict with an individual translator's conscience and his personal code of ethics, the translator must "construct and defend his very own 'code of ethics', in a new conception of the translator's agency and his personal integrity" (House, 2016, p. 131). Van Heerden (2016) takes this 'situational ethics of translation' even further and talks about a 'nomadic ethics' which is not about according to which norms we should translate, "rather about a philosophy of becoming which is situational: embedded and embodied within a specific location" (p. 89). Hence, ethical principles should be seen in reference to a specific context.

Such arguments could call into question the very presence of a uniform code of ethics for translators. Codes cannot provide an answer to all questions or new different ethical dilemmas that may arise in the professional life of translators. Hence, acting ethically does not necessarily mean that translators have to follow a set of agreed guidelines. If there is a question that codes do not address directly, translators should use their sound judgment of what is right to make the best decisions. As House (2016) also notes, there are no general ethical standards that are valid in all actual situations. Humans are concerned in almost any act of translation; they are so complex and likely to change that such generalizations seem unreasonable (House, 2016).

Conclusion

The present study examined the fundamental assumptions underlying some different codes of ethics from countries located in various parts of the world and highlighted their similarities. Then, it made a comparison between the content of these codes and that of the approved Iranian *Charter of Professional Ethics for Translators*. The comparison between the Iranian *Charter* of ethics and the analyzed codes revealed that, generally, the *Iranian Charter* speaks nothing more than the themes or principles such as confidentiality, faithfulness, and so on, which are common across other codes. It was also discussed how such a weakness lessens the impact of the codes on the translation profession.

Despite such a great number of professional codes of ethics for translators, put forward by different professional associations all around the world, as well as such an abundance of research on translation ethics, it seems that these codes have not been successful in regulating ethical practice across the translation profession and, hence, are not very practical nowadays. As it was mentioned, codes of ethics on their own are not a sufficient resource for translators. Such codes are lists of values and principles that demand accuracy or faithfulness of translators. However, they cannot precisely explain how to behave when the values are conflicting. As it was revealed from the analysis of the Iranian *Charter of Professional Ethics for translators*, it also suffers the very shortcoming. The *Charter* talks about almost all the common tenets observed in the analyzed English codes from around the world too. This paper suggested that the *Charter* should more fully recognize and acknowledge changes in the complex and changing world of the translation profession. Hence, before its application, the *Charter* should be modified in a way that it could see “the translator as an active and activist agent in the process of brokering individual and collective intercultural relationships in a world characterized by injustice and power imbalances” (Kruger & Crots, 2014, P. 152). Such a context-based code of ethics gives more freedom to translators and allows them to decide critically.

This study also has an implication for an ethics of translation. An ethics of translation requires of translators an awareness of the context in which they translate as well as a reflection on what they are doing. As Schwimmer (2017, p. 60) also stresses, an ethics of translation requires “autonomous institutions where problematizing, questioning, deviating, doubting and hesitating would be valued, and not just resolving problems, achieving objectives and meeting standards”. Therefore, “merely rewriting or rewording the existing codes and assuming that their presence alone is enough to modify behavior” (Lambert, 2018, p. 284) is not sufficient for the translation profession.

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Relevant Websites

ATA (American Translators Association Code of Professional Conduct and Business Practice)

URL: https://www.atanet.org/membership/code_of_professional_conduct.

ATIA (The Association of Translators and Interpreters of Alberta) Code of Ethics)

URL: <https://www.atia.ab.ca/about/code-of-ethics>

ATIO (The Association of Translators and Interpreters of Ontario Code of Ethics)

URL: <https://atio.on.ca/about/by-laws/>

ATPP (The Peruvian Association of Professional Translators)

URL: <http://www.atpp.org.pe/association.php>

AUSIT Code of Ethics for Interpreters and Translators

URL: https://www.ausit.org/ausit/documents/code_of_ethics_full.pdf

CFA Code of Ethics and Standards of Professional Conduct

URL: <https://www.cfainstitute.org/en/ethics/codes/code-of-ethics-standards-of-conduct-guidance>

Code of Ethics for Interpreters and Translators Employed by the Special Court for Sierra Leone

URL: <http://ethics.iit.edu/ecodes/node/5594>

FIT (International Federation of Translators Issued Translator's Charter)

URL: <https://www.fit-ift.org/translators-charter/>

IAPTI (International Association of Professional Translators and Interpreters) Code of Ethics

URL: https://www.iapti.org/code_of_ethics/

Institute of Translation and Interpreting (UK) Code of Professional Conduct

URL: <http://www.iti.org.uk/pdfs/newpdf/20FHCodeOfConductIndividual>

International Association of Conference Translators Professional Code

URL: <http://www.tradulex.com/Regles/ProAitcE.htm>

Interpreter, Translator, and Licensed Agency Personnel Code of Professional Conduct (Washington State Department of Social and Health Services)

URL: <https://www.dshs.wa.gov/fsa/language-testing-and-certification-program/code-ethics>

NAATI (National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters)

URL: https://www.naati.com.au/media/1257/ethics_information_booklet.pdf

NAJIT (National Association of Judiciary Interpreters & Translators)

URL: <https://najit.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/NAJITCodeofEthicsFINAL.pdf>

NZSTI (New Zealand Society of Translators and Interpreters Code of Ethics)

URL: www.nzsti.org/assets/uploads/files/codeofethics.pdf

SATI Code of Ethics (for South African Translation Institute)

URL: http://translators.org.za/sati/cms/downloads/dynamic/sati_ethics_individual_english.pdf

STIBC (Society of Translators and Interpreters of British Columbia)

URL: <http://www.stibc.org/page/code%20of%20ethics.aspx#.WarEjuQVj4g>

Translations.com Code of Ethical Business Conduct

URL: <https://www.translations.com/about/corporate-citizenship/ethical-code-of-conduct.html>

The Iranian Charter of Professional Ethics for Translators

URL: <https://tiat.ir/fa/%D9%85%D9%86%D8%B4%D9%88%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%AE%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%82%D8%AD%D8%B1%D9%81%D9%87%E2%80%8C%D8%A7%DB%8C%D9%85%D8%AA%D8%B1%D8%AC%D9%85%D8%A7%D9%86>

Appendix

Charter of Professional Ethics for translators

The principle of professional competence

Partaking of all scientific and professional measures in faithfulness to the meaning and message of the text, reproducing the translation in accordance with the cultural and specialized context of the target language, observing all the scientific and customary principles as well as the principles governing translation, avoiding orders that are for illegal or unethical purposes, or for the purposes contrary to the interests of the society.

The principle of responsibility

Accepting full responsibility for the translation (even if the translation is subcontracted to another translator), considering all the written or oral obligations as binding, meeting the deadlines, and following the delivery methods of the order.

The principle of trusteeship and confidentiality

Keeping the loan in the text and everything entrusted to the translator, refraining from disclosing the information about the text, or any financial or non-financial use or misuse of the information by the self or a third party, and disclosing the information only by the permission of the owner of the text or on the order of legal authorities.

The principle of transparency and adherence to the agreements

Taking advantage of all specialized and executive capacities to determine and implement the timing in accordance with existing guidelines for undertaking the translation project and avoiding modification or unilateral termination of the contract or firm verbal agreement without providing valid reasons and obtaining customer satisfaction.

The principle of honesty and integrity

Providing honest services to clients and avoiding false or misleading statements about professional competence and professional and specialist qualifications or advertising in a manner that would undermine the competence of other colleagues.

The principle of preserving and elevating the dignity and the status of the translation profession

Maintaining ethical standards in dealing with the clients and customers in a manner that is appropriate for the profession and that increases public trust and respect for the profession of translation, and avoiding damaging the interests and reputation of the organization, its members, and relevant institutions in the field of translation in speech or act, deliberately or inadvertently.

The principle of cooperation and assistance

Assisting and dealing honestly with colleagues, maintaining a spirit of cooperation and assistance in interactions and collaborations, and avoiding destructive and unhealthy competitions through actions such as accepting orders below common and standard rates.

The principle of continuing knowledge and skill development

Continuing effort to maintain and develop language skills at the general and specialized level as well as professional knowledge to work in line with existing needs and requirements and to provide high-quality translations.

The principle of customer orientation

Respecting clients' trust, notifying them of any changes to the ordering text that result in distortion of the text or altering its originality, informing and satisfying customers prior to the assignment of the relevant order, and responding appropriately to their needs that are related to the translation services.

Exploring the Impact of Common vs. Restricted Social Networks on English Foreign Language Learners' Writing Skill

Research Article

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Received: 2020-03-16 | Revised (1): 2020-06-01 | Accepted: 2020-06-09

Abstract

The appearance of different types of educational technology (Ed Tech) tools has paved the way for teachers and learners in all fields of study including second/foreign language learning in order to use them for making the education and learning process more fruitful and exciting. This study aimed to investigate and compare the impact of the common WhatsApp group in which participants could have interactions versus the restricted WhatsApp group in which participants did not have any interactions, as two quittances of social network groups on enhancing English Foreign Language (EFL) learners' writing ability with a focus on process analysis type of paragraph writing. In this regard, 64 intermediate EFL

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learners were homogenized through the administration of the Oxford Placement Test (OPT) and divided into two virtual groups randomly. Next, a paragraph writing pretest was administered, and then both virtual groups received the same treatment and material based on the Model-Practice-Effect instruction cycle. After the treatment sessions, the paragraph writing posttest was administered. Considering the purpose of the study, data analysis indicated that the participants in the common WhatsApp group who had experienced online interaction could significantly outperform the participants in the restricted WhatsApp group. The results and findings of this study can be useful for second/foreign language learners, teachers, researchers and experts in order to consider and become aware of the critical role of Ed Tech, as well as the central and important role of interaction in improving the quality of language teaching and learning process.

Keywords: common WhatsApp group, educational technology, restricted WhatsApp group, social networks, writing skills

Introduction

The development of educational technology (Ed Tech) tools has altered instructional-learning contexts and provided rich opportunities for learners of all majors of study in general and English as foreign language (EFL) learners in particular. Ed Tech-enhanced teaching and learning has facilitated the connections and helped student active engagement in the learning process. Seeing as the lives of today's generation of students or *Digital Natives*, as Prensky (2001) calls it, is dependent on Ed Tech, new types of instructional-learning contexts need to be integrated into the syllabus (Sah, 2015). In effect, the technological developments, the Internet, and new tendencies in the use of Ed Tech have resulted in changes in learning forms from conventional and traditional contexts to new forms of instructional-learning contexts and Ed Tech-enhanced teaching methods (e.g., Game-based Learning, Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL), Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL), Mobile learning (M-learning), etc.).

Ed Tech-enhanced instructional-learning contexts have been identified as a set of teaching and learning modules that are trying to facilitate students' learning progress and performance in both academia and workplaces (Rouse, 2011). Ed Tech-enhanced instructional-learning context is defined as technology-enhanced context which allows communications and information sharing with other stakeholders, though it can be used to hold a complete online course, a blended course or as a supporting feature for face-to-face courses (Fahretin & Feyzi, 2013; Sneha & Nagaraja, 2013). On the words of Barker and Gossman (2013), the major goal of Ed Tech-enhanced instructional-learning contexts is to ease, motivate and provide learning experiences that go beyond the conventional teacher-centered classrooms. Research has showed that Ed Tech-enhanced instructional-learning context by allowing stakeholders to select and employ variegated resources and applications (apps) to review the course content, plays the role of supporting instruction (e.g., Ottesen, 2018; Stiller &

Schworm, 2019). Nowadays, the functionality of some Ed Tech-enhanced instructional and learning contexts is being developed on mobile devices, which, in turn, can consolidate the role of mobile devices in language education, that is to say, M-learning context.

Over the last few decades among all different functions, M-learning has been mainly employed for amateur purposes. However, the availability of Ed Tech-enhanced platforms on these devices can render even greater benefits for both stakeholders in language education (Sneha & Nagaraja, 2013). This way, the mobile apps have set the scene for more effective and attractive learning of second/foreign language. According to Barboux (2006), in order to meet the expectations and needs of *Digital Natives*, educational authorities in all fields of study including second/foreign language learning should transfer the teaching methods and techniques of Traditional learning (T-learning) contexts to the new instructional-learning contexts. Among the new forms of learning contexts, teaching through social networks is known to be more flexible and operational mainly owing to overcoming restrictions of time and space. Social networks which are one of the categories of social media are defined as the online communities in which their users can establish a profile for themselves, comment on each other's posts, interact and share information with others (Davis et al., 2012). It is worthy to mention that, social networks have not been first designed for educational and academic purposes. But, due to the close connection between education system and technology improvements, as well as alterations in forms of learning contexts, they have been utilized as learning devices in education (Gupta, 2014) which can assist stakeholders to access information and facilitate second/foreign language learning. As Naseri and Khodabandeh (2019) hold, social networks utilized with educational purposes help non English students overcome the limitations of customary method of teaching English, boost their motivation, and pave the way for autonomous language learning. They cost efficient form of learning which make learning process more available, attractive, flexible and encouraging for stakeholders (Douglas et al., 2008). Bounhnik and Deshen (2014) pointed out that M-learning through social networks can greatly promote the quality of education in general and second/foreign language learning in particular. In this regard, Cavus and Ibrahim (2009) illuminated that social networks have revolutionized education and altered "the conventional classroom-based learning and teaching into anytime and anywhere education" (p. 82). Ed Tech-enhanced teaching and learning through social networks can be considered as one of the products of integration of technology into educational dimension of life (Grgurovic, 2010). According to Richards (2008), Ed Tech-enhanced teaching and learning is a form of learning in which stakeholders are separated in space or time. They have the potential to provide educational environments that are more student-centered, participatory, and meaningful (AlQahtani, 2018).

Social networks are known as collaborative technologies which provide opportunities for second/foreign language learners to have interactive learning and access to online interactive contexts (Khoshnoud & Karbalaei, 2014). As Ferdig (2007) claimed, these sites are full of interactions which are of use in

language learning process. Based on the Interactionist framework, cooperative learning (CL), and learner-based meaningful interaction are emphasized in second/foreign language instructional-learning contexts (Vygotsky, 1978). Similarly, active engagement and dynamic interaction are crucial factors for language learning (Heidari et al., 2018; Lee, 2011). Social Networking-Based Education (SNBE) enables students to connect to other counterparts, make social relations and share their views with others under interdisciplinary circumstances (Gaudeul & Peroni, 2010). Researchers acknowledge that social networks have achieved a dominant role for education and entertainment as they facilitate discussion and interaction (Ghobadi & Taki, 2018). Given students' goals in Ed Tech-enhanced teaching and learning contexts are the same as students' goals in conventional ones, special attention need to be given to interactions among students with their teacher and other students in such contexts (Davies & Graff, 2005). In recent years, with regards to constant use of mobile devices among the individuals in societies in all aspect of their lives such as education, it is of great importance to not become inattentive to the critical role and importance of interaction in social networks (Beer & Burrows, 2007).

Hobbs (2005) believed that "in the last 20 years, writing [skill] has come to approach the primacy that reading has held in the language arts hierarchy" (p. 8). Therefore, regarding the difficulties and problems of second/foreign language learners in mastering writing skill and considering the necessity of meeting the *Digital Natives'* expectations with regard to emergence of new Ed Tech-enhanced teaching and learning contexts. In addition, with respect to the crucial role of having proper interaction with counterparts and teacher for a successful language learning process, in this study it was intended to evaluate and compare the impact of two different social networks namely common WhatsApp group having interaction and restricted WhatsApp group lacking interaction in M-learning context on enhancing EFL learners' writing ability with a focus on process analysis type of paragraph writing. Considering the aforementioned purpose of the study, the following research question was proposed:

RQ: What is the difference between the impact of common WhatsApp group and restricted WhatsApp group on enhancing EFL learners' writing skill?

Literature Review

The purpose of this section is to review the previous empirical studies which are related to the subject of the present study. Barker and Gossman (2013) mentioned that, mobile-mediated language education can at least allow students to have more contact with authentic context of language use. As Stockwell and Hubbard (2013) stated, "M-learning is a field that is quickly maturing, and this way, a growing body of research has appeared that highlights the various ways in which mobile devices may be used in teaching and learning of languages" (p. 2). According to Farooq et al. (2002), the concept of M-learning combines the advantages of mobility and wireless technologies in order to be

used in learning and education process by both learners and teachers. According to Wanger and Wilsonm (2005), mobile technology is growing fast and use of mobile phones, applications and social networks is going to have noticeable impacts on language learning and teaching all around the world. The utilization of social networks such as Telegram, Line, and WhatsApp has been potentially affective in area of foreign language learning as EFL learners use them to get engaged and motivated in real communicative situations (Khoshnoud & Karbalaeei, 2014).

With regards to popularity and important role of M-learning and social networks in education, many research studies have been conducted and developed in order to investigate the effect and role of M-learning context and social networks in instruction as well as learning process. For instance, Belal (2014) investigated the impact of social media on students' writing skill and confirmed that social media helped the students to improve their writing and speaking as they are able to learn new words from their friends. Similarly, Robles (2016) investigated the effect of M-learning context on improving learner's writing ability and indicated that use of mobile device could increase learner's attention and motivation toward writing skill. In a recent study, Naseri and Khodabandeh (2019) compared the efficiency of input enhancement teaching techniques on enhancing EFL learners' collocation learning and their accurate use of collocation in narrative writing in two different learning contexts namely M-learning and T-learning contexts. Results were indicative of significant outperformance of learners in M-learning context in comparison to T-learning regarding collocation learning. Adloo and Aghajani (2018) conducted a research study with the purpose of seeking the effect of Telegram cooperative learning group as one of the social networks on EFL learners' writing performance and their attitudes toward using Telegram with educational purposes. The results manifested a significant difference between learners' performance in the Telegram group in comparison to learners' performance in the traditional and face to face cooperative writing group. The Telegram group also expressed positive attitudes toward using Telegram social network. In one of the other research studies with a focus on M-learning, Heidari et al., (2018) first compared two instructional methods including Face to Face Instruction (FFI) and Telegram Mobile Instruction (TMI), and second investigated the improvement of EFL learners in terms of narrative writing via TMI and traditional FFI. The researchers concluded that learners' narrative writing performance had significant improvement in the Telegram group because increased interaction was observed between the teacher and the learners and among learners themselves.

Some studies have focused on using social networks to improve EFL learners' vocabulary knowledge. For example, Jafari and Chalak (2016) examined the role of WhatsApp in improving the EFL students' vocabulary learning and agreed on the favorable impact of WhatsApp as a social network utilized in M-learning context. Ghaemi and Golshan (2017) also examined the effect of social network on learners' vocabulary learning and concluded that EFL learners could improve their vocabulary learning via social networks. In line with previous studies, Khan et al. (2016) confirmed that using social network is quite

helpful in vocabulary development of EFL learners at university level. More consistency, Mashhadi and Kaviani (2016) obtained the same results and claimed that using social networks is one of the effective ways to enhance vocabulary learning of EFL learners. Similarly, Khansarian-Dehkordi and Ameri-Golestan (2017) studied effects of one of the social networks named as the 'Line' application on EFL learners' vocabulary acquisition and concluded that the experimental group who applied mobile devices acquired target words and outperformed those of the control group who learned words through the traditional face-to-face classroom instruction. The impact of Telegram social network on learning second language vocabulary by EFL beginners was also examined by Heidari Tabrizi and Onvani (2018) who confirmed that using social networks such as Telegram can be an effective tool to motivate students to learn English. Telegram also has been proved to improve students' listening comprehension ability, as well as their collaborative skills (Salehpour, 2018). Exploring the impact of storytelling through the use of Telegram on oral language of EFL learners revealed that learners' speaking abilities can be improved through virtual environment (Khodabandeh, 2018) because social networks enable learners to talk and interact with their peers in their group (Abasi & Behjat, 2018).

To check the improvement of students' English grammar through social networks, Singman (2012) compared the impact of Wiki with traditional language learning activities on the development of EFL learners' correct usage of grammar and revealed that social networks can enhance learners' collaborative activities and improve their language learning achievement and motivation. Nabati (2018) also investigated the effect of using Telegram on EFL learners' learning grammar and demonstrated that Telegram has a positive effect on enhancing EFL learners' grammar points. Additionally, he confirmed that social networks make foreign language acquisition more effective and fun.

Reading has also been one of the most commonly taught language skills through social networks in recent years. For instance, Shirinbakhsh and Saeidi (2018) compared reading performance of EFL learners through traditional in-class presentations as opposed to those learning via Telegram and confirmed that the participants of the Telegram group are superior over the traditional group learners. Similarly, Dukper et al. (2018) explored the effects of social media on the reading culture of students and stated social media helps students improve their social relationship with their peers and share and exchange some form of academic information with them. Likewise, Akande and Oyedapo (2018) investigated the effect of social media on reading habits of high school students and affirmed that there is a positive significant relationship between social media and reading habits of the students.

Considering the aforementioned studies, there have been many research studies focusing on investigating how social media, social networks and M-learning context can effect different aspects of second/foreign language learning including grammar, vocabulary, reading and writing skill (e.g., Adloo & Aghajani, 2018; Belal, 2014; Heidari et al., 2018; Robles, 2016). The previous

research studies have obtained valuable conclusions, while it is noticed that, these studies have only focused on comparing the effectiveness of social media, social networks and M-learning in comparison to T-learning context. It can be claimed that the shortcomings of previous studies are first, ignorance of comparison between two different types of social networks or M-learning contexts in terms of language learning in general and writing ability in particular. Second, ignorance of evaluating and comparing the role of interaction (online interaction) in different types of social networks and M-learning contexts. Therefore, in order to overcome the cited shortcomings and to fill the gaps, the present study is designed to evaluate and compare the impact of two different social networks namely common WhatsApp group having interaction and restricted WhatsApp group lacking interaction in M-learning context on enhancing EFL learners' writing ability with a focus on process analysis type of paragraph writing.

Method

The Design of the Study

Given there was no true randomization in the present study, it was a quasi-experimental study. Considering the research question of this study, the independent variables in this study were common WhatsApp group having interaction and restricted WhatsApp group lacking interaction, and the dependent variable was EFL learners' writing skill with a focus on process analysis type of paragraph writing.

Participants

A total of 134 Intermediate EFL learners varying in age from 17 to 26 were selected. The participants were EFL learners at Kish, Safir, and Goyesh language institutes in Isfahan, Iran, and were non-randomly selected from different classes of the language institutes. All of the learners were female with Farsi as their native language. In order to homogenize the participants, Oxford Placement Test (OPT) was administered. Out of the whole learners, 68 EFL learners who could successfully obtain the required score (from 35 to 46) were considered as the intermediate learners and were selected as final participants in this study. Then, the homogenized participants were randomly divided into two equal experimental groups each consisting of 34 participants. (i.e., group A: Experimental group, receiving instructional materials in common WhatsApp group; group B: Experimental group, receiving instructional materials in restricted WhatsApp group).

Instruments

A number of instruments were used in order to run the present study, which are explained below:

The OPT. The OPT was administered in order to establish the participants' homogeneity. It is the test of language proficiency presented by Oxford University Press which provides tutors with a reliable and time saving technique for determining the proficiency level of learners. This test consists of 60 items in two parts: Part one with the first 40 multiple-choice items that assess use of English and part two with 20 multiple-choice items that assess listening skills. It is worthy to mention that both parts of the OPT were given to the participants in this study

Writing Pretest and Posttest. In order to evaluate the participants' writing ability in terms of process analysis writing before and after the treatment sessions, two pieces of process analysis paragraphs were taken from the participants of both groups as writing pretest and posttest. Process analysis writing is defined as a type of writing in which the sequential steps of a procedure are explained. There are two kinds of process writing including directional and informational. As the names suggest in directional type of process analysis paragraph, the author tries to explain how to do something. And in informational process analysis paragraph, the author tries to explain how something works or happens (Hemmati & Khodabandeh (2017).

In order to guide the participants, first they were given a particular topic as the writing pretest. The topic of writing pretest was about "how to gain entry to university", and the topic of the post-test was "How to choose a major", therefore; the type of process analysis paragraph in this study was informational process paragraph. In both pretest and posttest, the participants were informed that their writing should include a topic sentence, supporting sentences and a concluding sentence. The topic of the writing pretest and posttest were chosen under the supervision of the experts in the field of writing, and the scoring procedure was done by two raters whose inter-rater reliability was also calculated, the results of which will be presented later.

Procedure

The procedure of the present study was initiated with the selection of 68 homogeneous Intermediate EFL learners out of 134 EFL learners. The homogeneity of learners was determined by administration of OPT. As stated earlier, the homogenized participants were randomly divided into two experimental groups, which were respectively common WhatsApp group and restricted WhatsApp group. The second procedure was evaluating the participants' writing ability with a focus on process analysis type of paragraph writing before the treatment administration as the writing pretest. The following procedure was administration of treatment sessions and presentation of predesigned instructional materials. The whole treatment sessions in this study were 8 sessions and lasted for four weeks. Every week, two sessions were held and each session lasted for 1 hour. The first session was used to take the writing pretest. In each of the following 6 sessions, one of the predesigned instructional posts and models were presented and taught to the participants. The last session was

used to take the writing posttest. In order to teach process analysis writing, the researcher used Model-Practice-Reflect instructional cycle. Both experimental groups in this study received the same instructional materials and models, the only difference was in the type of the M-learning context of the groups. The first experimental group received the instruction in common WhatsApp group in which the participants experienced having online interaction with their peers and teacher, and the second experimental group received the instruction in restricted WhatsApp group in which the participants had no online interaction with their peers and teacher.

The instructional material used in the present study was extracted from the third unit of the book titled as *Advanced Writing*, written by Hemmati and Khodabandeh (2017). In order to provide proper instructional materials and exercises for the participants in both experimental groups, the researcher took two steps. First, she made 6 separate written instructional posts. The instructional posts respectively contained the definition and short explanations of what process analysis paragraph is, detailed explanation of two kinds of process writing with related examples for each kind, explanations of different parts of process analysis paragraph which are a topic sentence, supporting sentences and a concluding sentence, examples of suitable transition words and phrases for a process paragraph, use of imperative and passive verbs in process paragraphs and finally a detailed and rich chart for a piece of process paragraph rubric. Second, she made some other written posts which were exercises related to the predesigned instructional posts. The exercises were also extracted from the ones cited in the same book.

The researcher made a common WhatsApp group as the first experimental group, and added 34 of the homogeneous participants. The participants were required to be online in common WhatsApp group at the predetermined time on Sundays and Tuesdays for receiving their instruction. Having all the participants online, the researcher who was also the teacher in both experimental groups shared the predesigned instructional posts and models with the participants. The participants were required to read the presented model carefully. In addition, participants were supposed to interact with each other and their teacher by sharing their ideas or information about the instructional material and discuss the presented model in the group. Therefore, in this group the participants experienced having online interactions with each other and their teacher, and did not experience a teacher centered context. Regarding the Model-Practice-Reflect instructional cycle, after presentation of the predesigned model the participants were supposed to practice and follow the model, write a piece of paragraph writing and share it in the common WhatsApp group. They had also the chance to pose their questions if there was any and the teacher provided complete answer to their questions in the group. As the last step the teacher asked participants in order to give feedback on each other's paragraph writings and share their ideas, the teacher also helped the participants by her feedback in the WhatsApp group. The participants also interacted with each other to share their feedback and idea about each other's writings.

With respect to the other experimental group named as restricted WhatsApp group, the researcher made a restricted WhatsApp group and added the other 34 of the homogeneous participants. The participants in this group were also required to get online at predetermined time on Mondays and Wednesdays in order to receive their instruction. The teacher took the same steps for sharing and presenting the instructional posts and models as the common WhatsApp group. The participants were supposed to read the presented model carefully by themselves. While, in contrast to the common WhatsApp group, the participants in this group had no chance of interacting with each other and their teacher by sharing their ideas, information and questions. The restricted WhatsApp group was a completely teacher-centered virtual class lacking the participants' online interaction and participation. In order to follow the Model-Practice-Reflect instructional cycle, after presentation of pre-designed model the participants in this group were also required to practice and follow the model, write a piece of paragraph writing and give it to their teacher. Since this experimental group was designed as a restricted group in which the only active member was the teacher, participants had no chance to send messages in the group, ask questions and present their writings. Therefore, the participants had to send the paper form of their writings to their teacher, while their chance of interacting and communicating with their teacher was completely restricted. They had no chance and allowance to communicate or interact with their teacher for asking questions or sharing ideas. After receiving the writing papers, the teacher wrote her feedback on the papers and gave them back to the participants, while she had no interaction with them and giving back their papers while no interaction and communication happened among neither the participants nor the teacher in a context beyond restricted WhatsApp group. As the last procedure of this study, the writing posttest was taken from all groups of the participants in order to evaluate their writing ability with a focus on process analysis type of paragraph writing after the completion of the treatment sessions.

Data Analysis

The data collected in this study were then submitted to data analysis by the use of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 24 software. As the nature of the present study was quantitative, the data were analyzed via the employment of a series of paired and independent samples *t*-tests and assumptions of normality. The descriptive data consisting of the mean, the standard deviations and the standard error of means were used to compare the EFL learners' writing ability before the treatment to the one after the treatment. Moreover, test normality of data using both graphical and numerical methods was run. At last, a series of paired and independent samples *t*-tests were used for inferential statistics. In order to realize how effective the treatment was, the mean scores of the posttest of the two experimental groups were compared with those of the pretest and also the mean scores on the posttest of the two groups were compared with each other.

Results

Testing Normality of Data

The normality of data was established via employment of the Shapiro-Wilk test, as it is more appropriate for small sample sizes (< 50 samples). In this test, if significance level (sig) is greater than the error value 0.05, the data normality is considered as normal. Since the significance level (sig) of the pretest and post-test scores of the groups was greater than the error value 0.05 ($p > 0.05$) it was claimed that the assumption of normality was retained.

Inter-rater Reliability; Pretest and Posttest of Writing

The participants' performance on the writing pretest and posttest were rated by two raters. Such being the case, Pearson correlations were run to probe their inter-rater reliability. Based on the results, it was concluded that there were significant agreements between the two raters on the pretest ($r(118) = .871$ representing a large effect size, $p < .05$) and posttest ($r(118) = .837$ representing a large effect size, $p < .05$). During rating the writings, the raters focused on the appropriateness of process writing with the specific attention given to transition words and phrases as well as the passive verbs as two main features of such writings. As a result, they only rated the proper use of these components.

Descriptive Statistics: The Writing Pretest

Table 1 displays the descriptive statistics for the two groups on the writing pretest.

Table 1.
Descriptive Statistics for the Writing Pretest

Groups	N	M	SD	SEM
WhatsApp Group	34	9.09	2.06	0.66
Restricted WhatsApp Group	34	9.50	1.98	0.43

The results indicated that the common WhatsApp group ($M = 9.09$, $SD = 2.06$) and Restricted WhatsApp group ($M = 9.50$, $SD = 1.98$) group had almost the same means on the writing pretest.

The table showed that the groups were homogenous at the pretest stage. Therefore, before administration of the treatment sessions, the groups were homogenous in terms of their writing ability with a focus on process analysis paragraph.

Table 2 displays the main results of Independent Sample t-test.

Table 2.
Results of Independent Samples *t*-test for the Writing Pretest

Restricted Group vs. Group	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	F	Sig.	<i>t</i>	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	MD	SED	Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	4.908	0.029	1.008	66	0.42	0.623	0.626	-0.542	2.009
Equal variances not assumed			1.008	56.3	0.426	0.623	0.626	-0.548	2.015

Table 2 provides the means of the groups' pretest analyzed through the independent samples *t*-test before the treatment in terms of number of participants, means, standard deviations, standard error, lower and upper bounds. As shown in Table 2, since observed *t* (1.008) with DF = 66 is less than the critical *t* (1.96), the difference between the groups was not significant at writing pretest stage ($p < 0.05$). Thus, it can be claimed that the two groups were homogenous in terms of their writing ability with a focus on process analysis paragraph prior to the treatment sessions.

For further clarity, a sample of the writing pretest of one of the participants in each group is presented below. The correct transition words and phrases, passive verbs have been italicized, while the wrong ones have been underlined.

18- year old participant from common WhatsApp Group:

I think for going to university, we should study very well. *Also*, our self-confidence should be good. We register in Sazmane Sanjesh and choose favorite major. *Some months after this*, we go to Konkoor exam. Sanjesh will check our performance and decide which university for us. *Then* we go to that university and register our name. The first of Mehr the classes start and we go to participate in them.

Descriptive Statistics: The Writing Posttest

Table 3 displays the descriptive statistics for the two groups on the writing posttest.

Table 3.
Descriptive Statistics for the Writing Posttest

Groups	N	M	SD	SEM
WhatsApp Group	34	14.00	2.94	0.39
Restricted WhatsApp Group	34	10.88	2.64	0.38

The results indicated that the common WhatsApp group ($M = 14.00$, $SD = 2.94$) had higher mean than the Restricted WhatsApp group ($M = 10.88$, $SD = 2.64$) on the writing posttest.

Table 4 displays the main results of Independent Sample t -test.

Table 4.
Independent Samples t -test for the Posttest

Restricted Group vs. Group	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t -test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	MD	SED	Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	0.5	0.58	5.54	66	0.0	2.57	0.65	1.7	3.9
Equal variances not assumed			5.54	65.8	0.0	2.57	0.65	1.7	3.9

In order to find out whether the difference among the performances of the two experimental groups in posttest was statistically significant, another independent samples t -test was applied. Table 4 indicates that the observed t (5.544) with $DF = 66$ was greater than the Critical t (1.96). Thus, the common WhatsApp group ($M = 14.00501$) significantly outperformed the Restricted WhatsApp group ($M = 10.88927$). The mean difference between the common WhatsApp group and Restricted WhatsApp group was higher than the significance level ($p < .05$) on the writing posttest.

To sum up, based on the results shown in Table 1 and 3, the mean score of common WhatsApp group had substantial growth on the posttest in comparison with the pretest. Moreover, the mean score of Restricted WhatsApp group had an increase in the posttest in comparison with the pretest, but the growth was not statistically significant.

Although the mean score of Restricted WhatsApp group was greater than the mean score of common WhatsApp group in the pretest stage, the mean score of common WhatsApp group was significantly greater than the mean score of Restricted WhatsApp group in the posttest stage.

For further clarity, a sample of the writing posttest of one of the participants in each group is presented below. The correct transition words and phrases, passive verbs have been italicized, while the wrong ones have been underlined.

18- year old participant from common WhatsApp Group:

In order to go to choose the major, *first of all*, our knowledge *should be improved*. *In addition*, all the negative senses such as fear, anxiety, and worrying *should be removed* from us. *As the first step*, we must register our names in Sazmane Sanjesh Organization. *After that*, we must take part in Konoor exam. *What comes next* is choosing the majors based on our interest. The favorite majors *should be selected* in the Sanjesh website. *Finally*, Sanjesh will choose the best students for each university.

Discussion

Considering the research question, the results and findings of the present study indicated that the participants in the common WhatsApp group had better performance and higher mean on the writing posttest in comparison to the pretest. Therefore, common WhatsApp group by having online interaction between the participants and the teacher had significantly positive impact on enhancing the participants' writing ability in terms of process analysis paragraph. The results and findings of this study manifested that performance of the participants in the restricted WhatsApp group on the posttest was not significantly better than their performance on the pretest. Consequently, the restricted WhatsApp group by lacking online interaction between the participants and the teacher had no significant positive impact on enhancing the participants' writing ability in terms of process analysis paragraph.

The results and findings of this study were indicative of the significant difference between performance of the two experimental groups on the posttest. The results showed the significant outperformance of the common WhatsApp group on the posttest. Therefore, there was a significant difference between the impacts of the common WhatsApp group having online interaction and the restricted WhatsApp group lacking online interaction on enhancing the participants' writing ability in terms of process analysis paragraph.

It can be argued that the WhatsApp social network used in the teaching of process analysis paragraph in our context was significantly effective for the participants in the common WhatsApp group and non-significantly effective for the participants in the restricted WhatsApp group. In this regard, the significant performance of the participants in the common WhatsApp group can be explained by the online interactions and communications occurred and observed between the teacher and the participants and also among the participants themselves. The participants of the common WhatsApp group had online interaction with their teacher and other participants, shared their ideas, and presented lots of responses and feedback. In sum, the better performance of the participants in common WhatsApp group can be attributed to the close classroom atmosphere created through their online interactions which made them feel more relaxed, not considering their teacher as the sole authority and being active during the teaching-learning process. The participants' more opportunity to participate and interact with their teacher and their peers was the main reason for their improvement in their writing ability in terms of process analy-

sis paragraph. According to Lee (2011), this kind of teacher-learner interaction helps the process of learning and classroom discourse, because interaction between the teacher and learners facilitates learning for learners and makes the material easier for them to be understood. The participants' interactions in the common WhatsApp group and their willingness to communicate with each other and their teacher, reminds us of Warschauer's (2000) statement. He stated that interaction in online settings motivates students because they do not have concerns about their errors which occurs in the T-learning contexts. Regarding the present study, it can be claimed that due to the more participation, communication and interaction of the participants in the common WhatsApp group, they had the sufficient and proper opportunity in order to take part in their learning process and learn better in comparison to the participants in the restricted WhatsApp group. This is proper interaction that provides the opportunity for learners to share their ideas, thoughts, comments and feelings with their teacher and peers during the learning time (Yanfen & Yuqin, 2010). Thomas (2013) believes that since effective learning is the result of proper interaction between teachers and learners, it can be claimed to be the integral component of learning. The findings of the present study in terms of the positive impact of the participants' interaction in the common WhatsApp group as one of the types of social networks in M-learning context on learners' improvement writing ability in terms of process analysis paragraph, correlated with the findings of the studies such as Beer and Burrows, (2007); Ferdig (2007); Gaudeul and Peroni, (2010); Ghobadi and Taki, (2018); Heidari et al., (2018); Khoshnoud and Karbalaei (2014); Lee (2011).

On the contrary, the participants' performance on the writing posttest in the restricted WhatsApp group was not significantly improved in comparison to the writing pretest, as well as the performance of the common WhatsApp group on the posttest. The weak performance of the participants in the restricted WhatsApp group and their lack of improvement in writing ability in terms of process analysis paragraph can be explained due to some factors such as lack of online interaction, the teacher being the sole authority and active member in the group and the participants' passive role in their learning process.

Conclusion

The present study was conducted in order to investigate and compare the impact of two different social networks namely common WhatsApp Group having interaction and restricted WhatsApp group lacking interaction in M-learning contexts on enhancing EFL learners' writing ability in terms of process analysis. The findings of this study were quite consistent with the results of the reviewed studies. With regard to the findings and results of the present study it was concluded that the participants' writing ability in terms of process analysis paragraph was significantly enhanced in the common WhatsApp group. Regarding the comparison of the two experimental groups, the present study manifested that for enhancing the participants' writing ability in terms of process analysis,

the common WhatsApp group was significantly beneficial and efficient in comparison to the restricted WhatsApp group.

Considering the participants' participation in the learning process and their final performance, it was concluded that use of common WhatsApp as one of the types of social networks in M-learning context and Ed Tech has been so attractive and beneficial for the participants. The participants had online communication and interaction in a friendly atmosphere, experienced overcoming the restrictions of traditional learning contexts, were motivated, attracted and satisfied with their learning context. Therefore, it was concluded that having interaction in new learning contexts such as social media, social networks, M-learning context and etc. have significant positive impact on enhancing the second/foreign language learning process in general and writing skill in particular. The findings of the present study also confirmed Adloo and Aghajani's (2018) findings who confirmed that social networks such as WhatsApp are mobile applications that significantly help students in developing their writing and vocabulary word choice in their writing. Social networks allow learners to interact and discuss with other learners, give feedback and comment on the writing activities either synchronous or asynchronously. Using social networks as a medium for language learning actively encourages a cooperative environment, builds positive attitudes, increases motivation and student' participation, and sustains teacher-student relationships (Mazer et al., 2007).

The participants' participation and online interactions indicated that, the use of instructional podcasts could also contribute to making the participants become the main actors of their own learning as they are encouraged to become independent and motivated learners who are able to regulate their own learning pace and identify their weaknesses. Therefore, with regard to the particular features of M-learning context and the level of participants' participation in learning process it was concluded that M-learning contexts created by social networks such as WhatsApp can lead participants toward becoming more independent in their language learning process, and managing their own learning time, place and strategy.

As the result of comparison between the two groups of the participants after the completion of treatment and the posttest indicated, it was concluded that, since more online interaction took place in the common WhatsApp group, the participants were more engaged and active in their own learning process. The findings of the groups' comparison provided evidences in order to confirm the statements regarding the criticality of interaction in successful language learning. According to Curtis and Lawson (2001), interaction has a significant role in increasing the quality of learning, since better learning entails a collaborative activity between the teacher and students. "The most efficient way of learning is for a student to be really involved in a lesson" (Scrivener, 2014, p.59).

However, like other empirical research studies, the findings of the present study are not definitive. In other words, the findings do not suggest that virtual learning described in this study is the only best way to improve EFL learners' writing ability, but rather it represents a useful construct to be employed by

teachers as a basis for enhancing EFL learners' writing ability, as well as using the benefits of the online interaction in social networks and new learning contexts such as M-learning. One of the criterion based on which the results of a research study will be considered as valuable results, is its practicality. The results and conclusions of the present study are worthy and practical, since the findings can be useful for EFL teachers in terms of creating a learning context in which learners have interactions and communication with each other and their teacher. And, using different forms of social networks and M-learning learning contexts in developing EFL learners' writing ability in general and process analysis paragraph in particular. Considering the significant role of interaction in successful language learning process, the findings of this study can be useful for instructional material designers. The further instructional materials and exercises can be designed to require for more interactions between learners and teacher as well as learners themselves and also to weaken the dominate active role of the teacher in the class.

Regarding the limitations of the study, it is worthy to note that this study also had some limitations one of which was the participants' gender. In addition, due to some problems about filtering out some of the mobile applications, the type of mobile application used in this study was one of the other limitations. Also the present study had some delimitations namely the participants' language level, the type of paragraph writing, the instructional materials.

Due to the fact that no research study is exhaustive in itself, more research studies are necessary in order to verify, confirm, validate and expand the results of a research study. Consequently, as the first suggestion for further research, replication of the present study is mentioned. The same basic design could also be employed for EFL learners of other languages. In further research studies the impact and role of other types of Ed Techs and social networks can be investigated on improving EFL learners' writing ability. In addition, further studies can be focused on other types of paragraph writing such as narrative, cause and effect and descriptive paragraph or even other levels of language learning such as grammar or vocabulary learning. Comparing the impact of two different social networks namely common WhatsApp group and restricted WhatsApp group on improving EFL learners' writing ability in terms of process analysis paragraph was the novel aspect of this study. Therefore, the significant positive performance of common WhatsApp group in comparison to restricted WhatsApp group requires more investigation in order to find out all of the possible and logical reasons and factors behind this finding. It is hoped that this research can promote and inspire more researches on Ed Techs, M-learning contexts and EFL learners' writing skill.

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Language Teachers' Perception of an ELT Program: The Case of Iranian English Reform Developed for Secondary Schools

Research Article

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Received: 2020-04-11 | Revised (2): 2020-06-06 | Accepted: 2020-06-10

Abstract

The present study investigated the characteristics of the new ELT program in Iran from the perspective of its most direct implementers both qualitatively and quantitatively. To this end, 19 teachers implementing the new program were interviewed to describe the newly introduced change through their perception of its attributes such as its complexity, explicitness and practicality. After conducting content analysis on the transcribed interviews, the emerged themes were used to survey 256 lower and higher secondary teachers by means of a 5-point Likert-type

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questionnaire across the nation. The results show that, although the program implementers felt more satisfied with the new program due to the perceived advantages of the change over the previous one, the lack of crucial factors such as giving due attention to the oral skills, adjustability of the change to the needs of a wide range of users, training teachers to improve their skills in making use of methods and techniques compatible with the reality of local language classrooms replete with logistical shortcomings, permeation of change to different layers of the educational system and mobilizing all influential subsystems for putting the change into practice has handicapped the effective fulfilment of the program's objectives from teachers' eyes.

Keywords: change attributes, communicative language teaching approach, ELT change program, secondary education, program evaluation

Introduction

The evolving needs of society in science technology, education, economy, etc., are considered to be the source of changes in English Language Teaching (ELT) programs across the world. However, while the changes in approach and methods intended by a language education reform may be enthusiastically accepted and implemented in one setting, it is likely that the same changes are harshly rejected in other contexts; therefore, it is important to identify the reasons of its endorsement in some settings and its rejection in others (Stoller, 1994). As Markee (1997) notes, although the complexity, feasibility, and originality of change are specified as concerns at early stages of curriculum development, it is not possible to appreciate their significance and observe their reflection in practice at the planning phase as their importance and impact may emerge only after the program has been put into practice. In fact, one of the important yardsticks to evaluate the success of innovation management is related to the attributes of an innovation as perceived by its users; thus, translating the reform into these characteristics of change as perceived by its users after the implementation phase has been recommended in the literature (Henrichsen, 1989). According to Waters (2013), the fate of the change and the success of its diffusion can be anticipated by considering the status of these attributes in users' eyes.

After long years of practicing grammar-translation and reading-based methods of language teaching (Foroozandeh & Foroozani, 2015), finally in response to the Fundamental Reform Document of Education issued in 2012, the Iranian Ministry of Education provided the Document of National Curriculum to guide the process of renewing the curriculum in all subject fields including language education. The Organization of Educational Research and Planning of the ministry responsible for conducting the required research and planning for actualizing this reform delegated the responsibility of reproducing the materials and providing the means of language education reform to the Foreign Language Department of Curriculum Development Center (CDC).

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) was formally announced to be the adopted approach in the new curriculum of language education (Janfeshan & Nosrati, 2014; Kheirabadi & Alavi Moghaddam, 2014) which was supposed to start from the lower secondary school at 7th grade, and continue to the last year of upper secondary grade, i.e., 12th grade. Diminishing the effect of long years of practicing the traditional methods of language teaching which had primarily focused on reading texts with the aim of developing the vocabulary and grammar knowledge of students with minimal or no attention to improving their oral skills and their communicative language ability required serious undertakings on the part of the change managers and implementers. The first requirement of this rebuilding, undoubtedly, would have been the enhancement of motivation and the provision of robust training to teachers who, as the result of adopting traditional ways of language teaching for years, were deemed to have little experience with the recent trends and methods of language education vital for implementing a communicative approach.

While many of the local evaluations carried out so far have exclusively focused on evaluating the program's textbooks (e.g., Ahour et al., 2014; Jamalvandi, 2014; Janfeshan & Nosrati, 2014; Akbari & Pourabbas, 2015; Salehi & Amini, 2015; Toriki & Chalak, 2017; Gholami Pasand & Ghasemi, 2018), constriction of evaluation to only one component of the system of education in isolation and without considering other coexisting elements promotes tunnel vision approach in assessing a program which cannot be adequately fruitful. On the other hand, studies which investigated other aspects of the program have identified more fundamental sources of imperfections in this reform. Based on these studies, factors such as inadequate instructional time (Davari & Aghagolzadeh, 2015); poor self-confidence of teachers implementing the newly introduced ELT program primarily due to their inadequate language proficiency and uncertainty about the new method, practicing teacher-fronted instruction to increase the coverage of content and to enhance the students' success in the University Entrance Examination (UEE), (Barabadi & Razmjoo, 2015; Safari & Sahragard, 2015), inadequate physical resources and not cultivating the culture of skill-based language education in all of the stakeholders (Asadi et al., 2016), and students' false expectations of language teaching and erroneous beliefs about language learning (Akbari, 2015; Safari & Rashidi, 2015b) are some potential sources of the problem impeding the proper language teaching and learning in Iran even after the introduction of communicative language teaching.

The present study was an effort to explore the challenges faced by the most direct implementers of the change in the real condition of the language classes. By being informed of the meaning of this reform in teachers' view, based on a well-researched framework, the imperfections for subsequent revisions can be identified more comprehensively and tangibly to be considered in the future revisions of the program by governmental bodies, policy makers and CDC. Doing so facilitates successful implementation of the program whose final outcome would be significant promotion in Iranian students' effective communica-

tion in real-life situations and potential improvement in their life-long language learning.

Review of literature

The attributes for investigating the nature of change from the users' perspectives were initially introduced by Rogers and Shoemaker (1971) and later modified by Rogers (1983). They are referred to as 'relative advantage', 'observability', 'trialability', 'complexity' and 'comparability'. While, the first three are thought to have positive correlation with the diffusion of change, complexity is associated with negative correlation. The relationship of compatibility with the adoption of the change is dependent on the nature of the innovation and its congruence with the previous perspectives, needs, beliefs and values (Waters, 2009). According to Waters (2009), the list remained the same in more recent publication of Rodgers except for the addition of a less frequently mentioned attribute called re-invention which refers to the potential of the innovation to be modified by users in the process of its implementation. Contrary to the tradition, Stoller (1994) assumes a straightforward positive or negative relationship between the adoption of change and the six attributes of 'compatibility', 'complexity', 'explicitness', 'flexibility', 'visibility' and 'originality'. The 'middle range' of this set of attributes is thought to be in positive correlation with the adoption of change (Murray & Christison, 2012).

Not specifically focused on ELT, OECD, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, conducted a large scale comparative research on more than 70000 leaders and teachers of state middle schools in 23 countries across the world. The results of this study which targeted the insights of these groups of stakeholders in state schools revealed that "teachers' perceptions of how teaching and learning could be improved were consistent with the six parameters outlined in Stoller's zone of innovation (Murray & Christison, 2012, p. 66). The most common predicament hindering teachers from developing themselves professionally, according to Murray and Christison (2012), was being overloaded with work assignment and the rigidity of the activities designed for professional development with almost no variation in implementation to make them more appropriate based on individuals' needs and schedule.

According to Kiely (2012), the change should be analyzed with regard to its 'compatibility', 'complexity', 'trialability', and its 'relative advantage' and the results should be juxtaposed and assessed against the policies in place. The result of this analysis provides a basis for forming an argument in favor of or against the success of the program which can guide the change managers to put the change on the right track. Consistent with Kelly (1980), Kennedy (1988), emphasizing the vitality of the users' initial dissatisfaction with the current practices, explains the survival of a forthcoming change program in terms of its perceived 'feasibility', 'relevance' and 'acceptability' from the point of view of its potential adopters. Holding effective teacher training services and/or merging the roles of implementers and the material developers through recruiting

teachers as material developers have been suggested by Kennedy as the strategies to diminish the potential mismatches of teachers' and change managers' perception of the aforementioned characteristics. Markee (1997), also, adopted a number of the change characteristics in analyzing the most prominent language innovations such as 'task-based language teaching' or 'the notional-functional syllabus'.

Henrichsen (1989), on the other hand, proposed his own model, Hybrid Model, in examining the diffusion of a revolutionary ELT project in Japan called ELEC. In evaluating the success of ELEC while adding some features to the original list proposed by Rodgers (1983), Henrichsen introduced his own set of attributes and incorporated them into the model through a component called *factors within the innovation itself*. This component introduces one of the most comprehensive list of the attributes almost aggregating all of the key characteristics and aspects proposed by other researchers. This set of change attributes, as exploited in this study, includes 'originality', 'complexity', 'explicitness', 'relative advantage', 'observability', 'status', 'form', 'flexibility' / 'adaptability', 'primacy', and 'practicality'. As Henrichsen (1989) notes the perceived attribute by its adopters is much more crucial in directing the fate of the change than the objective attributes evaluated by an outsider. As these features constitute the focus of the present study in analyzing change from the participant teachers' perspective, they are briefly introduced below.

Originality of the innovation is defined as the extent to which an innovation is original. It is argued that excessive originality which means lack of a current model to support the proposed change can negatively influence the adoption of the change program. In other words, high degree of originality may lead to low degree of correspondence between the innovation and the intended user system and low acceptance of innovation by its potential adopters.

Complexity is defined in terms of the number of people who are expected to be involved in the innovation as well as the amount of change that is assumed to be made to a system. Complexity can be as well considered as the amount of time, energy and money that developing the skills and understanding for implementing the change properly imposes on its users. Complex changes in the classroom behavior of teachers, as confirmed by Henrichsen, are difficult to be achieved and thus, unlikely to happen.

Explicitness refers not only to the clarity of innovation's description but also the clarity of its rationale, philosophy, goals and objectives. Lack of clarity brings about user confusion and frustration; enhancing the explicitness, on the other hand, increases the likelihood of its adoption and implementation. Relative advantage of the innovation compared to the one that it supersedes is another factor discussed in this component of the model. This feature of change can "be measured in terms of economics, social prestige, convenience, and/or user satisfaction" (Henrichsen, 1989, p.84).

Observability deals with the extent to which the advantages of the innovation are visible to the users. It seems reasonable that when the benefits of an

innovation are evident to its potential users, the rate and likelihood of its adoption enhances. Thus, concrete innovations have the advantage of being appreciated more readily compared with abstract ones.

Status of the innovation as a powerful influencing factor affecting the change's adoption is actualized by the degree of attention attracted to a given innovation by its users due to the social level or prestige that is associated with it. Practicality, as a frequently overlooked factor according to Henrichsen, concentrates on the correspondence between the requirements of implementing the innovation and the capacity of the intended user system for its actualization; it includes issues such as the rationality of the expectations for users, the presence of aids for planning the instruction, and the adequacy of the resource material.

Flexibility/Adaptability deals with the adjustability and openness of the innovation to fit the particular situation of a wide range of users. Primacy puts emphasis on the importance of "the relative timing of an innovation" (p.85); being the first one is a merit that attracts the attention and resources to itself more than similar undertakings following it. Thus, former adopted practices can act as an obstacle to the promotion of an innovation particularly in societies that loyalty to tradition matters. Form of the innovation has been overlooked in many diffusion-of-innovation models. Those innovations which finally lead to publishable texts have a higher chance of adoption and survival than those which remain in the form of instructional philosophy. The reason in addition to the strong influence of materials on practice, according to Henrichsen, should be sought in the activities of the publishers to sell their products via direct visits to schools, attending in book exhibits and conferences, financing workshops and inviting famous authorities for lecturing about the philosophies behind the texts.

With this introduction, at the first year of the completion of the new ELT program's implementation in all grades of secondary schools of Iran, i.e., after six years of its implementation initiation, the researchers tried to find out the meaning of the new ELT education change as perceived by its most direct implementers. Although this investigation is considered necessary and has been recommended in the literature (Henrichsen, 1989; Kelly, 1980; Kennedy, 1988; Kiely, 2012; Murray & Christison, 2012; Waters, 2013), to the best of the researchers' knowledge, previous studies focused on this program have not dealt with finding out the meaning of this change in terms of the features of well-researched framework primarily developed to examine an educational reform from its adopters' views. However, according to Kiely (2012), change context should be analyzed with regard to these attributes. Moreover, researchers like Saad Orafi (2013) specified the perceived nature of innovation by teachers as the determinant of acceptability of an innovation. The result of this investigation provides a basis for forming an argument in favor of or against the success of the program in terms of these attributes.

Methodology

Participants

The study reported here is a part of a more comprehensive one assessing the new language program in Iran based on the Hybrid Model developed by Henrichsen (1989). Since this model has different constituents in addition to the users' perceived characteristics of the innovation, which make the interviews lengthy and time consuming, it was not easy to find and convince suitable informants to take part in the study. Therefore, Convenience sampling was exploited to collect both teachers' and head teachers' perspectives of different aspects of the program's implementation. The participant teachers were invited to participate in this investigation through their colleagues or friends and in this way, almost all of them accepted to devote their time to this investigation.

Out of 31 provinces in the country, these language teachers from six different provinces took part in the qualitative phase of this investigation. Six of these language teachers were from Tehran (Tehran, Baharestan, Shahriyar and Akbar abad), five from Fars (Ardakan and Fasa), three from Arak (Khomeinshahr), two from Isfahan (Isfahan), two from Hormozgan (Kish), and one from Khozestan (Shooshtar). Besides, the interviewed teachers were from various kinds of schools such as state, non-state and magnate schools as well as college of art, so that the voice of different range of direct implementers of the reform in terms of a set of innovation characteristics can be heard.

The interviewees were 19 teachers and head teachers, 7 males and 12 females, BA and MA holders with the age range of 25-50 and professional experience of 3 to 30 years. The number of teachers who were interviewed was decided based on data saturation, that is, the point at which no additional themes could be extracted from the data. This point was achieved by interviewing the first 13-14 teachers in the present study. However, the data collection was continued to include further participants to decrease the subjectivity of the perceived feeling of saturation by the researcher.

In the quantitative phase of the study, lower and upper secondary teachers who teach across the nation, were asked to evaluate the program based on their perceptions of the change in terms of the more detailed and concrete aspects of the reform emerged out of the initial qualitative phase of the study. The data was gathered from 256 of these teachers in 2019-2020. Table 1 presents part of biographical and professional information of this group of teachers.

Table 1.

Biographical and Professional Information of Respondents to the Survey

Age	Gender		Grade		Education			Years of Experience			
24-59	Female	Male	upper secondary teachers	lower secondary teachers	B.A	M.A	Ph. D	20 or more	11-20	4-10	1-3
	66%	34%	66%	34%	53.1%	42.6%	3.9%	52.3	33.6%	7.8%	6.3%

Procedures of Data Collection and Analysis

The data used in this study were collected in two subsequent qualitative and quantitative phases. To avoid using general and vague terms in the survey, the researchers, at the first place, arranged interviews with a group of teachers. This policy helped the researchers to make these attributes more concrete and pertinent to teachers' concerns, which is deemed to increase the accuracy of the assessment. Thus, a framework for the semi-structured interview was developed which included specific questions, according to Hybrid Model, to be asked from the participant teachers about each change attribute. (see the Appendix). The main function of making the interviews in addition to triangulate the data, was to develop a survey depicting the aspects of the change characteristics which are most relevant to and meaningful for Iranian language teachers in this program.

The interviews were audio recorded for transcription. The transcribed data with teachers were analyzed by making use of the constant comparative method. In the first phase of analysis, the transcribed text was segmented into meaningful chunks; the important and relevant segments were labeled using short phrases which showed the underlying concept of the segments (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). The findings of this phase were then transferred into tables with three columns; the first column specified for the codes given to the participants, the second one for the meaningful segments of the transcribed data and the third one for the underlying concepts of those segments. In the next phase, by removing the codes' overlap, the integrated codes were transformed into themes.

The obtained themes were subsequently used in developing a Likert-type questionnaire to investigate the issue and examine the accuracy and generalizability of the results in a larger population of teachers. An ELT expert in testing and evaluation, finally checked the items for clarity, as well as face and content validity. At this phase several items were added to the questionnaire. Besides, as the results of incorporating the expert's comments as well as the familiarity of the researchers with the context, some modifications were made in wordings of some of the items to make them as transparent as possible for teachers.

Among the introduced change attributes, investigating the *primacy* and *form* of the change were not included in the qualitative phase of the study; the *form* is discussed based on the knowledge of the researchers of this change. One item, however, was added to the quantitative questionnaire to survey teachers' subjective perception of the primacy of the reform which, as was previously noted, is deemed to be more crucial than the objective primacy (Henrichsen, 1989).

Results

In this section first the results of the interviews concerning different attributes of the present reform are presented in Table 2. The typical comments of the

interviewees are also provided in Table 3 to further illustrate the obtained themes of Table 2. To follow the principle of anonymity the ID of T1-T19 have been assigned to the interviewees in this table. These findings have formed the basis of developing the items of the Likert-type questionnaire (see Table 4). To show the correspondence of the items of the survey with the emerged themes, the number of the relevant item/items of the survey in Table 4 is provided in front of the individual themes derived from interviews in Table 2.

Table 2.

Summary of the Major Themes based on the Analysis of Interviews based on the Interviews

Innovation Characteristics	The Major Themes	The corresponding items in the questionnaire
Originality	Considering the program as an adaptation of the communicative approach	1,2,3
	Unacceptability of the dominance of local culture in the series	4
	Limited effectiveness of the program due to not adequately dealing with oral skills	3, 5
Complexity	Demanding more capability of teachers both in terms of language proficiency requirements and implementation of unfamiliar classroom management	6, 7, 8
	The simultaneous increase and decrease in the complexity of the change due to the logistical imperfections	9
Explicitness	The lack of explicitness of specific, domestic goals	10, 11
	lack of transparency of the techniques and strategies for implementing the program	12
Relative Advantage	Improving students' communicative ability	13
	More effective teaching of vocabulary items	14
	Students' weaker structural knowledge compared to past	15
	Reduced self-confidence of weaker students and t increased pressure and stress on students and teachers	16, 17
	Teachers' increased motivation to improve themselves professionally	18
	Developing textbooks which are relatively more consistent with students' taste	19
Status	Considering an edge for the authentic texts and foreign publishers	20, 21, 22, 23
	Winning and losing credence because of inclusion of four language skills and being compared with prestigious international textbooks simultaneously	24
	Lower quality of series compared to domestically-developed supplementary sources in teachers' eyes.	25
	Series' losing status in teachers' view due to their language errors	26
	The slight observable growth in students' proficiency	27
Observability Flexibility	The lack of flexibility in the program because of its single version books for a wide range of contexts	28, 29
	leniency in scoring to compensate for its lack of flexibility	30
Practicality	The unlikelihood of achieving the objectives of the course due to logistical shortcomings	31, 32, 33
Primacy		34

Table 3.
A Selection of Interviewees' Typical Comments

Innovation Characteristics	A selection of interviewees' typical comments
Originality	<p>The interviewees frequently mentioned the term “communicative approach” in describing the new language program.</p> <p>I think that the weakness [of the series] is [related to the fact] that English language involves another culture and then we want to teach the language with our own culture (T15).</p> <p>In each lesson we have a main theme and two conversations with two different topics which are mainly focused on grammar [...]. We do not see anything of speaking and conversation (T7).</p>
Complexity	<p>How can I change myself when I cannot talk [in English]? (T10)</p> <p>Textbooks have changed to a great extent and exactly this drastic shift and widespread change are the main source of confusion among teachers (T15).</p> <p>When I see that it is now that the school bell rings and I did not finish the lesson so I have to keep teaching fast and pass (T10).</p> <p>They have not changed a lot, but it is better; the fact that we left the black and white books and went for pictorial books, will attract students more (T7).</p>
Explicitness	<p>We were told it is communicative and then left to our own devices (T5).</p> <p>Only the objectives are stated, but no strategies and techniques are introduced to achieve those objectives. When the means and facilities are not available, [the stated objectives] would not be more than watch words (T7).</p> <p>So, the objectives are clear but since we need to put so much time to come up with solutions and strategies, all of colleagues decided to make use of the traditional methods (T6).</p>
Relative Advantage	<p>The program concentrates on improving communicative ability (T5).</p> <p>I think that the way it works on vocabularies is good. It first tries to activate the background knowledge of students, then presents images and then comes to sentences (T18).</p> <p>It seems that the grammatical parts are sporadic and there are fewer exercises and thus, it becomes less functional and not fully grasped. They have superficial knowledge from each grammatical structure (T18).</p> <p>The weak students cannot reach the strong students and so get disappointed and become isolated (T9).</p> <p>Students' and teachers' workload and stress have increased (T3).</p> <p>It prevented me from being fossilized (T14).</p> <p>It has opened the doors of discussion [...] It has presented more pleasant and tangible topics for students (T2).</p>
Status	<p>Teachers do not hold a positive view towards the series, anyway they have been written by Iranians (T15).</p> <p>The problem with our books is that [our] texts are translation to English (T12).</p> <p>The status of the course has improved considering the fact that we now require [facilities such as] video projector and power point (T9).</p> <p>When you look at other books like <i>New Interchange</i>, it is simple but attractive and it attracts students. But what about our books? (T16).</p> <p>In most of the cases, we make use of supplementary reading sources which have made up for the weaknesses of textbooks (T1).</p> <p>You come to the upper grades and see that they are full of problems (T16).</p>
Observability	<p>Students, not even at the elementary level because this is too much, but learn the language like a beginner and maybe can communicate better compared to past (T1).</p>
Flexibility	<p>It is not really possible to give the same book to those with higher and those with lower language proficiency (T7).</p> <p>We have 8 grades for testing speaking and listening [skills] and [so] those who cannot receive a good grade from their written examination can raise their score here (T11).</p> <p>These speaking and listening scores can help them pass [the course] (T4).</p>
Practicality	<p>We can put all the objectives into practice except that students can talk. Unless, the facilities are not provided, unless the audio-visual files are not played in the classrooms, the students would not automatically talk (T5).</p> <p>Its 100% can be implemented so that students talk, write some sentences, and learn some expressions but these are not our aims; they may be the aim of those who wrote the books but not ours. The aim is UEE (T6).</p>

In table 4, 33 items of the 5-point Likert-type questionnaire in addition to one open-ended question (item 3) are presented, A stands for the percentage of respondents who either strongly agreed or to some extent agreed and D stands for the percentage of respondents who strongly disagreed or to some extent disagreed with the statements included in the survey. To be more organized in presenting the results, only the interpretable data has been provided in Table 4. Thus, the proportion of those who did not hold definite positive or negative opinion regarding the statements provided in the survey and, thus, selected the third point (neutral option) of the Likert scale, though easily calculable, has no reflection in this table. The trends will be then presented and discussed.

Table 4.
The Items and Results of the Survey

The items of the questionnaire	A	D
1. In essence, the new program follows the communicative approach.	63	24
2. Only some of the aspects of the communicative approach have been adopted by this reform.	60	10
3. In what ways do you consider the new program consistent/inconsistent with CLT?		
4. I feel justified for the limited reflection of the cultural aspects of English speaking countries in the new series.	44.6	26.6
5. The series' activities for dealing with speaking and listening skills are adequate for improving oral skills of students.	19.9	55.1
6. The demands of the changes made in the new program exceed the energy and time of teachers.	78.1	7.8
7. Implementing the intended change and teaching communicatively is difficult for teachers.	52	25.4
8. I feel the need to improve my language proficiency in order to be able to teach the series competently.	30	48
9. The implementation of the intended changes does not fulfill the expectations.	63.7	12.9
10. I am completely justified in the new program's objectives.	49.2	24.2
11. I am completely justified in the philosophy of CLT.	60.1	18
12. I received trainings and practical solutions compatible with the real situation and limitations of the region that I was supposed to teach in.	21	57
13. I believe in the relative success of the students in communicating in English in the new program.	56.6	18
14. In the new program, students' vocabulary knowledge has increased compared with the past.	53.1	25.8
15. I think that students have a weaker grammatical knowledge compared with the past and this can be problematic.	59	17.2
16. The implementation of the new program has had a dampening effect on the less-prepared students' self-confidence.	39.9	29.7
17. The implementation of the new program has created worries and stress among teachers and students.	46.5	23.1
18. The demands of the newly-developed program on me have been instrumental in making me upgrade my language and pedagogical skills.	75.8	9.4
19. The newly-developed textbooks seem relatively attractive to the students.	65.6	12.1
20. I think that it was better to make use of international textbooks used in language institutes instead of domestically-produced textbooks in this program.	70.3	12.2
21. They should have used authentic texts in developing the program's textbooks.	86.7	7
22. Recruiting foreign consultants in the material development project, we would have had better language course books.	80.5	6.2
23. Teachers do not consider the series as effective as language institutes' inter-	76.2	11.3

The items of the questionnaire	A	D
national textbooks and this unconsciously influences teachers' and students' enthusiasm for working on the series.		
24. The new program has improved the status of the formal education's language courses in teachers', students' and families' eyes.	38.7	33.2
25. Compared to the supplementary reading sources, the new series have lower quality and effectiveness.	48.8	16.1
26. As the result of observing language errors in the series, I have lost my trust in their effectiveness and authors' qualifications.	47.3	21.1
27. The students' development of language skills is something that we can see very easily.	48	21.9
28. The newly-developed textbooks have the potential to be adapted to the students' level of proficiency and needs.	42.9	27
29. I think there is a need for developing multiple-version textbooks to provide schools with the suitable textbook compatible with their students' needs and language proficiency level.	64.4	13.2
30. The assessment of oral skills by the teachers is widely used to compensate for the student' deficiencies attributed to the limitations of the new program.	46.4	26.9
31. I feel, with all the imperfections and problems in the current situation, still it is likely to implement the program with the aim of improving students' language skills effectively.	48	18.4
32. I think that due to its failure in providing the logistics such as adequate instructional time, facilities and students' placement in language classrooms, the program is not effective in improving students' language skills.	80.1	6.6
33. The effectiveness of the program has been limited due to the inconsistency of its objectives with the content and structure of UEE and high-stake examinations,	81.7	6.3
34. It was for the first time that I experienced such a transformation in the language education system of the country.	68.3	11.7

The majority (62.5%) of respondents to the open-ended item of the survey (item 3), identified the insufficient inclusion of communicative activities, particularly in oral skills, and not developing the communicative ability of students, either due to the structure of the textbooks or, more importantly, the lack of logistics to promote communicative activities in language classes as the major sources of teachers' dissatisfaction with the localized model followed in developing the series of the program.

Discussion

The findings of the present study demonstrated that teachers consider the implemented model as an adaptation of the original communicative approach which is likely to promote the adoption of the change by the implementers on the account that the reform is new but not too new to be rejected (Rogers, 1983; Stoller, 1994). That is because teachers have been to some extent familiar with this trend of language teaching through the international textbooks and language institutes active nationwide.

Notwithstanding, insufficient inclusion of communicative activities in the program's series and its negative influence on improving students' communicative ability were identified as imperfections in this adaptation process which

have been reported by other local researchers as well (e.g., Akbari, 2015; Safari & Rashidi, 2015b). However, learning content and material which do not live up to the expectations of its adopters has been demonstrated to be one of the crucial factors demotivating high school students for pursuing language learning at schools (Sakai & Kikuchi, 2009, cited in Sahragard & Alimorad, 2013). Providing proper and adequate input for learners, especially in the oral mode by means of effective and adequate listening and speaking activities, has been strongly recommended in different studies. Shumin (2002), for instance, notes that due to the limited opportunities for interaction with native speakers in EFL contexts, 'the need for exposure to many kinds of scenes, situations, and accents as well as voices is particularly critical' (p. 209). Besides, according to Peterson (2001), the time devoted to listening tasks and activities should be increased so that these opportunities turn to be the chief channel of learning the target language in the classroom.

However, in spite of the interviewees' opinions as well as some local researchers like Dahmardeh (2009a) who consider the exclusion of the cultural aspects of English speaking countries from the language education of Iran with a completely different culture compared to the culture of English speaking countries seriously problematic, the results of this study indicates that Iranian language teachers feel convinced for the limited reflection of English culture in the language series developed for the formal education of the country in this program.

Moreover, the change is perceived as complex by the majority of respondents primarily for adjusting their teaching techniques to CLT as well as spending too much time and energy on planning the course's content and activities. According to Henrichsen (1989) if a change is perceived as a complex one by the majority of users, the question to be raised should turn to what has been done to assist teachers to overcome this complexity? Our findings at least hint that there is not general satisfaction with the effectiveness of teacher trainings in creating the essential skills in teachers. However, the negative influence of not being trained adequately by effective in-service teacher trainings on the program's malfunctioning in the implementation phase has been confirmed by numerous studies in the literature (e.g., Baniasad-Azad et al., 2018; Akbari, 2015; Barabadi and Razmjoo, 2015; Davari and Aghagolzadeh, 2015; Safari and Sahragard, 2015; Safari and Rashidi, 2015a, 2015b). Safari and Rashidi (2015a), for instance, identify factors such as the dominant trend of using transmission model of teaching, not making use of the expert educators, passive role of teachers in teacher training of this program as crucial factors in the failure of language teacher education in Iran. However, this investigation did not identify the language proficiency of teachers as an extra burden adding to the complexity felt by teachers. This finding is consistent with the findings of the study conducted by Farhady (2000) in that Iranian English teachers have an acceptable level of language proficiency and knowledge for doing their job effectively.

In addition to holding one-shot, lecture-based teacher trainings in this program (Feroozandeh & Forouzani, 2015) and not empowering teachers with practical solutions compatible with the real situation of the classrooms, as the results of this study revealed, the lack of infrastructures are also likely to impose considerable negative influence on the complexity of the program. As almost two-thirds of participants reported, in such a condition, the implementation of the intended changes did not fulfill the expectations and, thus, the complexity of the change was not fully perceived by many unjustified teachers who due to the logistical imperfections such as insufficient time and high population of multi-level students are primarily more concerned with not falling behind the schedule than fulfilling the communicative objectives of the program.

With regard to the explicitness of the program, the lower level of the clarity of the program in teachers' eyes with regard to the detailed, specific objectives of the local program in comparison to the overall communicative objectives of the program hints to the participants' confusion of the domestic goals as intended by change agents. The program has been only described as communicative in the introduction of series. According to Henrichsen (1989), though, generalities and vagueness if not improved by greater specification would raise the complexity and diminish the potential of the innovation to be implemented successfully. Besides, the lack of explicitness of the program with regard to the recommended methods and techniques in teacher training of this program, as confirmed by the majority of respondents, reveals that this is the very sphere where more explicitness with regard to the proper methods of teaching would definitely obviate teachers' confusion to a great extent and is likely to improve the current practices. Without any doubt, redefining the domestic objectives would be the stepping stone and an indispensable part of devising local methods and techniques.

The results of the questionnaire also attest to the relative advantage of the new program over its traditional predecessors in developing more attractive series compatible with students' needs and taste, making improvement in students' communicative ability and learning vocabulary items, as well as raising teachers' commitment and motivation to improve themselves professionally. Along with these advantages, however, the series did not prove to be effective in teaching grammatical items functionally and effectively to students. This imperfection, as revealed in the interviews, was primarily the direct result of presenting several grammatical structures in each lesson without helping the students to establish them for functional use.

Besides, the increased anxiety and stress of teachers and students as the result of implementing the new program and severe decrease in the self-confidence of students with little experience in language learning are in stark contradiction with the watch words of the local program, i.e., "interactive self-reliance communicative approach" (Kheirabadi & Alavi Moghaddam, 2014). These results hark back to the findings of the qualitative phase of the study. The interviews revealed that the lack of instructional time for covering the content of the series, expanding students' 'knowledge about language' by working on

extra supplementary sources, essential for their success in UEE, as well as the inconveniences in using technology primarily for listening activities which sometimes waste the language classes' time are the main sources of the perceived pressure by teachers. On the other hand, observing irrational, drastic distance between their own language proficiency and relatively strong students has made some weak students disappointed of making progress in learning the language and, as a result, reduces their self-confidence in this communicative program.

The results of this study neither does support nor reject the improved status of the reform in teachers' eyes. The findings of the interviews and survey provide evidence to suggest that the series' concentration on four language skills just like the international textbooks taught in prestigious language institutes has naturally improved the status of the course, and on the other hand, as the textbooks became more similar to the format of such international books they are unconsciously compared to them which not only are free from errors, but also more compatible with teachers' tendency to make use of international publications and authentic sources. Besides, the international textbooks are taught in the relatively more interesting contexts of language institutes. Failing to compete with these advantages, the status of the program is lost to some extent. Teachers' preference for using more appealing international textbooks taught in language institutes has been demonstrated in other studies as well (e.g., Asadi et al. (2016); and Maftoon et al., 2010).

In addition, the majority of teachers believe that the new series have lower quality and effectiveness compared to the locally-produced supplementary reading sources. Some supplementary reading materials, however, have fallen into the trap of showing too much authenticity by taking difficult, inappropriate original texts from the net instead of setting the ground for shaping authentic interactions. Thus, teachers who consider an edge for authentic texts over the simplified, instructional-oriented texts, have more trust in supplementary reading sources and authentic texts, as the results of the survey indicates. In the absence of the possibility for making use of English speaking experts in developing the materials because of both the political and economic issues, exploiting adapted texts by making reference to their sources can be a wise alternative. Besides, removing the language errors from the textbooks in new editions instead of sending the list of the language problems to schools can raise the status of the textbooks in teachers' eyes significantly.

Although, participants reported the suitability of the course books for their students' needs and level of language proficiency, larger proportion of teachers acknowledged the need for developing multiple-version textbooks to provide schools with the suitable versions compatible with their students' needs and language proficiency level. Moreover, making up for the lack of adaptability of the textbooks by adjusting the oral score with students' language proficiency level and abilities further attest to the lack of adjustability of the program as perceived by teachers. In fact, interviewees maintained that the textbooks' content is too low to be effective to be worked on in top schools, which have the

essential capacities in terms of both facilities and qualified teachers for implementing a CLT-based program, and too much for students especially those who do not attend language classes in state schools mostly deprived of the required physical facilities and trained teachers for realizing the intentions and expectations of the change agents. Teachers' belief in the lack of flexibility of the course books particularly for teachers and students of faraway villages has been reported by Asadi et al. (2016) as well. The change, however, needs to be adjustable to special conditions of various users (Henrichsen, 1989). Fullan (2006), in the same line, argues in favor of persistence but flexibility of any course. Asadi et al. (2016) recommends developing multiple versions of language course books based on independent needs analysis of privileged, underprivileged and semi-privileged areas of the country.

Above all, however, the reform is required to be plausible for teachers in the sense that teachers with their experience and knowledge of working with students and schools should consider it as possible and relevant to the reality of their immediate language classes, as policy makers do. In this program, although the respondents held positive view towards the general practicality of pursuing the communicative goals of the program for improving students' language skills with all the logistical deficiencies, their relatively more unanimous evaluation of the more detailed and concrete aspects of the implementation demonstrates clear support for the constraining effect of factors such as limited instructional time for practicing and testing communicative approach as well as incompatible UEE. The destructive influence of the insufficiency of the available time for delivering the course or the vitality of providing educational aids in classroom and facilities for implementing the program have been emphasized by other researchers assessing the program as well (e.g., Tabatabaei and Pourakbari, 2012; Davari & Aghagolzadeh, 2015).

However, it should be noted that teachers' perception of the feasibility of implementing CLT in a given context is vital in anticipating the fate of the change's institutionalization (Li, 1998; Markee, 1997). According to Vandenberghe (1984), teachers make rapid judgements of the practicality of the program relatively early at the implementation stage and based on the minimal experiences that they have with it. As Vandenberghe (1984) argues, the perceived practicality of an educational change would influence the extent to which teachers make efforts to modify and improve the classroom practice by incorporating the intended changes to their teaching acts and behaviors. When teachers find the intended changes proposed by reformers in conflict with the reality of their classrooms, they switch back to their traditional, accustomed methods and approaches of teaching (Chan, 2002). Specifically, factors such as lack of required facilities which has been demonstrated to have a negative influence on students' motivation for learning (Sahragard & Alimorad, 2013) are likely to, in turn, demotivate teachers from pursuing the communicative goals of the language course in underprivileged areas.

Furthermore, this study found evidence for the positive status of the reform's *primacy* in teachers' view. Since this change has occurred after long time

and has been the first in its own right in transmission from traditional to modern approaches of language teaching in the country, its primacy has been felt by the majority of respondents and this, according to Henrichsen (1989), raises the potential for its successful diffusion. Besides, the intended changes in this reform were offered in the *form* of the materials, i.e., textbooks, CDs and Teachers' Guide, which promote its spread and survival among users, as anticipated by Henrichsen (1989). In addition to organizing and standardizing the content, the strong preference for printed materials, according to Wall and Horak (2008), originates from the tendency of individuals for portability. This tendency for using predetermined materials, specifically textbooks, is stronger in countries like Iran where English is taught and learned as a foreign language (Akbari, 2015; Dahmardeh, 2009b).

Thus, based on the results and what was already discussed, the positive and negative aspects of change attributes can be summarized in the following table.

Table 5.
Attributes that Facilitated (+) or Inhibited (-) the New Language Program in Iran

Originality	+	Making use of a familiar model of language education in the country but new in the public education
	-	Inadequate inclusion of activities for improving oral skills
Status	+	Inclusion of four skills in the textbooks and using technology in classrooms like language institutes
	-	Not being able to compete with more prestigious sources such as international textbooks
Complexity	+	Teachers' enjoyment of acceptable level of language proficiency for implementing the program
	-	Taking too much time and energy of teachers because of so many changes in the course books whose implementation needs teachers to be more competent
Explicitness	+	The relative explicitness of the macro objectives
	-	The relative lack of explicitness of the local objectives
	-	The lack of explicitness of the strategies and techniques for achieving the goals in the absence of the required logistics
Observability	+	The observable improvement in students' communicative ability
Relative Advantage	+	Relatively more attractive series with relatively interesting topics
	+	Relatively better establishment of vocabulary items in students' mind
	+	Relative improvement in students' communicative ability
	+	Improved motivation and commitment of teachers for their professional development
	-	Poorer grammatical knowledge
	-	Relatively more stress and pressure of teachers and weaker students
Practicality	+, -	The feasibility of achieving the objectives of the program, though to a limited extent due to the lack of infrastructures
Flexibility	-	Lack of adjustability of the program to the language proficiency level of a wide range of users
Form	+	Making use of textbooks as the primary source of change
Primacy	+	The emergence of a drastic shift in the language education of the public sector for the first time

Conclusion

In this paper, we described the meaning of the new reform in language education of the country from the perspective of one important group of its adopters, i.e., teachers, and in terms of the change attributes recommended by Henrichsen (1989). To enhance findings' depth and generalizability. Critical aspects of the reform relevant to the characteristics of the innovation were first identified through conducting interviews with teachers whose accuracy were investigated through surveying larger number of teachers.

Based on the results of the current study, overall, the proper level of 'originality' of the program in making use of an internationally well-known but locally new model of language education and making some adaptations in it, improved 'status' of the course compared with the past, 'observability' of the achievements, 'relative advantage' of the reform in both improving the communicative ability of teachers and students as well as developing more attractive and functional textbooks, relative 'explicitness' of the general goals, 'form' and 'primacy' of the change are conducive to the diffusion of the change. However, not dealing adequately with oral skills; its relatively high level of complexity because of long-established, traditional language education trends and the absence of adequate training to make the required preparedness in teachers; its lack of flexibility; the disadvantages of the program particularly evident in the increased level of pressure on teachers and students; the lack of explicitness of the reform with regard to the domestic goals, appropriate methods and techniques; and its reduced status need to receive special attention by the managers of this reform.

To put it in a nutshell, the absence of the systematic change evident in the program's failure to coordinate relevant organizations such as those responsible for equipping schools with the required facilities, monitoring the quality of the implementation of the program, administering high-stake examinations, rewarding teachers to compensate for their heavier work assignment and above all, training teachers adequately for the proper implementation of the reform has limited this reform's potential achievement noticeably. Therefore, if there is a real determination for improving the language education of the formal education system of the country, the limitations in the way of the effective implementation of the program, chiefly originated from the absence of its implementation infrastructures need to be removed for more effective institutionalization of the change.

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Appendix: Interview Guide

Originality

1. In what ways do you consider the new program consistent/inconsistent with CLT?

Complexity

2. How do you evaluate the required change for teaching the books in the new program in terms of its complexity? Does it require teachers to spend a great deal of time and energy to put the change into practice effectively?

Explicitness

3. Are the objectives of the program such as the intended changes that should occur in teachers' performance and behavior and the strategies for achieving those objectives clear for you?

4. To what extent are you familiar with the theoretical underpinnings and philosophy of applying CLT?

Relative Advantage

5. In your opinion, what are the advantages and disadvantages of the program?

6. How do you evaluate the success of the new program in developing language proficiency of students compared to the previous one?

Observability

7. How observable are the changes in language skills of students for you?

Status

8. How has the new program's status and place changed in teachers' and students' eyes?

Practicality

9. How rational are the program's expectations from students and teachers?

10. Which aspects of the program seem impractical to you?

11. Considering the dominant instructional condition in the majority of schools such as what follows, how practical do you consider the program's implementation?

-the number of the students in the class

-the facilities

-the instructional time

12. How do you evaluate the success of the program? Has it reached its objectives in improving students' language proficiency?

13. How did teachers welcome the program? Did teachers resist against the program's implementation or welcome it openly?

Flexibility

14. How adaptable do you consider the program to the various needs, language proficiency and demands of students who live in different areas of the country with different cultural and economic situations? What are your reasons?

Blended Learning in the Development of EFL Productive Skills: Implementing Web-based Activities in High School Setting

Research Article

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Received: 2020-01-16 | Revised (3): 2020-06-28 | Accepted: 2020-07-01

Abstract

Blended learning is sometimes called the best of both worlds, as it combines the advantages of online learning with traditional face to face (FTF) instruction. The present study examines the impact of blended learning (BL) on the lexical variety (LV), lexical density (LD), and syntactic complexity (SC) of Iranian high school EFL students' speaking and writing skills over a nine-month period. Two groups of 42 homogeneous high school students were selected. One group was assigned as the blended and the other as the FTF group using the *Top Notch Placement Test*. Then,

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a website was designed as a platform for the BL group's online activities and tasks, such as chat room discussions, synchronous and asynchronous forums for writing and speaking activities, and an online task-completion activity. The FTF group received equal but different treatment. Interviews and a writing task were administered at the beginning and the end of the nine-month academic year in order to elicit speaking and writing samples from the students. Finally, the corpora obtained from the first and final interviews and writing tasks were analyzed by two independent coders to observe possible changes in linguistic features. A one-way ANOVA test was used to find out any meaningful differences between the indices of linguistic features in the two corpora. The results show that BL instruction exerted a positive effect on lexical variety and density both in terms of speaking and writing. However, the syntactic complexity of speaking and writing were significant for the FTF group. Hence, based on the obtained results, the superiority of BL instruction over FTF was revealed when the focus of attention was on productive skills.

Keywords: blended learning (BL), face to face (FTF) instruction, lexical density (LD), lexical variety (LV), syntactic complexity (SC)

Introduction

Recently, the power of computer-assisted language learning (CALL) has been expanded due to the nature of the World Wide Web by providing learners with the ability to discover, explore, and access online databases of resources. Meanwhile, teachers can integrate web resources into classrooms through a myriad of hyper linked multimedia documents (Ngo, 2018; Son, 2008). This integration can be realized in the form of BL instruction. BL refers to "a formal educational program in which a student learns at least in part through online learning, with some element of student control over time, place, path, and/or pace; and at least in part in a supervised brick and mortar location away from home; and the modalities along each student's learning path within a course or subject are connected to provide an integrated learning experience" (Christensen et al., 2013; Watson et al., 2013, p.9). This language program combines a FTF classroom component with the appropriate use of technology (Graham, 2006). Technology encompasses various terms, such as the Internet, websites, CD-ROMS, and interactive message boards. It also includes environments suitable for language learning. For example, web-based language learning (WBLL) uses websites and web materials to enrich the learning environment (Son, 2008). Many studies have investigated the effect of web-based instruction on language learning (Ngo, 2018; Smith, 2003; Son, 2008). However, by using technology in language instruction, the role of FTF instruction should not be ignored. Hence, this issue intensifies the significance of adopting a BL approach to maintain technology and FTF instruction with an optimal blend in classrooms.

Several studies have investigated the effects of blended learning instruction on different aspects of language learning in universities and institutions within ESL and EFL contexts (Danielson, 2018; Gilbert, 2013; Graham, 2013; Hamilton,

2018; Layton, 2017; Murray, 2019; Thorne, 2003; Tosun, 2015). However, the main focus of the present study is to investigate the development of the speaking and listening skills of first-grade high school students through the implementation of BL instruction and traces the development in terms of lexical variety and density and syntactic complexity as the main linguistic features (Hiro-tani, 2013; Housen & Kuiken, 2009; Tavakoli & Foster, 2011).

Literature Review

Theoretical Background of BL

The educational philosophy behind online learning was chiefly based on social constructivism, which stimulates cooperation among students and teachers. Based on the work of Lev Vygotsky, the theory of constructivism is an account of how learners attain knowledge through experiences (Popp, 2017). "With constructivist teaching methodology, students construct knowledge through social interactions with more capable peers or adults rather than simply receiving and memorizing information from an instructor presentation" (Deulen, 2013, p.93). In other words, different students have different ways of making sense of what they experience (Popp, 2017). Hence, the realization of constructivism through BL can be explained as engagement in online and FTF learning to build new knowledge.

BL attempts to combine the best aspects of online and FTF learning since it benefits from the instructional skills of a traditional classroom teacher and the flexibility and resources that online learning provides (Watson et al., 2013). BL is defined as "learning experiences that combine FTF and online instruction" (Graham, 2013, p. 335). Owing to the opportunities that BL presents, it can be of great benefit to students with busy schedules (Brooke, 2017, p.1). Students can be flexible with the use of their time and will have a free hand in their learning options and interventions for the delineation of course material (Brooke, 2017). Therefore, applying BL principles to the EFL program, can be beneficial both for instructors and learners. This could be in line with the new trends of digitization of schools and academic settings.

Types of BL

Part of BL takes place online, away from the school setting, while another part happens FTF in a school (Staker & Horn, 2012). In a BL class, creating a technology-rich learning environment is not the final task; it is crucial to create harmony between the content of online and FTF classes (Brooke, 2017; Murray, 2019). With the incorporation of online learning, students are assumed to have more control over the time, place, pace, and path of the content than they would have in a traditional classroom setting (Brooke, 2017; Staker & Horn, 2012). The flexibility in the time of the class means that classes are based on the learners' daily schedules (INACOL Staff, 2016).

One of the most significant modes of technology in BL instruction has been the application of web-based technologies in language teaching (Bambang et al., 2016; Gorjian, 2011). Forums and chat rooms are efficient electronic tools for enhancing productive skills on the web. They enable students to interact through synchronous/asynchronous communication. Online forums have the potential to facilitate discussions about topics of common interest among the students. The focal points of such discussions are based on specific writing topics (Beal, 2010). Through chat rooms, students can exchange messages in cyberspace. For example, students can participate in readings, discuss and share strategies for completing a writing task or help each other with other course components (Minalla, 2018).

Technology-based Language Learning in Iran

Several studies on the application of computer technology have been conducted in Iranian settings (Bagheri et al., 2013; Ghahari, & Ameri-Golestan, 2014; Khazaei & Jalilifar, 2015; Mashhadi et al., 2016; Shahrokni & Talaeizadeh, 2013; Zarei & Abdi, 2016). The new trend of teaching EFL in Iranian high schools has placed a great demand on curriculum developers to design new teaching materials customized to Iranian needs and culture. In 2010, the educational curricula were reformed for all the school subjects including English (Foroozandeh & Forouzani, 2015) which was set to the top of the program in the Organization of Educational Research and Planning (OERP). In this program reform, policy makers officially announced Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) as the main principle governing the materials (Foroozandeh & Forouzani, 2015). However, this trend has not been accompanied by electronic or online supplementary materials to fill the gap for the new needs of students based on modern technologies, such as cellphones and personal computers.

The Aims of the Current Study

This study aims to prepare and deliver material based on BL learning principles via a website to improve Iranian high school students' speaking and writing skills. Concerning the new high school EFL methodology, instructing and evaluating speaking and writing skills based on BL program can be a great challenge for EFL teachers in high schools, since these skills have been almost neglected in Iranian prescribed EFL textbooks (Jahangard, 2007).

One way to indicate the progress of the students' language proficiency based on BL program is to test the speaking and writing abilities and to probe changes in the students' language production based on specific linguistic features (Hiro-tani, 2013). Over the last decade, linguistic features have been strongly emphasized. The domains of linguistic features include vocabulary, grammar, fluency, content, and rhetorical organization (e.g., Bayazidi et al., 2019; Frear & Bitche-ner, 2015; Yoon & Polio, 2017).

The most popular linguistic features under scrutiny by leading international testing systems are lexical density, variety, and syntactic complexity. These features have been reliably cited as important attributes of L2 proficiency (Crossley et al., 2011; Hirovani, 2013; Johansson, 2008; Lu, 2012; Mazgutova & Kormos, 2015). Lexical density is a measure of how many lexical items such as nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs are used in a text, while lexical variety is a measure of how many different words are used in a text (Johansson, 2008). As such, syntactic complexity can be explained in terms of various measures such as the length of a production unit, the amount of subordination or coordination, the range of syntactic structures, and the degree of syntactic sophistication (Lu, 2011).

As the above review reveals, most of the literature has focused on BL practices or the analysis of linguistic features discreetly; using samples collected from a blended environment has not been the focus of previous works. Considering this gap and the under-researched context of high school as well as the new policies in the Iranian high school EFL instruction. The present research studied the long-term effects of BL on the oral and written performances of Iranian pre-intermediate high school students in terms of lexical variety and density and syntactic complexity. Hence, the following research questions are addressed:

1. Is there any development in the spoken and written performances of the two groups of BL and FTF Iranian high school students in terms of linguistic complexity (lexical variety, lexical density, and syntactic complexity) due to the effect of intervention program?
2. Are the differences between the BL and FTF groups' performances significant in terms of speaking and writing progress at the end of the project?

Method

Design

To address the research questions, we applied a quasi-experimental approach. The data collection procedure was conducted over a nine-month period covering one academic year. In the first phase, the oral and written production of the students both for BL and FTF groups were elicited via an interview and a writing exercise. In the second phase, another interview and composition were performed, containing similar questions and content as in the first phase. The results were then analyzed and compared with those of the first interview and composition. Finally, the initial and final speaking and writing production of the students were probed to scrutinize the lexical variety, lexical density, and syntactic complexity of each group of students.

Participants

The first sample participants of the study were 90 male high school students between 15 and 16 years old. From this sample, 42 students were selected as

the BL group by implementing the Top Notch Placement Test (Saslow & Ascher, 2006). Based on the classification of the Top Notch levels, 42 participants scored between 32 and 52 out of 140 and were considered to be at the pre-intermediate level.

The second sample population also consisted of 90 male high school students from another high school in the same district. Out of this sample 42 learners were selected as the control group; the same selection procedure, namely, implementing the Top Notch Placement Test (Saslow & Ascher, 2006) was adopted for this group too. Finally, a consent form was prepared and sent to the participants' parents (the students were under the legal age required to sign the document) to corroborate or reject the participation of their sons in the study and, in case of acceptance, to supply the needed tools, such as a tablet and laptop. The following statistical calculations were done to ascertain the homogeneity of the BL and FTF groups.

Table 1.
One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test for BL Group

BL group	N	42
Normal Parameters	Mean	42.0952
	Std. Deviation	6.14781
	Absolute	.158
Most extreme differences	Positive	.121
	Negative	-.158
	Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z	1.023
	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.246

As shown in table one above, the results of One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test on BL group confirm the normal distribution of the study sample ($p = .246$, $p > .05$).

Table 2.
One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test for FTF Group

FTF group	N	42
Normal Parameters	Mean	41.4762
	Std. Deviation	6.15744
	Absolute	.166
Most extreme differences	Positive	.166
	Negative	-.102
	Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z	1.077
	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.197

The results of the Smirnov Test in table 2 illustrate a normal distribution of the study sample within FTF group ($P = .197$, $P > .05$).

Table 3.
Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means			
		F	Sig.	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
B	Equal variances assumed	.043	.835	.461	82	.646	.6190

Based on the t-test and Levene's test results, the two groups were at nearly the same level of language proficiency; the difference between the groups was not significant (BL mean = 42.0952, FTF mean = 41.4762).

Materials

To collect the required data during the academic year, Vision 1 (Alavi Moghadam et al., 2016), which is the textbook used in Iranian high schools, was taught. This book is published by SAMT Publications and contains activities and tasks concerning the four main language skills, plus lessons on vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. This textbook is a localized source based on national values and culture.

Data Collection Instrumentation

The following instruments were utilized to collect data.

- 1) The Top Notch Placement Test (Saslow & Ascher, 2006), which is based on the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) standards. Top Notch is the name of a book series used to teach conversation to adult learners. This test covers three sections and includes 10 listening tests, 10 reading tests, and 120 general English tests.
- 2) The first speaking interview in the form of open-ended questions based on the textbook, which covered topics such as family, sightseeing, food, and travel and lasted from three to eight minutes for each candidate, as well as the first composition of about 100 to 150 words in which students either described their dream house or wrote about their city. See appendix for the interview questions.
- 3) The second interview at the end of the academic year, which covered topics related to Vision 1 with the same set of questions as in the first interview, as well as a composition about students' city or ambitions for the future. All interviews were recorded and then later transcribed.

In this study, two coders separately analyzed the speaking and writing corpus. The intercoder reliability of the analysis was calculated using Cohen's kappa formula. The kappa value was 0.91, which indicates substantial agreement between the two raters.

Procedure

Preparation Phase. The first stage was designing an educational interactive website parallel to the first-grade high school textbook, Vision 1 (Alavi Moghadam et al., 2016). The website was designed by a team of experts in a related field. The students were required to use their PCs, laptops, tablets, or cell phones to connect to the website and participate in the class at home or anywhere else. One of the researchers (the website administrator) was responsible for supplying and uploading the materials to the website. All the teaching activities for the BL and FTF groups were conducted by one teacher in order to control confounding variables that could result from differences between teachers.

The website is available for viewing at www.vision-blend.com. The website contained the following environments: chat room, forum, wiki, text message, exercise pages, audio and video panel, and online assessment. The online course components included a synchronous chat room, an asynchronous forum, uploaded assignments, and messages. The teacher provided feedback for all the students' submissions. The second set of activities was familiarizing the students with the website and its functions.

Instruction Procedure. This study employed a quasi-experimental approach. Initially, the Top Notch Placement test was administered to choose two homogeneous groups. The experimental group received treatment based on BL instruction, and the control group was taught based on FTF instruction only. The teaching material for both groups was the same, and the students received three hours of FTF instruction as regular activities based on their curriculum. However, for the BL group, some 30 to 40 percent of the material was delivered online via the website. In order to compensate for the extra online activities that the BL group completed, extra FTF classes were held two times a week beyond the three hours of regular instruction for the FTF group.

Due to the age group of the participants, we decided to use a limited set of platforms on the website to avoid ambiguity and to focus on production activities. Hence, the chat room and forum were selected as the two main platforms, and other facilities, such as the wiki, were not applied for the procedure of the study.

At the beginning of the academic year, an interview and composition covering the topics in Vision 1 (2016) were administered to all the participants in the BL and FTF groups. The interview contained familiar topics, such as family, travel, food, and sightseeing, which lasted from three to seven minutes. All the interviews were recorded and were later transcribed. Moreover, possible topics

for the composition (i.e., dream house, ambitions, or the cities the students live in) were provided by the researchers. During the academic year, the BL group attended three hours of FTF instruction and two online classes of 60 minutes per week. This group was divided into smaller groups of five to eight students to facilitate their participation in the online chat room and forum.

During the synchronous learning activities, the teacher provided corrective feedback and employed different correction strategies to fix students' inaccuracies. The chat activity was then used as a brainstorming tool for students' writing. The students were required to write a composition of about 100 words the following week using the ideas mentioned in the chat. They were to post their writing to the group no more than three days later.

Another activity was completed using the forum. This component was organized around weekly discussion topics posted according to the grammatical structure presented in the classroom. Table 4 summarizes the main activities performed in the BL group classes.

Table 4.
The Main Activities Conducted in the BL Class

Platform	BL (online activities)	BL group (FTF activities)
Chat room	guessing game(describing student's appearance)	Pre conversation tasks: introducing new vocabularies, matching exercises, grouping vocabulary
Chat room	Discussion: discussing a supplied topic	Matching vocabulary items with the pictures
Chat room	Interview: open-ended questions about the reading passage of the book	Listening to the CD related to the conversation section and answering the supplied questions
Chat room	Brainstorming: using chat activity as hints for writing	Pre reading activities: introducing new vocabularies related to the reading section
forum	Discussion: the topics were based on the grammatical structures of the lesson	Asking questions to activate the background knowledge
forum	Chatting: synchronous chat sessions to perform free discussion tasks	While reading activities: silent reading, paraphrasing, explaining, supplying synonyms and antonyms
forum		Post reading questions and answers

The FTF group received only FTF instruction by the same teacher (one of the researchers). One three-hour class was held each week, covering the same material as the BL group received in their FTF session. The FTF group received two extra classes of one hour each to compensate for the online activities performed by the BL group.

In later sessions, grammar points were presented, first inductively through a written text and then deductively through tables. The topics for discussion and writing were the same, and the same interview and writing activities were held for this group similar to the BL group but in an FTF mode. All the language

tasks were facilitated by the teacher in the FTF mode, including role playing, open-ended questions, and controlled question-and-answer exercises.

However, due to the nature of FTF classes, we occasionally gave some explicit grammar-based feedback. Throughout the BL and FTF activities, we tried to balance the amount of time allocated to each group. However, due to the nature of online activities, the time allocated to the groups was not identical. Finally, the students' writing and speaking samples were collected and analyzed. Table 5 summarizes the main activities done in the FTF group class.

Table 5.
The Main Activities Done in the FTF Group Class

activity	FTF class activities	FTF extra activities
	Pre conversation tasks: introducing new vocabularies, matching exercises, grouping vocabulary	contextualization of the vocabularies in new sentences
	Matching vocabulary items with the pictures	Reviewing the conversation section
	Listening to the CD related to the conversation section and answering the supplied questions	Asking questions about the conversation
	Pre reading activities: introducing new vocabularies related to the reading section	Asking mechanical meaningful questions based on the patterns in conversation
	Asking questions to activate the background knowledge	Discussion about the reading passage
	While reading activities: silent reading, paraphrasing, explaining, supplying synonyms and antonyms	Brainstorming about the reading to prepare for the writing activity
	Post reading questions and answers	

Measures of this Study

In this study, both lexical and syntactic complexity were examined. Lexical complexity was probed in terms of lexical variety and density. Lexical variety deals with how many types of words (i.e., how many different lexical items) exist in all tokens of words (i.e., all words). Instead of using a type-token ratio, which is a commonly employed measure for lexical variety (Warschauer, 1996), the lexical variety was calculated by dividing the number of types by the square root of the doubled number of tokens. Table 6 presents the linguistic indices used to evaluate the participants' oral and written performance.

Table 6.
Measures Adopted to Calculate Linguistic Features

Category	Subcategory	Measure
	Lexical Variety	$\text{type} / \sqrt{2 \cdot \text{token}}$
Lexical complexity	lexical density	$\text{type of content words} / \sqrt{2 \cdot \text{token of content words}}$
	Syntactic complexity	The number of clauses per AS-unit

This procedure is based on the work of Tajima (2002), who claims that lexical variety can be measured precisely with this formula. Lexical density is concerned with the percentages of the types of words (i.e., nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs) used. Accordingly, function words (i.e., particles and auxiliary verbs) were first discounted from all types of words, and lexical density was then computed by dividing the number of content word types by the square root of the doubled tokens of the content words. Lastly, syntactic complexity was computed as the number of clauses per analysis of speech unit (AS-unit) (Tajima, 2002). The 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 either” (Foster et al., 2000, p. 365). Utterances without predicates were permitted and counted as separate units. The following is an extract from the samples, which is analyzed as an example.

A few years ago, we had a big garden (AS Unit) and we would always go there and sat under the trees together with our friends (AS Unit). Then we thought that the garden is big enough to build a villa in it (AS Unit). After some years, we made it very beautiful (AS Unit) and had a lot of facilities such as a swimming pool there (AS Unit).

Tokens = 69, types = 41, AS Units = 5

Results and Discussion

In order to trace the development of the speaking and writing skills of high school students in terms of the linguistic features, the written and spoken products of the students obtained from written compositions and interview sessions were analyzed. Consequently, the linguistic features were assessed in terms of lexical variety, lexical density, and syntactic complexity (Hirotani, 2013). In order to calculate these features, we adopted Hirotani’s (2013) model. In applied linguistics studies conducted by Hirotani (2013), Housen and Kuiken (2009), and Tavakoli and Foster (2011), linguistic complexity was considered to be a significant variable when measuring L2 performance and proficiency.

The First Research Question

The first research question was concerned with the development in the spoken and written performances of the two groups of BL and FTF Iranian high school students in terms of linguistic complexity (lexical variety, lexical density, and syntactic complexity) due to the effect of intervention program. In order to answer this question, the written and spoken products of the students obtained from the written compositions and interview sessions in the first stage were analyzed and compared with those of the final samples for both the FTF and BL groups through a paired sample test using SPSS 22. Table 7 demonstrates the obtained results in FTF group.

Table 7.
Paired Samples Test FTF Group

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Devia- tion	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Dif- ference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	LDW.pre LDW.post	.1862	.06443	.00994	.1661	.2063	18.72	41	.000
Pair 2	LVW.pre LVW.post	42.40	18.6221	2.87346	36.6017	48.207	14.75	41	.000
Pair 3	SCW.pre SCW.post	.7804	1.95581	.30179	.1710	1.3899	2.586	41	.013
Pair 4	LDS.pre LDS.post	.2264	.07914	.01221	.2018	.2511	18.54	41	.000
Pair 5	LVS.pre LVS.post	84.80	36.2203	5.58892	73.5225	96.096	15.17	41	.000
Pair 6	SCS.pre SCS.post	1.208	1.06653	.16457	.8758	1.5405	7.341	41	.000

The results of table 7 show that, the P-value (0.001) for all the indices of linguistic features under study in this research is less than 0.05, which shows a significant difference between each pair of the lexical density, lexical variety and syntactic complexity of speaking and writing at the beginning and end of the project for FTF group. Table 8 demonstrates the results of the test in BL group.

Table 8.
Paired Samples Test BL

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Devia- tion	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Dif- ference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	LDW.pre LDW.post	.169	.06703	.01034	.1486	.1904	16.3	41	.000
Pair 2	LVW.pre LVW.post	18.0	13.783	2.1267	13.728	22.31	8.47	41	.000
Pair 3	SCW.pre SCW.post	1.07	1.2952	.19986	.6678	1.475	5.36	41	.000
Pair 4	LDS.pre LDS.post	.201	.07247	.01118	.1788	.2240	18.0	41	.000
Pair 5	LVS.pre LVS.post	13.7	21.039	3.2464	7.2293	20.34	4.24	41	.000
Pair 6	SCS.pre SCS.post	1.40	1.3773	.19457	.7758	1.5405	8.341	41	.000

Based on the results obtained in table 8, the p-value in all the indices is less than 0.05 which shows significant changes between the linguistic features in pre and post elicitation. Hence, we can conclude that based on the results of the Pair Sample Test in BL and FTF group, the effect of Intervention for both groups was significant and all the linguistic features developed in FTF and BL groups after nine months of academic year.

The Second Research Question

The second research question was concerned with the end products of the FTF and BL groups and compared the effect of BL instruction and FTF intervention on Lexical density, lexical variety and syntactic complexity of the groups under study. In this study, the following statistical calculations were conducted. Table 9 illustrates the descriptive analysis of the different linguistic features for the second corpus in the FTF and BL groups.

Table 9.
Indices of Linguistic Features in BL and FTF Groups in Post Tests

Group		N	Post- test	
			Mean	Std. Deviation
LDW	FTF	42	.4569	.04703
	BL	42	.4788	.04759
LVW	FTF	42	61.6905	14.09288
	BL	42	85.1190	19.10332
SCW	FTF	42	9.4327	5.30386
	BL	42	8.4751	1.52832
LDS	FTF	42	.4576	.02377
	BL	42	.4755	.03156
LVS	FTF	42	99.6667	30.39389
	BL	42	170.8810	34.09685
SCS	FTF	42	6.8993	.66664
	BL	42	6.5598	.97709

Based on table 9, the mean values of LDW, LVW, LDS, and LVS are higher for the BL group than FTF. However, the opposite trend is observed for SCW and SCS. Thus, it can be inferred that, in terms of both writing and speaking, the BL group outperformed the FTF group. Moreover, the researchers discovered that the syntactic structures exhibited in written language performance is more complex than that exhibited in spoken language (Brown & Yule, 1983; Pietilä, 1999). Hence, the results of the mean values are in line with those of previous studies (SCW mean \geq SCS) (Table 9). From another aspect, in this study, the amount of language production was higher in the BL group than in the FTF group. The FTF corpus contained 12,654 words, while the BL corpus encompassed 14,573 words. This is in line with Abrams's (2003) study concerning language production in a computer-mediated communication.

At this point, a one-way ANOVA was conducted in SPSS 22 to find whether there were statistically significant mean differences among the linguistic indices of the FTF and BL groups.

Table 10.

The Results of ANOVA Test on the Second Speaking and Writing Corpus of BL and FTF Groups

Source	variables	Sum of Square	Degree of freedom	Mean square	F	Sig.
Groups	LDW	.010	1	.010	4.502	.037
	LVW	11526.857	1	11526.857	40.908	.000
	SCW	19.259	1	19.259	1.264	.264
	LDS	.007	1	.007	8.579	.004
	LVS	106500.964	1	106500.964	102.091	.000
	SCS	2.420	1	2.420	3.459	.066

As the data in Table 10 demonstrates, the P-value (0.001) for LDW, LDS, LVS and LVW is less than 0.05, which shows a meaningful difference between the lexical density and lexical variety of speaking and writing samples in the BL and FTF corpus. As the mean score of the BL group is larger than that of the FTF group, it is logical to conclude that improvements in the lexical density and lexical variety of the BL group were more salient than those of the FTF group. However, in table 10, we observe that the p-value of SCS and SCW was not significant for the BL group and the FTF group had a better performance. Hence, considering the above calculations, we can conclude that four indices of LDS, LDW, LVS, and LVW were higher in BL group and SCS and SCW were larger for the FTF group.

Discussion

Kim (2014) believes that writers with more proficiency produce a greater density of words. The LD index in this study contradicts previous studies that have indicated that there is no statistically significant relationship between lexical density and L2 proficiency level (e.g., Crossley & McNamara, 2009; Lu, 2012; Park, 2013). The density of a lexical network (i.e., the number of connections a network contains) is known to increase as more connections are built during L2 development (Lu, 2012). In a BL environment, because the students are exposed to online multimedia materials as a part of their curriculum and benefit from the presence of a teacher during FTF classes, they receive more meaningful input. Hence, they retain lexical items efficiently. This is in line with the theory of the integrated model of SLA and multimedia proposed by Plass and Jones (2005). Based on this model, meaningful input is enhanced through the dual presentation of words (oral and/or written) and pictures (static and/or moving).

The lexical variety (LVW and LVS) exhibited by the second corpus revealed significantly greater improvements in the writing and speaking abilities of the

BL group in comparison to the FTF group (Table 10). Lexical variety has been cited as a clear predictor of learners' general language proficiency (e.g., Yu, 2010) and a crucial indicator of the quality of their speaking task performance (e.g., Jarvis, 2002; Malvern & Richard, 2002) and writing (e.g., Laufer & Nation, 1995). Such positive relationships are also stated explicitly in the rating scales of major international language tests such as IELTS and TOEFL IBT. As a result, the quality of production in the BL group is significantly better than that of the FTF group after the nine-month intervention in this study.

Finally, the P-values for the SC of the speaking and writing samples are greater than 0.05 (Table 10), meaning that these results are not significant. Hence, the FTF corpus showed superiority over the BL group in these indices. Some studies have used corpus data to determine the frequencies of syntactic constructions and concluded that a lower frequency corresponds to greater complexity (e.g., Wiersma et al., 2011). Moreover, speakers who produce longer utterances also produce less frequent and more complex syntactic structures (Kim, 2014). In the present study, however, the number of clauses per AS-unit dropped significantly when the learners' proficiency level increased (Lu, 2014). Consequently, Lu (2014) noted that as students become more proficient, phrasal rather than clausal complexity becomes more prominent feature in the students' writings. Thus, based on the above assumptions, it is possible that even though the SCW and SCS indices of BL learning were not higher than those of the FTF group, the BL groups' production can be considered more complex and more developed.

Previous research on BL is generally in harmony with the results of this study (Acelajado, 2011; Bambang et al., 2016; Means et al., 2009). Moreover, the active participation of students in completing the allocated tasks might be due to the novelty of BL (Hamilton, 2018) in EFL classes, which, in turn, enhance the motivation of the students to meet the goals of the curriculum. One of the most serious problems in formal high school English classes is the lack of motivation due to inappropriate teaching materials and content (Legault et al., 2006), the fact that there is no authentic English environment outside the classroom, overcrowded classes, and limited teaching time and resources (Locastro, 2001; Maringe & Sing, 2014).

Hence, by implementing BL principles, choosing the right method and the right materials, and attending to the needs and interests of students, this obstacle can be mitigated or even removed. This is in line with other research works that have pointed out the positive motivation and participation in BL courses (De George-Walker & Keeffe, 2010; Ugur et al., 2011).

Furthermore, some scientists such as Beauvois (1992), Chun (1994), and Kelm (1992) have suggested that the linguistic development of BL groups might be due to the transfer of online linguistic performance to FTF performance. In line with this, we observed that students were more prepared for FTF sessions if they had performed online discussion tasks or online writing tasks in the previous days. For example, during writing sessions, students had more ideas

of what to write about after the brainstorming sessions that they had completed asynchronously on the forum platform.

Secondly, engaging in more than one sense in the teaching process and employing a variety of teaching techniques, such as multimedia, animation, and tests, may have promoted learning (Mayer, 1997, 2005). However, efforts to increase the efficiency of class time should not be ignored. Improvements in the language production of students might be partially attributed to the use of class time in a strategic form. Garrison and Kanuka (2004) argue that in BL classes, the traditional lecture-based way of teaching is abandoned so that some class time can be allocated to enriching and meaningful activities. These activities enable the students to accelerate their learning at an individual pace, as supported by the theory of multimedia learning (Mayer, 2009, 2014), and they can foster students' different learning styles. Also, these learning activities occur in a non-threatening learning environment, which encourages communication among students and teachers, thus increasing students' motivation and interest in learning.

Conclusion and Implications

In this study, the lexical variety and density in the oral and written performances of high school students in the BL group were improved due to the positive impact of a BL environment. The BL format was found to be superior to traditional FTF classes when the focus of attention was on speaking and writing skills. This deduction is based on the empirical data we obtained throughout an academic year. BL improves the learning environment by enabling students to engage in more than one type of learning and providing multimedia resources and promoting self-learning strategies that can lead learners to practice learning English independently. Moreover, cooperation among online groups motivated shy students to present themselves more effectively both in synchronous and asynchronous activities.

The transfer of online linguistic performance to FTF performance further justified the better performance of the BL group. This could be a reason for the development of the communication skills of students, which, in turn, led to the production of more advanced language as indicated by the writing and speaking samples.

The findings of the current study lead to important implications for L2 researchers and educators. First, our results revealed significant differences in terms of two linguistic features (LD and LV) between the BL and FTF groups. By examining the effect of linguistic features on L2 writing and speaking, we obtained more comprehensive results than would have been possible through other methods of calculating writing and speaking proficiency.

Second, students need to practice varying their sentence structures in writing compositions and speaking performance. With this understanding, findings from this study point to the importance of considering the predictors of L2

writing and speaking proficiency when we teach language learners and assess their language products. Many studies have measured the extent to which accuracy, fluency, and grammatical complexity can indicate a learner's overall proficiency in L2 (e.g., Wolfe-Quintero et al., 1998; Zareva et al., 2005).

The results of this study are of practical use for classroom instruction to adjust the curriculum at the high school level. Students must be aware that by using and learning certain linguistic features, more value is attached to their language production. This study is conducted in a high-school setting among students with a specific level of proficiency and cannot be extended to other proficiency levels and age groups. With younger students, an optimal result is not to be expected due to their lack of computer knowledge. Conversely, with more proficient students, even better results than those reported here might be obtained.

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Appendix

Interview Sheet

1. Please tell me your full name and talk about yourself a bit.
2. What's your plan for the next summer? Where will you go? Who will be with you? What will you do there?
3. Suppose that a tourist is going to visit your city, describe your city for him/her?
4. What do you do in your free time?
5. Who is your best friend? Can you describe him/her for me?
6. Talk about the last time you went on a picnic? Who was with you? Where did you go? What did you do?
7. What did you do last weekend?

Developing Voice in EFL Learners' Argumentative Writing through Dialogical Thinking: A Promising Combination

Research Article

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Received: 2019-10-26 | Revised (4): 2020-07-02 | Accepted: 2020-07-05

Abstract

Dialogical thinking paves the way for EFL learners to express their thoughts in discussion, be able to convince the intended audience effectively, and provide reasons for the way they think, which consequently leads to the manifestation of individual voice. This study examined the effect of teaching dialogical thinking on the development of voice in the writing skill of a group of intermediate female EFL learners. To this end, twenty-two EFL learners were selected randomly and were assigned to two groups, namely experimental and control groups. Oxford Placement Test was administered to ensure the participants' homogeneity in terms of their language proficiency level. The experimental group received

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treatment on the dialogical thinking based on Alexander's (2008) dialogical teaching model in the form of analytical discussions on eight controversial topics in ten sessions. On the other hand, the control group was asked to take part in the routine written classroom activities. To measure the expression of voice, Helms-Park and Stapleton's (2003) Voice Intensity Rating Scale (VIRS) was used. The findings revealed that dialogical pedagogy stimulated logical arguments, sound reasoning, and sensible evaluations, and consequently, led to the manifestation of the individual voice via linguistic and rhetorical devices.

Keywords: dialogical thinking, EFL, instruction, voice, writing.

Introduction

To improve how to think, students must be encouraged to express their unique horizons, values, and world views in a dialogic environment (Lee & Gray, 2019; Marchenkova, 2005; Matsuda, 2015). The augmentation of voice empowers not only individuals' confidence, but also reinforces the manifestation of their individual perspectives and viewpoints (Olinger, 2011). Ivanic and Camps (2001) defined self-voice as the manifestation of the writer's personal views, authorial presence, and authoritativeness. In this regard, it refers to the way an author presents his/her views in relationship with the audience and the way s/he postulates meaning into a written text from the writer's self-voice. In simple terms, an individual voice can be perceived as the process of constantly producing, forming, modifying, and comprehending the internal/ external identities that shape us as writers within the enclosure of language and discourse (Hirvela & Belcher, 2001).

Paul and Elder's (2004) dialogical thinking expanded the scope of critical thinking by taking the social context into account leading to the social constructivism which was based on the distributed cognition. According to social constructivism, learning is constructed through critical dialogues among the individuals (Boulter, 2012; Paul & Elder, 2004). Challenging the established cultural norms, the traditional values, the conventional customaries, and the acknowledged claims that lead to the outgrowth of the opposing viewpoints are the consequences of the dialogical thinking. As Tanaka (2014) puts it, in dialogical thinking instead of deducing and inferring the accurate point of view, learners take part in the rigorous evaluation of numerous plausible points of view that are shaped according to diverse belief systems.

Therefore, teaching will not merely involve the transmission of subject knowledge, as in monologic and teacher-centered classrooms, but will develop the individuals' capacity "to engage in the dialogues through which knowledge is constantly being constructed, deconstructed, and reconstructed" (Wegerif, 2007, p. 60). Alexander and Wolfe (2008) suggested that dialogical pedagogies initiated inroads into the established ways of classroom communication through which the learners were considered as mere supporters of the teachers' ideas and their own voices were hardly heard. Therefore, rather than authoritative monologic answers, we should see a consent mutual understanding

of the issues raised and discussed by the individuals. This paper addresses the instruction of dialogic thinking as well as voice and the importance of their development in writing skill.

Literature Review

Dialogic thinking, by and large, plays a significant role in the personal and professional lives of individuals (Gemmell, 2008; Helms-Park & Stapleton, 2003). Apart from the central role of the knowledge of linguistic codes and the necessity of a rich schematic knowledge of the topic, learners have to attend to a plethora of relevant elements such as dialogic thinking, critical thinking, contextual factors, the audience, the purpose, self-identification, and the self-voice. Presently, most academic writing curriculums draw others' attention to the significance of dialogic thinking and self-voice which are essential for academic accomplishment and lifelong learning achievement (Alagozlu, 2007; Alkhouday, 2015). It means that instead of accepting others' ideas blindly, individuals are encouraged to critically examine the validity of the ideas presented in the texts and evaluate the ideas of other people. In that case, they can develop their authorial presence and the autonomy of their thoughts.

Numerous researches have been conducted into the quality of dialogic thinking and dialogic discourse (Alexander, 2017; Hall, 2018; Hemati & Valadi, 2017). Alagozlu (2007) explored the ways of developing writing skills by promoting critical thinking skills, and making reasoned judgments. She suggested that it is necessary to support EFL learners in terms of critical thinking skills and authorial voice to tackle the writing barriers and to deal with the demands of the multicultural world. Ramanathan and Atkinson (1999) stated that in order to think critically, one must have an individual voice to articulate his/her viewpoints on such issues, sharpen his/her own stance against that of others who disagree, and empower his/her personal views with whatever resources of evidence and support are feasible. This implied that individuals are supposed to examine the condition critically, persuasively back their decisions, estimate and appraise the counter-arguments, and reasonably weigh different pieces of evidence that may support their positions. As Ramanathan and Atkinson (1999) pointed out, such attitudes, however, have normally been found to be problematic for second language writers.

Voice refers to authorial identity and presence (Hirvela & Belcher, 2001; Hyland 2002; Lee & Gray, 2019) that enables the individuals to laudably articulate their ideas that may be against the socioculturally acknowledged norms and violates the relative avoidance of personal disagreement and social discord (Ramanathan & Atkinson, 1999). In writing, it records the sounds of the people on the page (Elbow, 1981) to express the intended meaning with regard to the topic, the audience and the purpose of communication. It is a personal and singular characteristic of a particular writer which represents his/her different perspectives (Dean, 2006). Sedova (2017) proposed that dialogic teaching encompassed stages of regression brought about by a disagreement among the

fundamentals of the dialogic arguments and stages of development which, on the other hand, became effective when the dismantled issues were brought into a coordinated harmony.

According to Stapleton (2002), voice can be perceived as recognized discursive features related to individualism originated in written texts in some cultures. He further added that “learners for learning to write in English should develop an individualized identity, or to impart their writing with voice, whereas suggesting that doing so is an alien concept in some L2 cultures” (p. 40). In fact, in the light of the socio-constructivist perspective, self-representation and authorial presence are crucial in perceiving written text as social communication between L2 readers and writers, through which meaning is assigned (Guinda & Hyland, 2012; Hyland, 2010). Matsuda (2001) emphasized the social aspect of voice and defined it as the collective impact of the proper employment of discursive and non-discursive elements by the individuals either deliberately or unintentionally from the yet existing social repertoires. Accordingly, Tardy (2012) considered the authorial voice as a multifaceted issue that includes individual dimensions such as uniqueness and authoritativeness, social features such as the resources of one’s representation and authorial attendance, and dialogic aspects like the interoperation between the people and the social aspects, including writer-reader mutual communication. Research employing social-constructivist definition of ‘voice’ (Hirvela & Belcher, 2001; Matsuda, 2001; Matsuda & Tardy, 2007; Prior, 2001; Tardy & Matsuda, 2009) argued that ‘voice’ is not utterly confined to individualism and highlighted that the individual and the social voice are reciprocally constitutive and unavoidable with an imperative function in advanced academic literacy.

The identification of the authorial voice in the written discourse is not an easy task as it is not just a simple and mere citation of the ideas of other individuals, but a relatively complicated set of linguistic strategies (Alagozlu, 2007). In an attempt to capture the features associated with voice, Helms-Park and Stapleton (2003) developed Voice Intensity Rating Scale that encompasses the textual features that are influential in the elaboration of voice in one’s writing. Based on this scale, the notion of voice consists of four components: assertiveness, self-identification, repetition of central point, and authorial presence (Helms-Park & Stapleton, 2003). The first two components of the scale are based on sentence-level linguistic features while the last two components evaluate the strength of individualized voice at the level of paragraph and beyond. Assertiveness is established through the manipulation of linguistic devices such as intensifiers and hedges and self-identification is demonstrated via the employment of the first-person pronouns (Helms-Park & Stapleton, 2003; Ivanic & Camps, 2001; Ramanathan & Atkinson, 1999). Hedges are used to reduce or soften the illocutionary force of the utterances and to moderate the claims. Intensifiers, on the other hand, are classes of words, mostly adverbs, used to adjust gradable adjectives, adverbs, verbs, or past participles. Self-identification refers to the application of the first and second person, vocative case, active voice, and explicit voice markers (Scollon et al., 1998) to signify personal opinion. Advocating the use of self-identification features, Harwood (2005) indicat-

ed some advantages of using personal pronouns in academic writing in order to facilitate the development of personal views pronouns in the arguments. Reiteration of the central point deals with how frequently and explicitly the major argument is repeated and rearticulated and the authorial presence assesses the overall manifestation of the author's voice that accounts for one's distinct inner self (Ramanathan & Atkinson, 1999). The manifestation of voice signifies the writers' willingness, confidence, and "self-trust to make claims, conviction, and gumption to support those claims" (Elbow, 1994, p. 10).

An empirical study was undertaken by Helms-Park and Stapleton (2003) with the aim of finding the relationship between the elements involved in L1 voice and the quality of academic writing in L2. The participants were required to give reasons in favor of or against Canada's immigration policy. Voice Intensity Rating Scale was used to measure the voice and Jacobs et al.'s (1981) ESL Composition Profile was employed by the overall writing quality. The results revealed no significant relationship between the quality in general and overall voice intensity or between overall quality and any of the four constituents of voice.

The intensity of authorial voice with regard to the overall quality of the argumentative writing was investigated by Zare-ee et al. (2014). As one of the components of the authorial voice, *assertiveness* was found to have a positive relationship with the overall quality of the academic writing quality. Having analyzed the strategies for expressing the voice, they came up with nine strategies for voice expression. At the sentence-level, the high-voice participants employed intensifiers most frequently to express assertiveness, while the low-voice participants tried to arrange other lexico-grammatical tools. At the text-level, however, both the high-voice and low-voice participants were more concerned with the effect of the topic on their voice expression.

In addition to the various writing difficulties, most EFL learners are grappling with expressing their own voice and identity in their writings. Matsuda (2001), in the context of L2 writing, observed that a problem that Japanese students faced in expressing voice in English written discourse was due to their lack of familiarity with voice-expression strategies employed in English. As Doukmak (2014) documented, most learners lack the ability to demonstrate their personal voices in writing due to the supremacy of the teacher's voice in classroom. Teacher should play the role of a facilitator in the students' quest to improve their participations, to develop their knowledge, to display their voice and identity, and finally to transfer the power from herself/himself to the students (Molinari & Mameli, 2013).

Although dialogic thinking and voice have been widely discussed in second language writing, on the pedagogical level, little attention has been given to the development of voice through dialogic thinking in writing instruction. To fill such a gap, this paper attempted to explore the effect of teaching dialogical thinking on the development of voice in intermediate EFL learners' writing.

Method

Participants

This study was carried out at Kish Language Institute, Tehran. Twenty-two intermediate female EFL learners with the age range of 15 to 22 years were randomly selected and then were assigned as the members of the experimental and control groups. To ensure the students' homogeneity with respect to their proficiency, Oxford Placement Test was used. All of the participants were Persian native speakers.

Instruments and Materials

The following tests and tasks were used to select the participants and to collect the data:

Oxford Placement Test (OPT). Oxford Placement Test version 1.1 (2001) published by Oxford University Press and University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate includes 60 items measuring the participants' general knowledge of grammar, vocabulary, reading, and writing. This test was used to homogenize the participants in terms of their proficiency level. The Cronhach's Alpha reliability coefficient was computed to be .91 indicating an excellent reliability estimate.

Writing Pre-Test. An IELTS writing test was employed as the pretest in the present study. In the writing task, the students wrote an argumentative discursive essay on a controversial topic provided to them to present general information, offer a solution, and justify the evidence. The topic was "why nowadays the families are not so close as they used to be in the past and how they could be brought closer together". They were given 30 minutes to write at least 250 words on the given topic and support their arguments with further explanation. The participants' writings were assessed based on IELTS detailed performance descriptors criteria including task response, lexical resources, coherence and cohesion, grammatical range and accuracy. The validity of scoring was ensured through inter-rater reliability. The discursive writing conventions such as the order of presenting the information, the style used, and the way the paragraphs started and finished were also taken into consideration. Irrelevant sentences, off-topic responses, and disconnected text were also penalized in scoring.

Writing Tasks. Considering the participants' level of proficiency, eight controversial topics and consequently passages were selected. Asking the participants about which topics were among their interests and priorities, the researchers collected a pool of controversial topics from which some were randomly selected. The topics, as well as the passages, were selected with the consultation of two experienced EFL university instructors who had the experience of teaching materials preparation and curriculum development courses. The passages were selected in line with Flesch readability standard based on which the difficulty level of the texts was checked to match the students' proficiency level. The topics were also selected meticulously to be controversial enough to raise different

opinions and viewpoints. The controversial prompt would kindle and stimulate the individuals to voice their own views on the suggested topic. The following items were the selected topics:

1. The actual school system is not good.
2. The positive and negative influences of TV programs (Some argue that the negative effects of TV programs on youths are more than the positive ones).
3. The educational values of computers (Some people say computers facilitate education but do not necessarily enrich it).
4. Success in life means money.
5. Husbands and wives should have the same educational level.
6. Friendship is the most important relationship in life.
7. Doing a job that you like is more important than earning more money.
8. Team-work or individual work? Being a team worker is more important than being a brilliantly creative person.

Voice Intensity Rating Scale. To measure the expression of voice in the writing samples, Helm-Park and Stapleton's (2003) Voice Intensity Rating Scale (VIRS), the analytic rating scale for voice expression in writing, was used as an instrument. The scale is based on a careful analysis of voice features from the literature. To ensure the reliability of this instrument in Iranian EFL context, it was also piloted on 14 participants ($n_{Cont.} = 7$; $n_{Exp.} = 7$) having characteristics similar to those of the main participants. Cronbach Alpha was run to ensure the internal consistency of this scale and it was found to be .83. Based on this scale, the voice elements are classified in two levels and four scales. Table 1 shows the Voice Intensity Rating Scale components at both sentence and text levels.

Table 1.
Voice Intensity Rating Scale Components

		<i>Criteria</i>
<i>Sentence level Scales</i>	1. Assertiveness	a. hedges b. intensifiers c. boosters
	2. Self-identification	a. use of first person pronoun b. active voice
	3. Reiteration of central point	a. restating the central point frequently and directly b. the explicit rearticulation of the main argument
	4. Authorial presence and autonomy of thought	a. the overall manifestation of the author's voice b. the intangible quality of identity in writing c. author's explicit views d. disclosure of personal attitudes

These two first clusters segregate linguistic features of voice mainly at the sentence level. The last two groups measure the strength of personalized voice beyond sentence. The scale includes four voice components of assertiveness that is quantified as the frequency of hedges and intensifiers in a passage, self-identification that is shown through the use of first-person pronouns and grammatical voice, reiteration of central point which is measured by the rearticulation of the central idea and authorial presence and autonomy of thought which is measured by the degree to which the author clearly expresses his or her own views.

Data Collection and Analysis

The study was conducted in ten sessions in which sample essays supplemented by writing activities were employed to make the participants familiar with the basic structure of essay writing through dialogical thinking (See Appendix A for the detailed lesson plan). A writing pre-test was given to both groups prior to the study to examine their use of voice in writing. As the treatment, in experimental group, dialogical thinking based on Alexander's (2008) dialogic teaching was offered and students participated in consensus tasks that generally engaged them in coming to an agreement on a certain issue. Students were expected to read an article about the issue that was supposed to be discussed during that session. The issue featured opposed viewpoints in the community, in the education, and in the society. Each week students completed in-class writing tasks to show their learning of the course materials. For these tasks, they were asked to clearly state their positions on a controversial issue and to follow paragraph and essay organization principles taught in the course. Assignments for other weeks were completed through multiple in-class drafting, out of class writing, or cooperative writing. With respect to dialogical thinking instruction, students read various articles selected by the researchers on different issues including the actual school system, the positive and negative influences of TV programs, the educational values of computers, 'success in life means money', educational level of husbands and wives, friendship, doing a job to earn more money, and 'team-work or individual work'.

Students were required to participate in the discussions and complete assignments such as analyzing each topic and listing 10 reasons to reject or accept it. They were required to discuss the opinions raised on the selected topics. The topics featured clear and powerful controversial viewpoints, which the participants examined and assessed through whole-class and group discussions. The process of perceiving and apprehending controversial standpoints started by uncovering the conventional belief system that shapes assumptions, which in turn shape opinions. In addition, the researchers delivered lectures on the instruction and facilitated the practice in preparing criteria lists and recognizing dissimilarities in paradigms. After the discussions, the participants wrote essays on comparing and contrasting the divergent viewpoints from the readings, and prioritizing fairness and academic responsibility in their own writing.

Each session, students were asked to enlist and write their viewpoints around the agreements.

As part of this study, the participants were exposed to examples of boosters, hedges, intensifiers, lexical bundles, and reiteration of the central points, and were supposed to identify the instances in the passages covered in the class. For every passage up to the final one, the feedback on the target devices on voice was given to the participants. As a part of practice, the participants were given a handout with neutral statements and they were supposed to rewrite them using boosters, intensifiers, and hedges to allow them to see how to intensify or tone down one's ideas.

Altogether, the learners completed the three writing tasks within the experimental period as part of their class requirements. After the ninth sessions, for the final essay, they wrote about two topics. One of them was selected from among the topics discussed during the treatment and another one was selected by the course instructor.

To measure the expression of voice, Helm-Park and Stapleton's (2003) Voice Intensity Rating Scale (VIRS) was adopted. The lesson plan was prepared for the experimental group based on Alexander's (2008) dialogic teaching that included five principles. The principles are presented below:

- Collective: Learners and teachers together address learning tasks in a group or as a class;
- Reciprocal: Listening to each other, learners and teachers share ideas and consider other possible different views;
- Supportive: Learners freely express their thoughts, without fear of being embarrassed due to possible wrong responses, and they assist each other to arrive at common understandings;
- Cumulative: Learners and teachers expand their own and each other's knowledge and understandings;
- Purposeful: Teachers design and boost dialogic teaching with specific educational objectives in view (Alexander, 2006).

Upon the completion of the course, the final argumentative essays were analyzed through quantifying the number of instances of lexical bundles, hedges, boosters, rhetorical devices and other voice strategies that shed light on the use of each of the devices in their essays. In the following sample excerpt, merely the use of voice strategies was underlined and the other writing components such as the accuracy of punctuation and the grammatical and lexical deviations were not pointed out.

Figure 1.
A Sample of the Participants' Argumentative Writing

Topic: Doing a job that you like is more important than to earn more money

Having a job seems to be really interesting to many of the people. I think that one can spend her day to do important jobs rather than just staying at home or playing wastefully with cell phones. However, there are some of the people who think that money is more important than the job itself because life is very expensive and they have to pay for them. Moreover, they believe that by earning much money they can reach their dreams. They also believe that money brings happiness for themselves somehow and they can help others, too. Another point is that even if one likes her job when the salary is low, it will probably demotivate her. My father for example, although he likes his job, he is very demotivated because he earns low money. He is forced to do other jobs to pay the expenses and when he comes back home he is completely tired and just likes to rest. He does not have time to spend with us or to play with my brother.

There are some people who argue that job itself is more important than the money they earn. They argue that if one loves the job she does, she will do her best to do it in a very good way. Besides, they believe that it is possible for them to give brilliant suggestions and to do wonderful things. Weighting up both of the sides, I strongly agree that the job is good salary. The workers will do it much better and happy. They will be more happy and as the result their family will be happy. It is good to have happy family rather than sad or angry one. It makes them to be good with each other and spend good time together. I think, therefore, that it is very good to enjoy the job and it will be much better if its money is high and good.

It is important to point out that by the time this argumentative essay was written, the participants were already familiarized with the voice strategies and had employed boosters, hedges, intensifiers, and the other voice strategies in their previous written assignments. In addition to the elements of cohesion, coherence, unity and other lexical and syntactic considerations, the writing essays were analyzed in terms of the use of voice strategies.

As highlighted in the excerpt, as far as *assertiveness* was concerned, five hedges and thirteen boosters were employed. Regarding *self-identification*, five first-person pronouns and twelve cases of active voice were utilized. Concern-

ing *reiteration of central point*, at least eight cases were detected. With respect to the *authorial presence and autonomy of thought*, ten cases were spotted in the form of overall presence, intangible quality of identity, and the author's explicit views.

To ensure the reliability of scoring, following an analytical scoring, inter-rater reliability was computed based on the IELTS performance descriptors criteria. To this end, the raters who were professional IELTS instructors were prepared for the rating task through two 30-minute training sessions in which Helm-Park and Stapleton's (2003) Voice Intensity Rating Scale (VIRS) and the IELTS detailed performance descriptors criteria were explained to them. The raters were then provided with the copies of the VIRS and IELTS band descriptors and the randomly selected writing papers of the participants. Finally, they were asked to rate the selected writings. As explained in more detail in the following section, the inter-rater reliability was ensured.

To analyze the data, both descriptive and inferential statistics were run. To this end, means and standard deviations were computed first. In addition, Cronbach Alpha was run to ensure the OPT reliability. Furthermore, to confirm the normality of the distribution of the obtained data, One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test was run. Moreover, to explore whether teaching dialogical thinking has any significant effects on the development of voice in intermediate EFL learners' writing, independent samples t-test and paired t-tests were run.

Results

Inter-rater Reliability Analysis for the Two Raters

Inter-rater reliability was used to assess the consistency between the ratings provided by the two raters and the degree of the agreement between them. It was computed based on the data obtained from the pilot study participants ($n = 14$). It is to be noted that in the pilot phase, there were seven participants in each group, namely control and experimental groups. The consistency of the two raters' judgments was also tested using intra-class correlation coefficient (ICC) analysis that yielded a comparatively high level of inter-rater reliability for the writing test scores in the two administrations in pre and post-tests. The item statistics for the scores given by the two raters are presented in table 2.

Table 2.
Item Statistics for the Scores Given by the Two Raters

Groups		Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Control	Pretest scores rater A	58.0000	6.48074	7
	Pretest scores rater B	59.1429	6.66905	7
	Posttest scores rater A	62.5714	5.19157	7
	Posttest scores rater B	62.4286	4.11733	7
Experimental	Pretest scores rater A	63.5514	7.41299	7
	Pretest scores rater B	63.5714	7.45782	7
	Posttest scores rater A	86.5714	5.44234	7
	Posttest scores rater B	86.8571	5.78586	7

Table 2 displayed the item statistics for the scores assigned by the two raters, showing the mean (M) and standard deviation (SD) of the data from each rater for pre and post-tests. Overall, it appeared that rater (B) measured slightly higher writing scores than rater (A) both in pre and post-tests.

After the means and standard deviation for the scores were given by the two raters for both pre and post-tests, 'average measures' were computed individually for the writing pre and post-tests. Table 3 shows the intra-class correlation coefficients (ICC) for the scores.

Table 3.

The Intra-class Correlation Coefficients for the Scores by Two Raters for Pre- and Post-test Scores

	Groups		Correlation	95% Confidence Interval		F Test with True Value 0				
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Value	df1	df2	Sig	
Pretest scores	Cont.	Single Measures	.906	.553	.983	20.24	6	6	.001	
		Average Measures	.951	.712	.992	20.24	6	6	.001	
	Exp.	Single Measures	.952	.749	.992	40.46	6	6	.00	
		Average Measures	.975	.856	.996	40.46	6	6	.00	
	Posttest scores	Cont.	Single Measures	.928	.645	.987	26.93	6	6	.00
			Average Measures	.963	.784	.994	26.93	6	6	.00
Exp.		Single Measures	.949	.734	.991	37.97	6	6	.00	
		Average Measures	.974	.847	.995	37.97	6	6	.00	

The estimated inter-rater reliability estimates between the two ratings for the pre-test scores of the control group ($r = .951$), with 95% CI (.712, .992), and for the experimental group ($r = .975$), with 95% CI (.856, .996) were computed and both of them were quite strong. Furthermore, the estimated reliability between the two raters for the post-test scores of the control group ($r = .963$), with 95% CI (.784, .994), and for the experimental group ($r = .974$), with 95% CI (.847, .995) were also calculated which were both quite wide. Therefore, inter-rater reliability of the writing measurement for the writing pre and post-test between the two raters was ensured.

Results of the Pre-test Scores of the Voice Rate in Writing

After assigning the participants into control and experimental groups, they were given a writing test to unveil the possible pre-existing differences between the two groups with respect to the voice rate in writing before offering the treatment to the experimental group. Tables 4 displays the results of an independent samples t-test which was run to analyze the participants' pretest writing scores.

Table 4.
Group Statistics for the Pre-test scores of the Voice Rate in Writing

	Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pretest scores	Control	10	58.5714	6.41891	2.42612
	Experimental	12	63.5714	7.34523	2.77624

For the participants' writing pre-test in terms of the measured voice rate, the mean scores for both groups were computed ($M_{control} = 58.87$; $M_{experimental} = 63.57$). Furthermore, the standard deviation for the control group was slightly smaller than that of the experimental group ($SD_{control\ group} = 6.41$; $SD_{experimental\ group} = 7.34$). Table 5 shows the independent samples t- test for the pre-test writing scores.

Table 5.
Independent Samples T-test for the Pre-test Scores of the Writing

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					
		F	Sig.	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
Pretest scores	Equal variances assumed	.39	.54	-1.35	12	.200	-5.00	-13.03	3.03
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.35	11.78	.200	-5.00	-13.04	3.04

The independent samples t-test showed the results of the Levene's test for the equality of the variances for the distributions. As the Sig. value for the Levene's test was found to be higher than the alpha level, i.e., .05, the first row, i.e., 'equal variances assumed' was considered to explain the results of the voice rate in learners' writing. This indicated that the assumption of equal variances was not violated for the two tests and both groups were approximately equal in terms of variance as far as voice was considered in their writing.

Results of the Post-test Scores of the Voice Rate in Writing

The independent-samples t-test was run to compare the two groups' voice rate in writing pretest. Normality, as the main assumption of t-test, was checked before we ran the main statistical analyses. To this end, the Skewness and Kurtosis values were computed and the trimmed means were obtained. The Skewness and Kurtosis values were all within the range of ± 2 , indicating the normality of the distributions. After establishing the normality assumption, the t-test

was run to answer if there were statistically significant differences between the two groups in terms of the mean scores of the voice rate. The independent-samples t-test was run to see whether there was a statistically significant difference in the mean scores of the groups under study. Table 6 shows the group statistics for the two groups on posttest of writing.

Table 6.
Group Statistics for the Two Groups on Post-test of Writing (voice rate)

	Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Posttest scores	Control	10	62.5000	4.60072	1.73891
	Experimental	12	86.7143	5.54419	2.09551

In the group statistics, as table 6 shows, the means and the standard deviations for each of the groups are given. For the posttest of writing that was administered after the treatment to measure the development of voice, the mean scores of the voice rate for the control and experimental groups were ($M_{control} = 62.50$) and ($M_{experimental} = 86.71$), respectively. Furthermore, the extent of the deviation of the scores for the control group was smaller than that of the experimental group ($SD_{control\ group} = 4.60$; $SD_{Experimental\ group} = 5.54$). Table 7 shows the group statistics for the two groups on writing posttest.

Table 7.
Independent Samples Test for the Two Groups on Post-test of the Writing (voice rate)

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					
		F	Sig.	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
Posttest scores	Equal variances assumed	.61	.44	-8.89	12	.000	-24.21	-30.14	-18.28
	Equal variances not assumed			-8.89	11.60	.000	-24.21	-30.16	-18.25

The independent samples t-test presented the results of the Levene's test for equality of variances. This tested whether the variation of scores for the groups under the study was the same. The output of this test determined the correct t-value that SPSS provided for use. Since the Sig. value for the Levene's test was larger than the alpha level (.05), the first row of the table, referred to "Equal variances assumed," was used. In Table 9, the significance level for Levene's test was (.44). This was larger than the cut-off point (.05). This meant that the assumption of equal variances was not violated for the posttest scores, too.

As the value in the Sig. (2-tailed) column was lower than .05, there was a statistically significant difference in the posttest mean scores of voice rate for

each of the two groups. In this study, the Sig. (2-tailed) value was (.00). Since this value was lower than the required cut-off point (.05), a significant difference in the posttest means of the voice rate in writing for the control and experimental groups was found. The mean difference between the two groups is also shown in this table (mean difference = 24.21), along with the 95% Confidence Interval (CI) of the difference showing both the lower and upper values (see Table 7).

Calculating the Effect Size for the Independent-Samples T-Test (Posttest Scores)

Effect size statistics shows the magnitude of the existing differences between groups. Eta squared was used to compute the effect size. Eta squared shows the proportion of the variance in the dependent variable under study explained by the independent (type of instruction) variable. Eta squared value for t-test was computed using the information given in the output.

Replacing with the appropriate values from table 7: Eta squared = $79.03 / 79.03 + (7+7-2) = .8681$. The guidelines (proposed by Cohen 1988) for interpreting this value are .1 = small effect, .3 = medium effect, .5 = large effect. It was found that the effect size of .8681 shows a large effect. Expressed in percentage (eta square value was multiplied by 100), 86.81% of the variance in writing posttest scores was explained by group factor which was related to the type of instruction for the two groups.

To sum up, there was a significant difference in the mean scores for the control (M control = 62.50, SD control = 4.60) and experimental group (M experimental = 86.71, SD experimental = 5.54; $t(14) = 8.89$, $p = .00$). The magnitude of the differences in the means (mean difference = 24.21, 95% CI: -30.14 to -18.28) was medium (Eta squared = .8681). Thus, dialogical thinking has a statistically significant effect on intermediate EFL learners' development of voice in writing.

The Results of Paired Samples T-Test

To investigate the extent of the participants' development of voice in writing within the groups, paired samples t-tests were also run. These tests showed the participants' progress in writing pre-test and post-test of the voice as shown in Table 8.

Table 8.
Paired Samples Statistics for the Pre- and Post-test of the Voice Rate in Writing for the Two Groups

Groups			Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Control	Pair 1	Pretest scores	58.5714	10	6.41891	2.42612
		Posttest scores	62.5000	10	4.60072	1.73891
Experimental	Pair 2	Pretest scores	63.5714	12	7.34523	2.77624
		Posttest scores	86.7143	12	5.54419	2.09551

The mean score of the control group for the voice rate in writing improved from pre-test ($M = 58.57$) to post-test ($M = 62.50$). For the experimental group, the mean score noticeably improved from pre-test ($M = 63.57$) to post-test ($M = 86.71$).

In order to see if these differences between pre and posttest scores of the voice rate in writing were statistically significant, paired samples t-tests were run on the pre and posttest writing scores for the two groups. The results are presented in table 9.

Table 9.

Paired Samples Test for the Pre- and Post-test of the Voice Rate in Writing for the Two Groups

Groups		Mean	Std. De- viation	Paired Differences		T	Df	Sig. (2- tailed)
				95% Confidence Interval of the Difference Lower	Upper			
Control	Pretest scores - Posttest scores	-3.92	7.33	-10.71	2.85	-1.41	6	.206
Experimental	Pretest scores - Posttest scores	-23.14	10.67	-33.01	-13.26	-5.73	6	.001

As it was shown in Tables 8 and 9, both groups showed development of voice in their writing. This improvement could be argued to be statistically significant for the experimental group only ($p \leq .05$). The mean difference between pre and posttests for the control group was 3.92 for the development of voice in learners' writing. However, the mean difference between pre and posttests for the experimental group amounted to 23.14. This suggested that the experimental group outperformed the control group in writing posttest. As a result, it could be concluded that dialogical thinking had a statistically significant effect on intermediate EFL learners' development of voice in writing. The results of paired samples t-tests revealed that both groups progressed in the writing post-test. However, this progress was statistically significant simply for the experimental group ($p \leq .05$).

Discussion

The results revealed that the manipulation of voice strategies assisted the participants to accomplish various objectives in their writing and to portray themselves in their essays. Voice strategies such as the reiteration and the restatement of the central point improved the quality of coherence and unity in their writings (see Figure 1). With regard to the boosters and hedges, they enabled the participants not only to state their opinions but also to adjust the level of

directness and emphasis. The results also revealed that these strategies improved the participants' overall writing skill and helped them unveil their emotions and attitudes more clearly. Through the disclosure of personal attitude, their autonomy of thought as an individual and their personal voice were imprinted. Based on the findings, the learners started making rhetorical moves that qualified them to be more cautious when suggesting or challenging the values and beliefs, and to treat the topics with more relative authority and confidence. Hyland (2002) also accentuated that writing calls not only for the exploration of the norms not only at the sentence levels but also at the discursal and authorial levels. The EFL learners' awareness of voice may establish rich ground for them to better understand their teachers' feedback and to handle unity, coherence, cohesion, sentence, and structural skills, coupled with boosters, intensifiers, hedges, and other voice components to cultivate a stronger sense of authoritativeness and authorial presence in their writing.

In light of the findings of the present study, it was found that voice expression strategies, as elements of good writing (Matsuda, 2001), needed to be detected, discussed, evaluated, modeled, and taught to the EFL learners to help them have their own authorial voice and claim the ownership of their scripts. Lack of due attention to the development of voice, the components of assertiveness, boosters, hedges, self-identification, authorial presence, and stance-taking strategies in composition classes may leave the learners on their own to guess what is taken to be good writing. The findings are supported by Escobar and Fernandez (2017) who confirmed that EFL composition courses should offer an opportunity to the learners to learn not only the basic norms but also to build a discursal and authorial voice as EFL writers.

The findings of this study are indicative of the credibility of the manipulation of dialogic teaching and its effect on the writing pedagogy and the development of voice in EFL learners' writing. The findings are consistent with those of Fahim and Mirzaii (2014) who acknowledged the acceptability of the employment of dialogic critical thinking tasks and their weighty influence on writing pedagogy. They continued that dialogic critical thinking tasks, inherently, engage individuals in dialog; consequently, they would have the potentiality for developing voice in them considerably.

Along with the findings of the present study, Tanaka (2014) stated that dialogical thinking guides students to consider and understand the controversies through the analysis and appraisal of opposing belief systems behind controversial perspectives. The attainment of voice through dialogical thinking helps the learners to posit their ideas, views, and attitudes based on logical argumentations (Alagozlu, 2007; Hyland, 2010; Ibrahim & Nambiar, 2012). This stance suggests that critical thinking and self-voice mutually improve the quality of the L2 writing. As Barnawi (2011) confirmed, dialogic thinking and voice are "indispensable ingredients in EFL college writing/composition instruction, which will allow students to express themselves clearly, and put their own viewpoints into their writing" (p.191).

The findings suggested that dialogical thinking enables the learners to engage in argumentative discussions to meet the mutual understanding and thereby shape and strengthen their voice. As Matusov (2007) argued, dialogism can lead to the creation of voices by providing opportunities for the learners to engage collaboratively with each other and provide reasons for the way they think. The results dovetail with Chappell (2014, p. 98) who pointed out that engaging students in dialogues and writing activities help them manage reasonably what they think. Yaqubi and Rashidi (2019) also acknowledged that dialogic classes provide opportunities for all students to have voice and contribution and propose their own comments, viewpoints, and perspectives.

Merely getting a voice into one's writing is not enough (Arend & Sunnen, 2016; Escobar & Fernández, 2017) and it should be accompanied by sound and sense reasoning and thinking. Dialogical thinking is needed to encourage and stimulate reasonable arguments, sound judgments, and sensible evaluations. Regarding dialogic thinking, the results were in line with those of Frijters et al. (2008) who contended that dialogic teaching results in an extra positive influence on the critical thinking skills of the students regarding "generative fluency of reasoning and quality of value orientation" (p. 66). Dialogic pedagogy expedites learners' exploration of meaning, evidence, and application of reasoned arguments (Jamali, 2015) that consequently initiates the development of higher level of cognitive complexity (Reznitskaya, 2012).

Traditionally, the writing courses yielded to the compliance of the EFL learners with a set of lexical, syntactic, and linguistic resources and the role of the EFL teachers was to teach the writing rules (Johns, 1997). However, the EFL learners' mastery of the basic norms of academic writing does not suffice to develop a strong discursal and authorial voice. Writing is not the demonstration of ideas in a detached, neutral, and impersonal manner, but rather the manifestation of voice. EFL teachers, therefore, should tailor the writing courses that conventionally focus on unity, cohesion, and coherence so as to address voice sufficiently and enhance the learners' writing ability by engaging them in scaffolded dialogues.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study attempted to develop voice into college EFL writing classrooms through dialogical thinking. The finding revealed that utilizing the dialogical thinking during class instruction affect the development of voice in the intermediate EFL learners' writing. In fact, teaching writing just through the basics and rules fails to prepare learners for the scholarly work that they need (Dizon, 2016).

In the light of the findings of the present study, a number of pedagogical implications for teachers, instructors, material developers, and policy makers are put forward. First of all, through dialogic pedagogy, teachers can empower L2 learners to have a voice in the classroom and consequently in the society (Rahimi et al., 2012). Under this approach, the scholarly texts are not consid-

ered as “perfect, formally organized language patterns and discourses” (Johns, 1997, p.7), rather they are viewed as medium for self-disclosure and discovery and the expansion of an exclusive individual voice. Accordingly, EFL curriculum developers and textbook writers are highly recommended to include these types of tasks as one of the components of instructional materials to enable the EFL learners to voice their opinions and engage them in dialogical thinking tasks. There seems to be an opportunity to improve students’ writing on challenging topics by instructing and practicing the principles of dialogical thinking. The results imply that EFL practitioners not only need to modify their views about writing, texts and voice, but also have to modify their approach to writing and the methodologies they use. Last but not least, it should be mentioned that teaching dialogical thinking and promoting self-voice in writing requires not only the knowledge of how to apply them practically in the class, but also patience, persistence, and meticulous supervision on behalf of the teachers to support the students and get them to engage in the whole process.

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Appendix

The Lesson Plan Based on Alexander's (2008) Dialogic Teaching

Objectives:

At the end of the term, the students would have been able to:

- Identify the structure of the genre of the argumentative essay.
- Identify the features of the generic structure and the stages of the essay.
- Identify the linguistic features (i.e. hedges, intensifiers, bundles, boosters, and stance taking strategies, point-making) in the moves of the essay.
- Recognize the use of types of active and passive versions.
- Find the various use of stating, developing, and supporting the argument

Session 1:

- An OPT was administered to select the participants who were at intermediate level.
- Students were familiarized with the course requirements and the nature of the writing activities.
- The learners were informed that they had to complete some writing tasks as part of their class requirements and hand the final draft to the teacher for feedback and scoring. However, they were already informed that they were supposed to hand in their best draft because it contributed to their final score in the course.
- The preliminary topics of writing were taught (topic sentence, support sentences, etc.)

Sessions 2 to 9:

- From week 2 to week 9 of the course meetings, the learners spent 35 minutes of the total class time (90 minutes) each week to complete the assignments through multiple in-class drafting, out of class writing, or cooperative writing.
- The teacher delivered the first passage to the students. Teachers and students addressed learning tasks, i.e., topic sentence, hedges, and intensifiers together as group discussions. (*Collective principle*)
- The participants were asked to summarize the passage in one page and in two pages they were to argue and list in favor of or against any issues raised in the selected passage individually.
- Teachers and students listened to each other, shared ideas, and considered alternative viewpoints. They were asked to discuss the issue in small groups and present their reasons. They were asked to clearly state their positions, justify their viewpoints, challenge others' views and finally arrive at a consensus. (*Reciprocal principle*)
- Students articulated their ideas freely without fear of embarrassment over wrong answers. They helped each other to reach common understandings. They were asked to participate in discussion and completed assignments such as analyzing the topic and listing 10 reasons for rejecting or accepting the issue and its effect on society. (*Supportive principle*)
- Students were supposed to discuss and evaluate opposing viewpoints of the controversial issue in a kind of a consensus task leading to an agreement on the certain issue. In fact, the teacher and students built on their own and each other's ideas and chain them into coherent lines of thinking and enquiry. (*Cumulative principle*)
- The teacher delivered the necessary instructions on the topic sentence, hedges, and intensifiers. They practiced cooperatively building the criteria lists and identifying differences in the paradigms. (*Purposeful principle*)
- The students were asked to enlist and write their viewpoints around the agreements.
- The students were asked to explore hedges and boosters across the genre-moves of the essay.
- Next session, they had to handle a written paper based on their new understandings and viewpoints.
- They were asked to follow essay organization principles taught in the course.
- The topic for the next session was introduced.

Session 10:

- The final writing tasks was administered in which the participants were asked to write about two topics. One of them was chosen from among the topics they discussed during the treatment and another one was selected by the teacher.

Domination of Positivism in Academic Writing of Iranian Applied Linguists: A Critical Corpus-based Approach

Research Article

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Received: 2020-05-03 | Revised (1): 2020-07-16 | Accepted: 2020-07-22

Abstract

Academic writing is one of the important skills in higher education and as a social phenomenon can be investigated for ideological manipulations. This study tries to unveil the westernized hegemonic discourse such as legitimation patterns in academic discourse of Iranian applied linguists in three major research paradigms. To this end, five-point classification of van Leeuwen's (2008) authorization's category was used as our analytic framework. The published articles of Iranian academic-scholarly journals

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were critically analyzed for the observed frequencies of the mentioned classifications and Chi-square tests were used to statistically investigate the associations between authorization's patterns and research paradigms. The results revealed statistically significant associations between quantitative and qualitative research methods on one hand and between qualitative and mixed-methods on the other hand. Accordingly, the results of this study may shed some lights on the domination of positivist's ideology in academic writing of the applied linguists in Iran. In this respect, the policy makers in the Ministry of Science, Research, and Technology, along with editorial boards of Iranian journals in the field of applied linguistics, may change the globalized and westernized view of education into more locally oriented approaches. Furthermore, professors and students may adopt more democratic views in their research and reporting studies.

Keywords: positivism, academic writing, critical corpus-based approach, hegemonic discourse, domination

Introduction

One of the most challenging skills with regard to gatekeeping characteristics in second language learning is writing. Language learners deal with writing in everyday life and learn and improve this skill from the beginning of their studies. There are numerous definitions for writing available in the literature. According to Cumming (1998), "writing is text, is composing, and is social construction" (p. 61). Despite the shortness of this definition, the vastness of this skill is identifiable respectively. This definition draws the attention from mere understanding of writing skill as development of texts to more contextual, dynamic, and social approaches. Among different models of this skill, academic writing is of paramount importance and can be considered as one of the most crucial tools in education. According to Hyland (2016), academic writing became an enterprise in which "six million scholars in 17,000 universities produce over 1.5 million peer reviewed articles" (p. 58). This amount of publication and academic findings, by nature, leads to visible or hidden influences in the education. In other words, education cannot be considered as a neutral and apolitical setting which only scientific findings are focalized. Through manipulative issues for research in the applied linguistics, Mirhosseini (2018) identified several sources for scrutiny of which publishing has an important contribution to this study. Publishing in many circumstances has a hegemonic role for the researchers. Accordingly, Canagarajah (1996) underlined three obstacles to publishing, in which; "non-discursive requirements exclude Third World scholars from scholarly publications; that the material constraints on academic writing bear on knowledge production; and that such academic /publishing practices are embedded in international power relations" (p.438).

The ideological problems in academic writing can be investigated from two major manipulative sources of power namely the dominant research paradigm and the journals' policies. The mirror image of the sources of power reflects the ideological stand of the dominated group. Moreover, researchers may adopt

the tenets of the dominant ideology in their study to become accepted as the member of the particular academic discourse community. This is one of the manipulative issues in academic writing which the dominant research paradigm may directly manipulate the language of the researchers. Hall (2007) mentioned that “good journals may reject good work for reasons of ideology” (p.13). Ideological manipulation of scholarly papers can be considered as one of the several sources of hegemony in academic settings which may tackle the identity of the authors. According to Burgess and Ivancic (2010) identity in writing is not a fixed entity and includes “the self that a person brings to the act of writing, the self she constructs through the act of writing, and the way in which the writer is perceived by the reader(s) of the writing” (p.232). However, the self-construction has relations with political, economic and cultural agendas in higher education.

Publication, in essence, makes great opportunities for universities’ income, judgment of scholars and practitioners. Moreover, researchers are engrossed in opportunities for their future careers (Hyland, 2016). In other words, publication validates researchers in their field of inquiry (Canagarajah, 1996). This validation in Iranian context has roots in policies of the Ministry of Science, Research and Technology (henceforth MSRT). Tavakoli and Tavakol (2018) found education in Iran as a problematic jurisdiction in that neither relevant need analysis nor appropriate right analysis existed in higher education and decisions were based on intentions of authorities. In this respect, the second concern is the hegemonic control of Iranian local journals with regard to the global effects on the language of the accepted articles. As the crux of the matter, if journals seek for scientific scholarly papers which “I” as an identity indicator must be excluded, scholars and practitioners will unquestionably remove their identity in what they have found to gain the mentioned validity and visibility.

This study aims to unveil the hegemonic discourse of Iranian published articles in the field of applied linguistics vis-à-vis their research paradigms. Shohamy (2008) divided language policy into overt and covert. In Iran, overt policies are those influenced by authorities in Iranian academic context whereas covert policies deal with actual practices which may or may not be influenced by bureaucratic power (Mirhosseini & Khodakarami, 2016). Covert policies may embrace the hidden intentions of sources of power in academic settings which make researchers servant of the system through eliminating their identity and promotion of positivism. This study targeted the discourse manipulation of researchers through the methodological forces in their academic articles. One of the reasons for this manipulation is that global forces and colonial intentions tend to disparage the local knowledge (Kumaravadivelu, 2006). Geerlings and Lundberg (2018) argued for the need to uncover the hegemonic discursive in academic writing which had roots in globalization and universalizing knowledge in Asia. Uncurtaining the hegemonic discursive of western knowledge may shed lights on the reality of higher education in Iranian context. Furthermore, identification of global forces which influence academic writing in Iran may be fruitful for researchers’ identities.

The critical appraisal of academic writings in this study owes much to Foucault's (1980) identification of "subjugated knowledges" versus "low-ranking knowledges" (pp. 81-82). 'Subjugated knowledges can be generalized to the dominant school of thought approved by the majorities whereas 'low-ranking knowledges stay in minorities. Accordingly, the unification in scientific discourse which has been derived from the subjugated knowledge develops a threshold for scientific researchers and embroils other varieties and methodologies for research. The discourse of the researchers, in this case, becomes manipulated through assigned characteristics of the scientific discourse. Moreover, Shor and Freire (1987) highlighted the division of "producing knowledge" and "existing knowledge" as the pivotal point for domination of western ideology and dominant group of society in education. Dominant group maintains and replicates hegemony through manipulation which results in power abuse (van Dijk, 2006). The findings of this study may suggest academicians, journals reviewers, editors and decision makers more liberal and locally oriented approaches toward writing style of scholarly papers.

Background of the Study

The role of philosophy is irresistible in language studies. The skeleton of education is mounted on different theories and philosophies which are covertly filtered by power. According to Comte (2009), philosophy was derived from human life and it was intended to compensate for the shortcomings in three major layers of life namely "thoughts, feelings and actions" (p.8). Yet, we can simply realize that problems such as inequality and injustice are growing all around the world regardless of availability of different theories and philosophies. On one hand, philosophies and theories cannot create change unless the level of praxis is achieved; on the other hand, social transformation and educational change are two inseparable entities. These two notions underline the practice of critical pedagogy as a fortifying tool against dictatorship in education and societies.

Different intentions exist in education and universities canvass for them. Various types of ideology in higher education may unravel the unity of researchers in solving the real problems. These ideologies manipulate researchers in terms of the method and the form of the language they use. In essence, three major research paradigms are quantitative with positivist ideology, qualitative with reformist ideology and mixed-method which is based on pragmatism (Dornyei, 2007). These ideologies and methodologies segregate researchers and practitioners in education and may take their attention from problem-posing and problem-solving nature of research to visibility and benefits of publication.

McLean (2006) succinctly identified three key objectives which higher education should take into consideration namely democracy, identification of sources of inequalities and addressing global problems. Democracy in education and applied linguistics can help transgression of dictated methods and

conventional approaches in research and writing scholarly papers. On the other hand, undemocratic approach to applied linguistics may result in unjust, unfair, and unequal academic setting. Dewey (1916) did not divide education from the society and believed that democratic education leads to democratic society. Higher education in Iran, specifically in the field of applied linguistics, may masquerade its unequal appeal to positivist school of thought which promotes language of statistics, callousness and prescribed procedures. In what follows, the nexus between theoretical and empirical studies with regard to hegemony, critical language studies and identity are brought into consideration.

Critical Language Studies and the Identity Formation

In line with justice, equality and democracy in applied linguistics, Pennycook (2010) identified a number of critical domains and mentioned that critical approach towards language study “involves a constant skepticism, a constant questioning of the normative assumptions of applied linguistics” (p.3). Norms and conventions play a determinant role in promotion of the particular belief in higher education. To elaborate, Lazaraton (1997) specified several possible reasons such as department preference for instruction of quantitative research methodology as a conventional approach. Considering the research paradigm in postmethod, Kumaravadivelu (2006) believed that “contrary to common misconception, doing teacher research does not necessarily involve highly sophisticated, statistically laden, variable-controlled experimental studies” (p. 181). This belief paves the path for practitioners and scholars to adopt different research methodologies for their studies. Furthermore, the scientific approach cannot be conceived as the only research paradigm and researchers’ open-mindedness may resolve the distance between authors and readers in scientific studies. The quantitative research methodology with traditional, isolated and fragmented structures in the articles has been dominantly practiced in TESOL (Canagarajah, 2016). To this end, questioning the norms of scientific writing through the lens of critical discourse analysis (CDA) can be considered as an initial step in resistance to manipulative global forces in the local research articles.

Language and ideology are intertwined facts which cannot be separated and have mutual effects on each other (Fairclough, 1995). The impacts of ideology on discourse and resistance upon “what is acceptable and what is tabooed” can be directly sought through critical language related studies (Kumaravadivelu, 2006, p.13). Critical pedagogy, among various types of critical language studies, should be reputed as the artery of consciousness and criticality in education. According to Kubota and Miller (2017), the concept of criticality in language related studies could be enunciated in key issues such as “problematizing naturalized and normalized assumptions and practices; questioning power and inequalities; focusing on broader social, ideological, and colonial milieus; problematizing gender, race, class, and sexuality; transcending fixed knowledge and seeking visions for change; and practicing self-reflexivity and praxis” (p. 132). Understanding, scrutinizing and reflecting on these issues can be sought in op-

erationalizing Freire's (1970) notion of 'problem- posing' model of education. With regard to critical pedagogy, Kumaravadivelu (2006) pointed out the importance of teachers and learners' identity for interrogation of hegemony. The identity construction of educators can give them voice to resist inequities and injustice. Furthermore, they become able to change the undemocratic status quo in their education and society. This change or transformation is at the heart of the critical approaches toward education (Dewey, 1916; Freire, 1970; Joseph, 2002; Kumaravadivelu, 2006; Shor & Freire, 1987).

By considering the sociological standpoint of identity formation, Kumaravadivelu (2012) pinned three philosophical points namely modernism, post-modernism and globalism. Identity of individuals in modernism is tied directly to the societal conventions, yet in postmodernism it is constructed based on individual self-determination (Kumaravadivelu, 2012). However, the identity in globalism is what this paper seeks and the construction of this type of identity may not be achieved unless individuals develop "critical knowledge that can help them tell the difference between formation and disinformation, between ideas and ideologies, between trivial and the consequential" (Kumaravadivelu, 2012, p. 12). Globalism has reduced the boundaries and unfamiliarity of the nations with different cultures. Thereby, the powerful culture both in everyday life or academic setting maybe adopted by nations. In other words, the western theories and theorists, as the sources of power, may be role modeled by local educators, practitioners and scholars which in fact tackles their identity. In academic writing, Hyland (2002) specified several argumentations for the exclusion of students' identity two of which namely "culturally shaped epistemologies" and "culture specific views of authority" are related to global forces and the intentions of authorities (p. 1107). In this respect, reviewing some researches in line with the theory of identity in Iran may possibly shed some lights on the perceptions of the Iranian educated elite.

Researchers' Self-determination and the Control of Authors in Iranian Context

Culture and identity are inseparable facts which can be investigated in social settings. Karimifard (2012) spotted three areas such as nationality, religion and modernism which Iranian identities are constructed upon. To study culture and identity empirically, Saboori et al. (2015) investigated the relationship between cultural dimensions and identity components. In their initial step, their findings revealed that those with adopted western identity have more democratic perspectives in their identity formation. To remark some of these democratic features, the participants were intolerant of inequality and had lower emotional gender distinction (see Saboori et al. 2015). Although investigation of identity at social level is significantly important due to inseparability of society and education, more pertinent studies in line with this study is worthy of attention.

Concerning the academic setting, Rashidi and Mansurian (2015) studied the possible relationship between personal, relational, social and collective identi-

ties and the English achievements of Iranian learners. However, their result did not indicate significant correlation between variables. In contrast, Alimorad (2015) found identity as a crucial factor for academic performance, but instructors and practitioners paid little attention to this notion. To democratize the university setting, Alimorad (2015) suggested that “listening to the voices of language learners” was an important step for the future of education (p. 50). Listening to the voice of voiceless is one of the fundamental concerns in critical language studies which can be generalized to the identity construction of the researchers. Rahimpour et al. (2018) investigated researchers’ identity in their own academic articles in relation to the qualitative research methodology. In Rahimpour et al. (2018) study, researchers used personal pronouns and possessive to indicate their voice in their research articles. In different disciplines, the self-mention was used more frequently in social sciences such as philosophy, applied linguistics and sociology comparing to the other fields (Hyland, 2001).

However, the voice of the authors can be controlled by professors and editors. Hegemony is a control over a group via consent and agreement (Gramsci, 1971) and can be considered as a hurdle for the reformation. In this regard, Rezaei and Seyri (2019) found that Iranian PhD students “were concerned about the hegemony of English as the language of science and instead preferred publishing their works in Persian and in the local journals” (p. 949). Furthermore, they found that the evaluation system in Iran is based on the publication. One of the participants stated that:

One reason for submitting papers to international journals is that promotion of faculty members is tied to the number of articles they publish. If they publish a great number of articles, they can easily be promoted to associate professorship (Rezaei& Seyri, 2019, p.947).

These findings possibly indicate the control of professors over PhD students’ academic writing for publishing purposes. Accordingly, professors are more familiar with the expectations of academic discourse community in comparison to the students. These expectations are accepted by majority and create a uniform frame for academic communications. For instance, quantitative articles follow sets of predetermined steps and deviation from these steps can be considered problematic by professors and editors. However, the uniform means of communication may be fruitful for some scholars and practitioners. In this regard, Mansouri Nejad et al. (2019) found the interests of Iranian PhD candidates for quantitative research methods based on facts such as easiness, speed, time saving features of data analysis and cost effectiveness. However, from a critical lens the uniform means of communication may be considered problematic. These steps are not locally identified and have deep roots in the western traditions of scientific writing. Disrespect of the identified standards which are accepted globally and by western theorists is equal to rejection. For instance, Stapleton (2019) states his strong opposition to the deviation from standards in the discourse of scientific articles that have been accepted by the majority (natives).

Also, the pressure of editors and reviewers is highly influential in maintaining the status quo in academic writing. Accordingly, O'Neil (2019) underlined that the editors in well-accredited international journals can control and define the construction of knowledge for the entire discipline. Local journals, in Iran, may also follow the standards of western dominant scientific discourse in Iranian academic setting.

Research Question and Hypothesis

Through critical approach toward globalized and ideological manipulation of discourse, this study seeks domination of scientific writing in relation to the research methodologies in the well-accredited local Iranian journals in the field of applied linguistics. According to our initial investigation there was a significant relationship between quantitative and Mixed-methods in terms of Authorization's patterns (see table 3). Therefore, we investigated those patterns between quantitative and qualitative along with qualitative and mixed-methods designs:

- Are there statistically significant associations between adoptions of authorization's patterns in different research paradigms in Iranian local journals?
- H0: There are no statistically significant associations between adoptions of authorization's patterns in different research paradigms in Iranian local journals.

Materials and Methods

This study is based on quantitative text analysis method. The texts of academic articles published in local Iranian journals are critically analyzed to quantitatively investigate the patterns of discourse in relation to their research methodologies.

Corpus

The corpus of this study is consisted of scholarly papers published in open access '*Academic-Scholarly*' journals granted and approved by the MSRT of Iran. These journals are well-accredited and follow peer-reviewed process in their decisions. The titles of Iranian targeted journals along with the date of availability are brought in Table 1. Some of the journals have been excluded since they publish articles in Persian language.

Table 1.*Title and Date of Availability of Iranian Academic-Scholarly Journals*

Title	Date of Availability
Teaching English Language (TEL)	2007
Iranian Journal of Applied Linguistics (IJAL)	2008
Iranian Journal of Applied Language Studies (IJALS)	2009
Journal of Teaching Language Skills (JTLS)	2009
Journal of Research in Applied Linguistic (JRAL)	2010
Applied Research on English Language (AREL)	2012
Issues in Language Teaching (ILT)	2012
Iranian Journal of Language Teaching Research (IJLTR)	2013
Iranian Journal of English for Academic Purposes (IJEAP)	2015

The listed journals are related to the field of applied linguistics and mainly directed by Iranian state universities. Iranian scholars mostly present their research and their line of thoughts in such journals. Additionally, the future of many educators in Iran, specifically PhD candidates, depends on the publication in one of these journals under some circumstances. This highlights the importance of this study and other critical studies with regard to the same subject.

As it was discussed in preceding sections, Dornyei (2007) identified three main ideologies of research methods in applied linguistics (see Table 2). This classification has systematized the selection of the articles in this study. Accordingly, 36 papers for each research methodology were randomly selected from the mentioned journals ($t = 108$).

Table 2.*Three Main Ideological Research Methods in Applied Linguistics*

Quantitative	Qualitative	Mixed methods
Positivism	Reformist movement	Pragmatism

One of the main issues for appropriateness of a quantitative study is the sample size; however, in text and discourse analysis this point is secondary. In text analysis, researchers might adopt flexible range of subjects. For example, Hyland (2013) mentioned that “sometimes researchers work with a single text” (p. 149).

The Analytic Framework

The discourse in academic writing embraces large area for research. It can be critically analyzed from the positivistic traditions in textual format of articles such as “Introduction, Method, Result, and Discussion” (Canagarajah, 2016) to more meaning oriented approaches such as Hyland’s (2005) stance and engagement markers. But, the concept of legitimation can be considered at the heart of power manipulation in academic settings and mainly positivist school of thought. With regard to CDA, van Leeuwen (2008) classified four areas for the discursive manipulation of legitimation in which we selected authorization.

This category is comprised of Personal Authority (PA), Expert Authority (EA), role model authority (RA), impersonal authority (IA), the authority of tradition (AT) and the authority of conformity (AC). Among these six categories, role model authority is excluded due to limited application in academic writing.

To illustrate each sector briskly, in personal authority researchers' "obligation modality" can be investigated (van Leeuwen, 2008, p. 106). In fact, identities which authors construct in the report of their study (such as I or we) are under scrutiny. The second classification, expert authority, has much in common with Clark's (1992) notion of "appeal to authority" which pinpoints the conventional use of pioneers in academic discourses (p. 135). Researchers refer to a number of studies which have similar result to support their point of view. For instance, as Karimi and Nafissi (2017) have also mentioned, the importance and integration of culture learning into second or foreign language learning curriculum has been highlighted by many (Brown, 2007; Choudhury, 2014; Christiansen & Silva, 2016; Kramsch, 1998; Schulz, 2007; Tomalin, 2008; Wang, 2008, all cited in Karimi & Nafissi, 2017). According to van Leeuwen (2008) this classification typically occurs in academic discourse in which researchers instead of "providing arguments and evidence, quote intellectual megastars, or just add their names in parentheses" (p. 107). Numerous references in support of a point may also squander the intellectual priorities of readers such as critical reading and thinking.

Additionally, standardized rules in research methodologies can be investigated through impersonal authority (e.g., $r = .071$, $p < .01$). These rules are mainly indicated by the methodologies that researchers adopt in accomplishing their studies. The authority of tradition also tackles the conventions in academic discourse such as presenting estimate of reliability of instruments in the research articles (e.g., Cronbach's alpha was found to be 0.77 or reporting Kappa value for Qual studies). The report of reliability estimates instead of validity investigation which plays much greater role in studies became a common sense in Iranian academic discourse community. Finally, the authority of conformity targets the reductionist and to the point presentation of gap or statement of the problem. In other words, the traditions of scientific writing conform authors to study single problem while possibility of other forces such as political, economic and cultural constraints are not included in the studies. The reductionist approach to stating the problem is under magnifier in this part e.g. Askari Matin et al. (2018) specifically mentioned several *gaps* in changing teacher education in Iran.

Procedure

In order to critically analyze the corpus, AntConc software is used for the discourse in the texts. AntConc toolkit is a useful program for the frequency measurement of words and phrases in corpus analysis. Anthony (2013) depicted the usefulness of AntCon freeware in providing researchers with constructive elements of the texts. This program has a converting option for PDF files which

gives the opportunity for critical analysis of the published texts. After the text converting step, the identified discourse based on van Leeuwen's (2008) category of 'authorization' is investigated through words and clues of those patterns. In this step, texts were scrutinized through Cluster and N/Grams which calculates frequencies (Cluster size = Min.1 and Max.1). In case of occurrence, the observed frequencies of each category were jotted down. AntConc only provides the list of words and sentences without identification of sections (whether the clue is in reference, transcription of interviews, or author's writing) which may lead to inconsistent results. To this end, we double checked the occurrence of the authorizations clues visually by three reviewers in the texts for assurance of existence and observed frequencies.

In order to test the hypothesis, Chi-square test is used via SPSS (version 17). This study investigates the associations between frequencies of authorization's patterns (categorical variable) and research methodologies (categorical variable). Our variables are both categorical and the most appropriate statistical test is Pearson's Chi-Square (Field, 2009).

Results

In order to probe the research question, two pairs (Quan-Qual and Qual-Mixed) exist for running Chi-square test. These two pairs are under scrutiny based on the frequency of authorization's patterns in texts. The findings based on AntConc program such as the observed frequencies of authorization's patterns in quantitative, qualitative and mixed are listed in Table 3.

Table 3.
Observed Frequencies

Authorizations	Methods		
	Quan	Qual	Mixed
PA	161	162	153
EA	135	120	113
IA	200	25	210
AT	67	10	49
AC	31	18	16
Total	594	335	541

Accordingly, quantitative research methodology has the highest total value of using authorization's patterns. This research methodology has the most adoptability of the scientific writing conventions and discourse (Total $f = 594$). The second place belongs to mixed-methods (Total $f = 541$), yet the frequency of occurrence of IA were even higher than quantitative method due to reliance of some researchers on percentage in qualitative data analysis sections. On the contrary, the researchers in qualitative study used the lowest authorization's patterns in their writing (Total $f = 335$). However, the highest frequency of PA is recognizable in qualitative research methodology which is a good sign of sur-

passing the discourse of scientific writing. These observed frequencies were used in running the Chi-square test.

Table 4
Quan and Qual Methods Authorizations Crosstabulation

		Authorizations					Total	
		PA	EA	IA	AT	AC		
Methods	Quan	Count	161	135	200	67	31	594
		Expected Count	206.5	163.0	143.9	49.2	31.3	594.0
		Std. Residual	-3.2	-2.2	4.7	2.5	-.1	
	Qual	Count	162	120	25	10	18	335
		Expected Count	116.5	92.0	81.1	27.8	17.7	335.0
		Std. Residual	4.2	2.9	-6.2	-3.4	.1	
Total	Count	323	255	225	77	49	929	
	Expected Count	323.0	255.0	225.0	77.0	49.0	929.0	

In order to meet the assumption, the expected count should be higher than 5 in each cell (Field, 2009). All the expected frequencies in Table 4 are above the threshold which indicates the appropriateness of the proportion of cases in each category.

Table 5.
Qual and Mixed Methods Authorizations Crosstabulation

		Authorizations					Total	
		PA	EA	IA	AT	AC		
Methods	Qual	Count	162	120	25	10	18	335
		Expected Count	120.5	89.1	89.9	22.6	13.0	335.0
		Std. Residual	3.8	3.3	-6.8	-2.6	1.4	
	Mixed	Count	153	113	210	49	16	541
		Expected Count	194.5	143.9	145.1	36.4	21.0	541.0
		Std. Residual	-3.0	-2.6	5.4	2.1	-1.1	
Total	Count	315	233	235	59	34	876	
	Expected Count	315.0	233.0	235.0	59.0	34.0	876.0	

Furthermore, the assumption was checked for the second pairs namely qualitative and mixed-methods designs. Similar to the previous pairs, all the values were higher than five which indicates that the assumption is met.

Table 6.
Chi-Square Tests

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	119.740 ^a	4	.000
Likelihood Ratio	133.424	4	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	64.162	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	929		

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 17.67.

The result of Chi-square revealed a statistically significant association in adoption of authorization's patterns between quantitative and qualitative research methodologies ($\chi^2(4) = 119.74, p < .001$). This indicates that qualitative and quantitative methods were not significantly different in terms of the frequency of occurrence of PA, EA, IA, AT and AC. Also, the result of the Chi-square was statistically significant for the qualitative and mixed-methods design ($\chi^2(4) = 130.79, p < .001$).

Table 7.
Chi-Square Tests

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	130.793 ^a	4	.000
Likelihood Ratio	146.281	4	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	53.701	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	876		

Note. a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 13.00.

Based on these results we can reject our null hypothesis 'There are no statistically significant associations between adoptions of authorization's patterns in different research paradigms in Iranian local journals.' In contrast, there was a significant association between methodologies and domination of authorization's patterns which can be considered as the domination of scientific discourse in academic writings.

Table 8.
Symmetric Measures

		Value	Approx. Sig.
Nominal by Nominal (for Quan and Qual)	Phi	.359	.000
	Cramer's V	.359	.000
N of Valid Cases		929	
Nominal by Nominal (for Qual and Mixed)	Phi	.386	.000
	Cramer's V	.386	.000
N of Valid Cases		876	

The Cramer's statistics turned out to be statistically significant ($V = .359, P < .001$), similarly; the result for the second pair was statistically significant ($V = .386, P < .001$) which indicates the proper effect size and reduces the involvement of chance in the result of Chi-square (See Table, 8).

Discussion

In this study, we investigated the associations of authorization's patterns vis-à-vis three major research methodologies in applied linguistics. The results revealed statistically significant associations between these two variables. This indicates that the scientific writing with authorization's patterns as a positivistic move is dominant in reporting research in the field of applied linguistics in Iran. Accordingly, the results of this study supports the findings of Tavakoli and Tavkol (2018) with regard to educational system as one of the several roots of domination of traditional (positivist) approaches to English for academic purposes. By considering publications and their scopes and objectives as a part of educational system, this study revealed that the articles with different methodologies more or less followed the same old conventions of positivism and scientific writing. This can indicate the domination of ideology of positivism in research and reporting research. The qualitative method is widely used in Iranian academic context but conventions of scientific (quantitative) writing such as reliance on percentages in support of findings is also used in such methodology. Reformist movements of qualitative research need critical approach toward all aspects of writing not just replacing questionnaires with interviews.

Moreover, the qualitative and mixed-methods papers could not completely achieve the epistemic break in presenting their reports. Kumaravadivelu (2012) mentioned that "practitioners of academic disciplines work within the epistemic discourse to understand, express, and predict patterns of meaning within their disciplines" (p.14). The statistical association of the epistemic discourse and research methodologies indicates that 'understanding, expressing, and predictions of meaning' in Iranian context is tied to scientific/positivistic characteristics of knowledge production. Considering globalism as another factor for the hegemony of "western publishing industries" (Kumaravadivelu, 2012, P. 21), academic authors can be rejected according to the political reasons. In this regard, Rezaei and Seyri (2019) found that some of the participants of their study received unequal and unjust rejections of their studies due to political reasons. This finding, in fact, pinpoints the political influence of power in education which Freire (1970) pinpointed. Moreover, Mansouri Nejad et al. (2019) underlined the force of faculty members for publishing in international well-accredited journals. This attitude can influence local journals and local academic scholars and practitioners through unequal and limited access to the constructed knowledge of their own setting (Raitskaya & Tikhonova, 2020). Also, the importance of international well-accredited journals in Iran can influence the local journals to follow the dominant school of thought and to set similar structures, norms and standards for local settings. Our findings indicated that most of the studies followed similar legitimate patterns of discourse in their reports. This finding indicated the domination of quantitative discourses based on the positivist ideology in the academic writing of Iranian scholars and practitioners. Furthermore, practicing the legitimate discourse based on the dominant ideology in higher education can restricts critical inquiry and intellectualism (Shear, 2008). For instance, we recognized that some studies intellectually sought the language related matters while they followed the tradition

of positivism and scientific writing. In this regard, the identity of authors and researchers are under the influence of external forces such as expectations of discourse community and greater forces such as the policies of the MSRT.

The external forces which we underlined are transparent in some findings of Rezaei and Seyri (2019) in that the evaluation system in Iran is based on the quantity of publications. Accordingly, authors may adopt the predetermined and standardized styles of writing which are widely practiced by international scholars in order to achieve their benefits (graduation, promotions, recognition, etc.). The findings of this study showed that Iranian researchers adopted globally approved authorization's patterns which are widely practiced and accepted by the majority of academicians as the scientific language. However, following the rules and standards may faint innovation and reform in academic writing. For instance, some authors who qualitatively investigated problems used similar patterns of scientific and quantitative research methodology. The force of academic discourse community for following standards in reporting research problematizes the claim of democratic education in Iran. One of the possible circumstances for achieving democracy in higher education is to allow "low-ranking knowledges" enter in educational system. In contrast, the higher education in the field of applied linguistics mostly follows the "subjugated knowledges" in Iran. In like manner, every scientific move from research methodologies to writing the report of a study should follow prescribed and legitimized standards in order to become available in public. This notion supports Freire's banking model of education. In other words, attentions of intellectuals, scholars and practitioners are directed toward materialistic notion of education rather than problem-posing and problem-solving characteristics. To enlighten this, Atai et al. (2018) stated that "the ultimate goal of doctoral education is to prepare doctoral students to write publishable research papers" (p. 31). This claim indicates the materialistic features of higher education in Iran; in which, the intentions of authors are more integrated with academic visibility and benefits rather than solving socially-related issues which are sought in problem-posing model of education.

On the other hand, personal authority is majorly used in academic articles. The result indicated statistical associations of self-mention among all three methodologies. This is in contrast to findings of Alimorad (2015) with regard to little attention of practitioners toward identity. Moreover, the result (PA with frequency of 161, 162 and 153 for Quan, Qual and Mixed respectively) supports Hyland (2001) findings on the frequency of self-mention in applied linguistics. Iranian practitioners and scholars used personal authority to establish the aspects of identity mentioned by Burgess and Ivanic (2010). However, this does not entirely pave the road for democratic view in research and academic writing. In some single authored articles 'we' was used instead of 'I'. Rezvani and Mansouri (2013) found similarity between the identity construction of Iranian authors and other authors. However, the identity construction is not limited to the use of 'we or I' in the articles. The nature of research plays a determining role and it is in line with what Gee (2000) categorized as 'institution-identity'. In this category the identity is defined and described through institutions and

sources of power's intentions. In academic context, the requirements and objectives which create institutional-identity for faculty members, professors, students, and as such are predetermined by authorities. Academicians should follow the expected and predefined characteristics to become member of that community.

This can be considered as hegemony (control through the agreement of majority). According to Gee (2000) institutional-identity is constructed based on the discourse. Montessori (2011) highlighted the role that language plays in hegemony and mentioned that this hegemony can be unveiled through CDA. The results of this study revealed the domination of positivistic institutional-identity for academicians in Iranian context. To analyze this finding, personal authority was one of the absent features of the texts in scientific writing which after several articles and seminal works of critical scholars such as Ivancic (1998) became more visible in the academic discourse. But this is only one of the several possibilities for overcoming scientific/positivistic rules which are identified by authorities in academic discourse and controlled through the consent in the community of applied linguists. For instance, expert authority is highly expected in most of Iranian local journals in the field of applied linguistics. But, the role that mega masterminds play in readers and reviewers expectations and approval of the statements and frameworks advocates inequality between scholars and practitioners. This is what Kumaravadivelu (2006) astutely tried to minimize via postmethod pedagogy which had deep roots in critical pedagogy. As it was mentioned, the authorities use predetermined criteria for controlling the discourse in report of a research. This is one of the reasons that van Leeuwen (2008) identified several authorizations' patterns which should be applied in order to gain acceptance by authorities (ministry of education, journals policy makers, reviewers, readers, etc.).

Another aspect which possibly creates this hegemony is publishing. Accordingly, Chu Kwan (2010) underlined the pressure on doctoral students for publishing internationally in Asian context. In the field of applied linguistics in Iranian context, this pressure (pressure of publishing as key for students' prosperity) is not limited to publishing in international journals and locally approved journals adds to it. In fact, doctoral and graduate students' future is defined in either publishing in well-accredited international journals or locally approved journals. The result of this pressure is competition and it will be the benefit for the sources of power. In this regard, Atai et al. (2018) found that Iranian doctoral students compete for gaining the profit of publishing. This profit is what sources of power identified for students, professors, and researchers which creates individual competition. In other words, MRST's policies created an atmosphere which graduation became one of the main motives of PhD candidates (Rezaei and Seyri, 2019) and accordingly they might follow the expectations of the discourse community unquestionably. This competition is not appreciated in liberal education. However, to achieve this benefit (such as permission for defense session, upgrading assistant position into associate and as such) we have to follow those authorizations' patterns. For instance, we used similar au-

thorizations' patterns in this study that we critically investigated in the articles of other authors.

Conclusion

Change in educational system happens gradually. In hey days of behaviorism, behaviorists merely thought about other possibilities in applied linguistics. This change can be achieved through praxis of intellectual priorities in higher education which invites academicians to democratic approaches. To investigate the possibility for democracy in academic writing, we sought authorizations' patterns among three major research methodologies in local Iranian journals. In fact, we expected that the ideology behind the research methods influence the writing patterns of authors in their article. However, the result indicated that there is statistically significant association between research methods in terms of adoption of authorizations' patterns. In other words, the same conventions in writing quantitative studies were used in qualitative and mixed-methods designs. This indicates the domination of scientific style of writing in Iranian contexts in the field of applied linguistics. However, qualitative inquiry could be more indicative of its inherited resistance against positivism based on the observed frequency but this was not statistically significant. One of the intentions in qualitative research method is democratic society (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005); as a result, researchers could imply more democratic style of writing for paving the road for the future of applied linguistic in Iran. For instance, they can bring their identity in all parts of their article. Moreover, Canagarajah (2016) underlined the traditional sections of articles (i.e. Introduction, Method, Conclusion) as the conventions in empirical and positivists ideology. Researchers, specifically those who adopt qualitative research methods, can use different alternative sections for the report of their studies. Furthermore, Dornyei (2007) specifically mentioned that there is no guarantee for the truthfulness of the language of statistics in quantitative method; therefore, it is suggested that qualitative researchers replace numerical oriented (such as percentages and values) explanations in their findings by in-depth explorations.

The result of this study may shed some lights on the domination of positivist's ideology in the field of applied linguistics in Iran. In this respect, the policy makers in the MSRT along with editorial boards of Iranian journals in the field of applied linguistics may change the globalized and westernized view of education into more locally oriented approaches. According to Mansouri Nejad et al. (2019) findings, one unethical action practiced by the PhD candidates in Iran was 'simultaneous multiple submissions'. Possible reformation in MSRT policies may create an atmosphere for PhD candidates to follow ethical actions. MSRT's policy makers can adopt problem-posing model of education (in which socially related issues in language related studies are of concern) instead of the banking model of education (which the number of publications based on western academic convention is of importance). University professors can also provide students with an open-minded view towards education and research field. They can help students to democratically adopt their research methodologies

which they want to use in their studies beside the freedom of reporting. Students of the field of applied linguistics, on the other hand, can use reformist approach in their academic communications in the case of interests for the deviation from positivistic norms.

For further scrutiny, we suggest an in-depth study on moves and authorization's patterns in qualitative research articles in applied linguistics. Accordingly, some possibilities for alternatives of the authorization's patterns in academic discourse may become apparent. Moreover, investigation of authorization's patterns among well-accredited international journals may specify the dominant scientific discourse that has been practiced internationally. We also suggest a comparison of dominant discourse between Iranian and international journals to identify the status of Iranian and global authors. Identification, resistance and reflection on the positivism and positivists' traditions have roots in emancipatory knowledge (see Habermas, 1971), which strive for democracy.

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Identity Processing Styles as Predictors of L2 Pragmatic Knowledge and Performance: A Case of Common English Speech Acts

Research Article

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Received: 2019-05-31 | Revised (1): 2020-07-30 | Accepted: 2020-08-01

Abstract

Identity processing styles are those psychological, sociocultural, and socio-cognitive mechanisms that shape, reshape, and establish different individuals' identities both in their mother tongues and in the second or foreign language they are striving to acquire. The relationship between these identity processing styles and L2 learners' pragmatic competence is a crucial issue that has not been explored thus far in an EFL context. Therefore, the present study sought to investigate the relationship be-

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tween the information-oriented, diffuse-avoidant, and normative identity processing styles as measured by Berzonsky's (2011) Identity Processing Style Inventory (ISI-4) and L2 speech-act knowledge and production among 122 (82 F and 40 M) Iranian upper-intermediate to advanced proficiency level learners. A validated 35-item multiple-choice discourse completion test (MDCT) including five frequent English speech acts (requests, apologies, refusals, complaints, and compliments/compliment responses) and a related role-play interactive test were then employed. The application of multiple regression revealed that diffuse-avoidant and normative identity processing styles were significant but moderate contributors to both pragmatic knowledge and production; however, information-oriented identity processing style was a weak significant predictor. These findings imply that teachers can manage and tailor the instructional pragmatic practices in accordance with the learners' identity processing styles.

Keywords: identity processing style, information-oriented, diffuse-avoidant, normative, L2 pragmatic knowledge, pragmatic performance

Introduction

Individual differences (IDs) occupy a prominent position in learning a foreign or second language based on the existing SLA literature. Individual differences have been defined as “dimensions of enduring personal characteristics that are assumed to apply to everybody and on which people differ by degree” (Dörnyei, 2005, p. 4). Brown (2014) has mentioned that age, gender, personality, motivation, willingness to communicate, language proficiency, intelligence and aptitude, identity, and self-esteem are the most investigated individual variables in SLA research over the past century. As asserted by Ellis (2005, 2008), individual differences are significantly related to foreign or second language learning in general and some language skills and sub-skills in particular. Ellis (2008) has reported some of the most significant studies on the relationship between the aforementioned variables and L2 listening, reading, speaking, writing, grammar, and vocabulary from across various EFL and ESL contexts.

Pragmatics research also parallels the mainstream theories and research agenda in SLA, and accordingly, it has also witnessed some studies, drawing on multiple interweaving factors—linguistic, psychological, cognitive, sociological, affective, and social—which need to be scrutinized concomitantly to perceive the acquisition and learning of L2 pragmatics. A considerable amount of research has been done on the contribution of L2 proficiency (e.g., Al-Gahtani & Roever, 2018; Bella, 2012, 2014; Derakhshan, 2019; Félix-Brasdefer, 2004, 2007; Galaczi, 2014; Roever, 2005; Rose, 2000, 2009; Taguchi, 2005, 2007; Takimoto, 2009), motivation (e.g., Arabmofrad et al., 2019; Tajeddin & Zand-Moghadam, 2012; Takahashi, 2005; Ushioda, 2009), emotional intelligence (Ahmadi Safa, 2013; Derakhshan et al., in press), multiple intelligences (Sarani & Malmir, 2020), age and gender (Diskin, 2017; Malmir & Derakhshan, 2020; Tajeddin & Malmir, 2014) both as physiological and socio-psychological varia-

bles, personality types (e.g., Kuriscak, 2006; Taguchi, 2014, 2019; Verhoeven & Vermeer, 2002), and willingness to communicate (Reinders & Wattana, 2012) to L2 learners' speech acts, replicators, and conversational routines.

Social identity and language identity have also received some attention from pragmatics researchers (e.g., Bagheri Nevisi & Afsooshin, 2020; Hassall, 2015; Malmir, 2020; Nestor et al., 2012; Norton, 1997, 2000, 2010; Ohta, 2005; Peirce, 1995). Kasper and Roever (2005) have argued, both social and language identities, directly and indirectly, exert a tremendous influence on L2 pragmatic development and performance. In fact, most socio-pragmatic norms of the L2 are exquisitely interwoven into the social and cultural identity of the target community which inevitably affects the learners' pragmatic knowledge and performance (Kasper & Rose, 2002). Nonetheless, these mostly recognized types of identities may be the manifestation of a deeper cognitive and psychological identity formation mechanism. The development of any kind of identity, including social, cultural, and L1 and L2 identities, is the offspring of the psychological construct of identity processing style (Berzonsky & Ferrari, 1996). Berzonsky (2010) defined the identity processing styles as "those processing social, psychological and cultural mechanisms which shape, reshape, and determine the identity of an L2 learner in the target language s/he is acquiring" (p. 32). These identity processing styles set the stage for the formation of the individual's self-image and self-conceptualization during his/her cognitive, emotional, and social maturation in the community.

Identity processing styles as a very important class of individual differences have been comparatively less studied in SLA in general, and to date, no study has been conducted to examine their contributions to L2 pragmatic knowledge and performance. Therefore, the present study attempted to examine the extent of the contribution of information-oriented, diffuse-avoidant, and normative styles as the three essential types of identity processing styles to L2 learners' knowledge and actual performance speech acts. Moreover, this study has tried to scrutinize the relationship between these identity processing styles and a larger number of speech acts in comparison with the majority of the earlier speech-act studies that only focused on one or two speech acts.

Literature Review

Pragmatic Competence

Pragmatic competence is the ability that lets second or foreign language learners know how to use the linguistic forms to express their needed meanings and to achieve their communicative purposes/functions based on the variables present in the social context. Taguchi (2017, 2019) has pointed out that pragmatic competence entails a comprehensive knowledge of L2 linguistic forms and their use in the contexts to complete social actions. Bardovi-Harlig (2005) defined pragmatic competence as the second or foreign language learners' knowledge and use of the target language in sociocultural exchanges. Bardovi-Harlig (2010) maintained that pragmatic competence is that kind of knowledge that

bridges the gap “between the system side of language and the use aside” (p. 1). Barron (2003) depicted pragmatic competence as the knowledge of pragmalinguistic forms and sociopragmatic norms and how to appropriately use them to achieve communicative functions based on the dynamic and complex sociocultural requirements that are inherent in human interactions.

Nearly all these definitions provided for pragmatic competence emphasize three important types of abilities or capabilities. First, L2 learners need to develop an effective repertoire of declarative knowledge regarding linguistic aspects of the language, including lexical and grammar information. Second, L2 learners should achieve a level of procedural knowledge use that abstract theoretical competence in actual everyday encounters, i.e., how to act and use the language to express the meanings and intentions. And finally, L2 learners should have the skill to use pragmatic knowledge and abilities based on the demands of the situation and dynamism of the sociocultural context, which is under the influence of some micro-level and macro-level sociocultural factors. Therefore, in line with the dichotomy made by Kasper and Rose (2002), we can dissect pragmatic competence into knowledge and performance modules. This dichotomous division has been echoed in the current pragmatic literature by many of the renowned scholars (e.g., Bardovi-Harlig & Bastos, 2011; Roever, 2013; Taguchi, 2007, 2008, 2009).

As far as the content of the pragmatic competence is concerned, the majority of the researchers and scholars agree that speech acts are the building blocks of pragmatic competence. The speech acts accompanied by implicatures and conversational routines are the core of pragmatic knowledge with the lion share for speech acts (Taguchi & Roever, 2017). In effect, whenever we engage in interactions, we are using a chain of various speech acts, or we are answering a range of speech acts produced by others. As a result, successful language learners should continually assess how to produce speech acts and how to comprehend them based on the events in the scene of the conversation. According to Schauer (2009), speech acts are the functions of language and the communicative acts that convey the intended meanings and intentions of the interlocutors in any language encounter.

Speech acts have been classified from different perspectives and by different scholars over the past century (See Flowerdew, 2013 for a complete list); however, the most preferred classification is based on what speech acts actually do in the real world. Therefore, classifications of the speech acts from the 1990s thus far include categories such as requests, apologies, refusals, thank-yous, greetings, complaints, compliments and compliment responses, condolences, accepting, and rejecting these types of functions, and so forth. Speech acts have been studied from a purely linguistic perspective and learning or teaching perspective based on the educational needs of language practitioners in L2 pragmatics research. One of the areas of researching speech acts has been their relationship with L2 learners’ differences since learners have different cognitive, affective, and social predispositions and tendencies that directly and indirectly influence their acquisition and use of L2 speech acts an issue that it is briefly dealt with in the next section.

Individual Differences and Pragmatics

The relationship between individual/learner variables and acquisition and use of various L2 speech acts have been the focus of theoretical and empirical investigation over the half past century. Taguchi and Roever (2017) have divided these individual differences into two groups of cognitive versus social categories. Cognitive individual differences include variables such as language proficiency, intelligence, and aptitude; whereas, social individual differences include variables such as willingness to communicate (WTC), L2 language identity, and personality factors. Some other scholars (e.g., Roever et al., 2014) have divided the individual differences into three groups by adding affective variables and including personality types and motivation within that group.

Another theoretical debate about the role of individual differences in L2 pragmatic development and performance is how researchers and scholars should treat these individualistic peculiarities in their studies and how they can operationalize the related constructs. Initially, these individualistic characteristics were considered as fixed, unidimensional, and stable over time that lend themselves to psychometric evaluation and hence to instructional intervention. However, in the turn-of-the-century, as our knowledge in psycholinguistics and sociolinguistics augmented, L2 researchers and experts advanced this argument that these individual differences should be considered as dynamic, ever-changing, and unstable traits that are highly under the influence of the dynamism of the sociocultural context and easily cannot be measured by the traditional psychometric tests and that we need more sophisticated operational definitions for them in applied linguistics research (Roever, 2006).

According to Taguchi and Roever (2017), language proficiency has been the most studied individual variable in L2 pragmatics, and how it is related to pragmatic production and performance concerning the most frequent speech acts. Bella (2012) examined the relationship between the knowledge of L2 Greek and proficiency level and revealed that advanced learners had a better knowledge of Greek refusals compared with intermediate and lower proficiency learners. Interestingly, she also found that even advanced learners could not be compared with the native speakers of Greek, clearly highlighting the role of proficiency in the target language. Taguchi's (2011) study also showed that L2 proficiency was positively correlated with the knowledge of L2 speech acts and various conventional and nonconventional implicatures. Having reviewed some of the important studies, Taguchi and Roever have concluded that higher language proficiency levels better correlate with both speech act knowledge and performance. The second most investigated individual characteristic was language motivation or pragmatic motivation. Generally, the existing literature on the relationship between motivation and acquisition and use of various speech acts revealed that motivation in general and pragmatic motivation in particular positively correlates with higher knowledge of speech acts (Kasper & Rose, 2002). It should be noted that the correlation between motivation and pragmatic production/performance is less than pragmatic knowledge. In a seminal study, Takahashi (2005) found that proficiency was a significant contributor to

EFL learners' awareness and noticing of various English pragmalinguistic forms in return conversations. Various types of personality factors have also been the focus of the scrutiny in L2 pragmatics research. The five big personality characteristics, as labeled in the literature, for example, have been studied by many scholars (e.g., Kuriscak, 2006; Taguchi, 2014; Verhoeven & Vermeer, 2002). In their research, Verhoeven and Vermeer (2002) investigated the relationship between L2 Dutch pragmatic knowledge and personality type as measured by the Big Five model. The results of this study showed a moderate positive correlation between openness to experience and L2 Dutch pragmatic knowledge. Taguchi and Roever (2017) have summarized these studies reporting that introversion /extroversion is the most examined personality factor in the existing literature.

Compared with the above-mentioned individual variables, language identity, or social identity roles in the development of the speech act knowledge and performance have been comparatively less investigated. These studies have tried to examine the extent of the relationship between language identity or L2 social identity as measured by a questionnaire or survey and L2 speech act knowledge (e.g., Block, 2006; Duff, 2002; McNamara, 1997; Norton, 2000; Siegal, 1996). These studies have reported a positive correlation between the two. Nonetheless, identity is a very complex individual characteristic that acts based on psychological, cognitive, and social dimensions. So, we need to answer how the identity formation processes at the cognitive and psychological level are related to L2 learners' speech act knowledge and performance. Thus, before studying the relationship between L2 identity and pragmatic competence, we need to check the relationship between general identity processing styles and pragmatic knowledge and performance, a research gap that has not been seriously dealt with in the existing literature.

Identity Processing Styles

Identity is the learners' definition of his or her relationships with the external sociocultural world and internal emotional and socio-cognitive predispositions that determine the individual's notion of self, family, society, and the whole of humanity. Identity has been the target of extensive studies in psychology, sociology, sociolinguistics, and anthropology because of its inherent importance that is very crucial in many sub-branches of social sciences and humanities. Norton (2013) pointed out that the identity of the individuals is the focal site of all knowledge and science, applied linguistics being no exception. Berzonsky (1990) described the concept of identity as "a self-constructed cognitive representation of oneself that is used to interpret self-relevant information and to cope with personal problems and life events" (p. 156). Cote and Levine (2002) stated that identity formation is a dynamic and lifelong process that is shaped by the individuals' interactions with other people within the society based on their own idiosyncratic tendencies and capabilities. As a consequence, when talking about identity, we should consider its multilayered and complex composite. Block (2007) mentioned that whenever a person acts in society, (s)he

displays a dimension of his/her constructed identity which is materialized as a person's intellectual identity, family identity, social identity, political identity, L1, and L2 identities, and so forth. Berzonsky (2004) maintained that these three identity processing styles are, in essence, problem-solving abilities and failure-coping mechanisms that can conspicuously show themselves in the language used by different people.

As far as identity processing styles are concerned, most identity theories adhere to three main categories: information-oriented, normative, and diffuse-avoidant (e.g., Berzonsky & Adams, 1999; Berzonsky & Neimeyer, 1994; Schwartz et al., 2006). According to Duff (2002), individuals with dominant informational identity aside are very capable at encountering and solving different problems tactfully and effectively, they are congenial and highly willing to integrate and intermingle with people around them, they are not impulsive and do not judge the events quickly, and they set clear short-term objectives and long-term aims for their own progress and self-fulfilment. Additionally, they try to educate themselves for achieving their own goals and expectations, show resilience in the face of adversity, and the difficulties that challenge them in their individual life, social encounters, and occupational experiences (Berzonsky & Kuk, 2005). Taylor (1989), one of the pioneers of identity research, maintained that information-oriented individuals have sharp minds and do not quickly believe what they have been told, are good evaluators, and try to self-explore their own and others characteristics.

Berzonsky and Kinney (1994) mentioned that individuals with the predominant normative identity aside learn and internalize other people's values, respect their standards and accepted ethics, and they moderately get involved in relations with other people. However, these individuals are more malleable by the forces of the sociocultural context and they need to be externally organized by others (Norton, 2010). Furthermore, people with normative identity processing style seek to obtain information that is more consistent with their own values and the values of the important people around them, they are more closed-minded compared with the informational people and are more easily influenced by other people's advice especially by those who have some kind of social or intellectual power, they like to decide after receiving analysis and consultations from others, and they tried to self-assess themselves in different areas of their lives (Berry, 2005).

People who possess diffuse-avoidant identity processing styles utilize more emotional strategies in their social interactions, are not good decision-makers especially in challenging circumstances, are very conservative and hesitant in their decisions and try to pay meticulous attention to all possible repercussions of their decisions in advance (Schwartz, 2011), are somehow unpredictable in their demeanor and speech (Dollinger, 1995). Meeus and Dekovic (1995) asserted people with diffuse-avoidant identity processing styles employ fewer metacognitive and cognitive strategies in their learning and assessment of their own progress and changes in the surrounding environment.

A great deal of research has been conducted on the relationship between these three different types of identity processing styles and educational achievement (e.g., Berzonsky & Kuk, 2005; Crocetti et al., 2008; Dollinger, 1995; Eryigit & Kerpelman, 2009; Schwartz, 2011); however, there is comparatively little research about their investigation in second or foreign language learning and teaching in EFL/ESL contexts and very few studies can be mentioned in this regard (e.g. Razmjoo, 2010; Razmjoo & Izadpanah, 2010; Razmjoo & Neissi, 2010).

As depicted in the previous literature, the importance and centrality of identity processing styles as psychological, sociocultural, and socio-cognitive variables in learning and L2 are undeniable, and they have shown the contribution to the development of reading and writing skills as reported by Razmjoo and Izadpanah (2010); however, their relationship with L2 pragmatic knowledge and performance, to date, has not been investigated through empirical studies. Accordingly, due to their probable significant contribution to language development and the paucity of research in this regard, the current research attempted to examine the relationship between identity processing styles and L2 learners' knowledge and performance for common English speech acts as the core of the pragmatic competence. Specifically, the current study was guided by the following two questions:

- 1) How well do identity processing styles contribute to Iranian EFL learners' L2 speech-act knowledge? Which identity processing style is a stronger predictor of L2 speech-act knowledge?
- 2) How well do identity processing styles contribute to Iranian EFL learners' L2 speech-act production? Which identity processing style is a stronger predictor of L2 speech-act production?

Method

The present research tried to investigate the relationship between identity processing styles and L2 pragmatic knowledge and performance regarding the common speech acts through the correlational ex post facto design.

Participants

A sample of 122 Iranian EFL learners took part in this study. These learners were selected among the 203 BA students at Imam Khomeini International University (IKIU), Qazvin who were studying either English language translation studies or teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL) English language teaching. The study sample was selected based on the results of the Michigan Test of English Language Proficiency. Those learners whose scores fell at or beyond the mean score were chosen. The selected participants were seniors ($n = 36$), juniors ($n = 35$), sophomores ($n = 29$), and freshman ($n = 22$) regarding the language learning experience at the university level; however, they had

been engaging with English from 2 to 7 years before entering the university ($M = 6.2$ years, $SD = 3.4$). The participants' age range was between 18 and 25 ($M = 21.3$, $SD = 2.4$), and 82 of them were females (67.2 %), and the rest 40 were males (32.8 %). The dominant mother tongue of the learners was Persian or its dialects ($n = 87$); however, some learners had Turkish ($n = 12$), Kurdish ($n = 8$), Tati ($n = 6$), Arabic ($n = 4$), Chinese ($n = 3$ female students from China), Thai ($n = 1$), Japanese ($n = 1$). The majority of the learners were Iranians; but as aforementioned, there were some students from China, Japan, Syria, and Lebanon.

Instruments

The current study utilized a language proficiency test and two pragmatic assessment tools as follows: The Michigan Test of English Language Proficiency (MTELP) as a homogeneity test, a multiple-choice discourse completion test (MDCT), and interactive pragmatic role-plays. The features of the used instruments, their content, reliability, and implementation steps will be briefly touched upon in the next sections.

The Michigan Test of English Language Proficiency. In order to target a homogenous group having a similar level of language proficiency, the Michigan Test of English Language Proficiency (MTELP) was utilized. This test includes 100 multiple-choice items within three sections of reading comprehension (20 items based on four reading passages), vocabulary (40 items), and grammar (40 items). It has also been found to be of high reliability as reported in previous studies (e.g., Brown & Abeywickrama, 2010; Shohamy et al., 2017). The reliability of the test estimated in the present study was .82.

The Identity Processing Style Inventory (IPSI-4). The Identity Processing Style Inventory (IPSI-4) was developed and validated by Berzonsky (2011). It is a five-point Likert-scale including 40 items that determines four major types of identity processing styles: a) the informational-style scale (7 items); b) normative-style scale (8 items); c) diffuse-avoidant-style scale (9 items); and d) the commitment-style scale (9 items). The commitment subscale with 9 items usually applied in psychology research that was excluded from this study based on the guidelines given by the inventory developer; therefore, the final scale is made up of 31 items. Berzonsky has validated and modified the inventory in a series of studies (1990, 1992, 1994, 2011), reporting reliability indices beyond .75. The three components of the inventory have been extracted through componential factor analysis with high alpha values for the whole inventory and the subsections. This inventory has also proved its high reliability in the Iranian EFL context (e.g., Razmjoo & Izadpanha, 2010; Razmjoo & Neissi, 2010). The test rubrics provide information about the items that estimate each type of identity processing style. It will take 10 to 15 minutes to fill out the inventory.

Multiple-Choice Discourse Completion Test (MDCTs). Tajeddin and Malmir (2015) designed and validated the multiple-choice discourse completion test (MDCT) to assess speech act knowledge of EFL learners. It comprised 50 items, each of which involved a pragmatic context, a three to eight-line conversation,

and three options, one of which was the most suitable choice concerning pragmatic criteria and a specific situation. Well-known American English conversation books and their specific speech acts of compliment/compliment responses, requests, refusals, complaints, and apologies informed the production of the content of the pragmatic test. The criterion for choosing these five speech acts was their frequent use in the language. All aspects of the content including the conversation, contexts, and options were produced by American English native speakers in real-world situations as mentioned by the American English conversation books used for developing the test. It should be also noted that only minor revisions were made to the content for the purpose of the test. Originally, to pilot the test, it was given to a group of 60 American English native speakers. Item discrimination and item facility results revealed 10 items needing to be excluded from the test. Besides, the test was reduced for its length by putting the conversations into the contexts. The Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient found in this regard was .89. But the test went through a second pilot study with a group of 80 EFL learners for ensuring its reliability in the EFL context. The Cronbach alpha result reported was .75. Besides, some modifications were made to the test such as the elimination of five more items. For instance, item number 5, in the final version, is presented below:

Item 5

Pragmatic Scenario: Eric works as a waiter. He is supposed to work this afternoon but he hasn't been feeling well lately and wants to go and see his doctor. He decides to ask his colleague Nikita to take his shift. What would he say?

- a. *Nikita, be a real friend! Take my shift this afternoon. I know you are free. I am going to the doctor.*
- b. *Nikita, I know you're free today. As I am going to the doctor, you will take my shift this afternoon.*
- c. *Nikita, would you mind taking my shift this afternoon? I'd really appreciate it. I am going to the doctor.*

After the validation process, the final version of the test included 35 items. The parts of the last version of the MDCT are presented in Table 1.

Table 1.
The Speech Act Components of the MDCT (Adapted from Tajeddin & Malmir, 2015)

Speech Act	Number of Items
Request	7
Apology	9
Refusal	8
Compliment/ Compliment Response	7
Complaint	4
Total	35

Interactive Pragmatic Role-plays. Role-plays are a type of interactive production data collection tool in L2 pragmatics research and a logical balance and a beneficial compromise between the highly controlled and structured data collection procedures and naturally occurring data. According to Roever (2005), to estimate L2 learners' pragmatic performance, the researchers should use interactive instruments rather than traditional metapragmatic judgment tasks which only gauge pragmatic knowledge, what we did in the second phase of the current study. According to Taguchi and Roever (2017), role plays are either closed or open. In the current study, open role plays were used to elicit an interaction around the given pragmatic scenarios between two participants. The researchers could themselves be the interlocutors; however, they avoided it, because in that case, learners might have felt more psychological and cognitive pressure and considered the whole role-play sessions as artificial. Accordingly, the role plays were acted out by pairs of peers in a non-threatening and joyful environment, and the researchers were observers, recorders, and cognizant analysts in this scene of the events. Besides the pragmatic scenario, the interlocutors were given some role-play cards determining the relationship between the two parties and who was the initiator of the conversation. No time limit was imposed on the flow of the conversation and when the learners felt they cannot continue any more they closed the conversation.

As mentioned by Schauer (2009), the application of role plays in pragmatics research may be open to validity and authenticity threats; accordingly, the researchers tried their best to provide a non-threatening environment for the study participants, and they were informed that there was no assessment judgment and their performances were kept confidential, and after some time the recorded conversations were deleted. Moreover, the researchers did not interrupt the moment by moment co-construction of the interaction and tried to let students act as if they are in real-world situations interacting with native speakers of English. Additionally, the participants were not forced to close the conversations, and they were given this permission to continue the conversation until the topic was well exchanged between the two parties and reached a saturation point. The researchers did not intervene at all during the recordings.

For analyzing the data and before quantitatively deciding on the pragmatic performance abilities of the learners regarding the five common speech acts, all the recorded role plays were first transcribed based on their Jefferson's (2004) transcription system for conversation analysis (CA). This transcription system is the most comprehensive conversation analysis package that represents sentences and words by the formal and sometimes informal orthographic representations, pauses, overlaps, latches, and other emotional behaviors. Jefferson's (2004) transcription system can be used hierarchically from the formal spoken and written sentences to minute feelings and emotions, pauses, laughter, reduced forms, dialectical contractions, and many other suprasegmental features; however, since this study purported to only estimate the learners' ability to produce corrected speech acts considering appropriate socio-pragmatic forms and pragmalinguistic norms, it did not follow the detailed modules of the sys-

tem, and it opted the general paradigms inasmuch as it could disclose learners' speech act performance abilities.

The two researchers whose area of interest in applied linguistics research is pragmatics and discourse analysis were the raters. As mentioned by discourse analysts and pragmaticians, there is no established and unanimously agreed upon rubric or checklist for scoring the role-plays (see Taguchi & Roever, 2017); however, the researchers should consider issues such as politeness, power, imposition, and distance based on the dynamism of the sociocultural context to quantify the qualitative role-plays, a process which is not exempt from human error and misjudgments. In tandem with the existing literature and some earlier empirical studies, this research assigned the successful use of the speech acts with appropriate locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts based on a scale from zero to four. Therefore, the total score given for the successful contextualized use of the speech acts for each party in the conversations could be 20. The raters gave their scores based on a checklist provided and agreed upon prior to the data analysis.

It should be humbly noted that despite all the efforts made to provide precise quantification of purely qualified and sociocultural phenomena like interactions as elicited through role-plays, there are some issues of validity and authenticity. As argued by Taguchi and Roever (2017), we need to compromise between researching pragmatics by tolerating the challenges and intervening factors instead of abandoning the inquiry discourse analysis and pragmatics. MAXQDA Intercoder Agreement Function was employed to estimate the intercoder reliability that is a prerequisite in qualitative analysis. The estimated average percentage agreement was 87.53%, representative of a strong agreement between the scores given by two raters as mentioned in the literature (e.g., Aspers & Corte, 2019; MacPhail et al., 2015).

Data Collection Procedure

To determine the extent of the contributions of identity processing styles to L2 speech act knowledge and performance, first, an initial sample of 203 BA students at Imam Khomeini International University, Qazvin were selected and were given the Michigan Test of English Language Proficiency (MTELP). A sample of 122 students who scored at or beyond the mean ($M = 55.41$, $SD = 12.31$) was accepted into this three-phased study.

In the first phase, Berzonsky's (2011) Identity Processing Style Inventory (IPSI-4) was filled out by the students. Next, they answered Tajeddin and Malmir's (2015) multiple-choice discourse completion test of common English speech acts. Finally, the participants were required to role-play in a conversation based on the same pragmatic scenarios observed in the MDCT given in the previous stage. It should be noted that to reduce the test and retest effect, the role-plays were recorded three weeks after the administration of the MDCT. The students' role-plays were mostly audio- and sometimes video-recorded for further analysis by the raters. This phase was the most difficult and laborious

part of the study since it entailed the participants in pairs to engage in joint role-plays for one pragmatic scenario from each of the five speech act groups. The process was time-consuming and sometimes exhausting for students and the stage witnessed a sharp decrease in the number of students who cooperated. It took about one hour to record the five role-plays.

Data Analysis

The present study made use of both descriptive and inferential statistics employing the SPSS program (version 23). Descriptive statistics, including reliability tests, normality tests, and other needed preliminary tests for checking the required assumptions for inferential statistics, were obtained. The standard multiple regression was employed twice to answer the two research questions since, in the current study, there was an independent variable with three levels and one dependent variable in each of the research questions.

Results

The results of the learners' performances on the three different sections of the identity processing styles inventory (IPSI-4) and the multiple-choice discourse completion test (MDCT) are presented in Table 2.

Table 2.
Descriptive Statistics of the Scores on the IPSI-4 and the MDCT

	<i>N</i>	<i>Minimum</i>	<i>Maximum</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>
Total IPSI Score	122	64	112	87.52	9.432
Information-Oriented Style	122	22	42	31.51	3.917
Normative-Style	122	19	38	29.50	3.885
Diffuse-Avoidant Style	122	15	38	26.51	4.818
Pragmatic Knowledge	122	20	33	25.88	3.416
Pragmatic Performance	122	7	24	13.58	3.300

The mean score for the students' scores on the identity processing styles was 87.52 with a standard deviation of 9.43. Generally, students did better on the information-oriented style subscale ($M = 31.51$, $SD = 3.91$), followed by the normative ($M = 29.50$, $SD = 3.88$) and diffuse-avoidant style ($M = 26.51$, $SD = 4.81$) subscales. However, these differences and descriptive statistics do not imply any statistical difference because the number of items for each of the subscales is not the same, and also because this study is a correlational one. Participants' mean score and standard deviation were 25.88 and 3.41, respectively.

The same statistics for learners the speech act performance on the MDCT of common speech acts were 13.58 and 3.30. Again, the apparent differences are due to the different number of items in this test. Preliminary data analysis demonstrated that the distribution for the scores obtained on the three study

measures and the subscales of the IPSI-4 was normal and the skewness ratios were within the range of -1.96 and +1.96. The normal probability plots, i.e., Normal Q-Q Plots, and Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests confirmed the normality of each measure's scores. No outliers were located as well.

Research Question One

The first research question sought to determine the contribution of the informational, normative, and diffuse-avoidant identity processing styles to the pragmatic knowledge of the five common speech acts. Before the application of regression analysis, its special requirements such as multicollinearity, linearity, homoscedasticity, the independence of residuals, the linear relation between each pair of variables, and homoscedasticity were checked (based on Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007), and no serious violations were observed.

Learners' scores on the three sections of the identity processing styles inventory were the independent or predictor variables and their speech-act knowledge of scores comprised the dependent or predicted variable. Based on the constructed model, R was 0.786 and hence R^2 equaled 0.617, clearly indicating that the constructed model could account for 61.7 percent of the total variation speech-act knowledge scores. Results of the ANOVA in Table 3 [$F(3, 121) = 63.429, p = 0.000$] revealed that the constructed model can significantly predict L2 learners' knowledge of pragmatic regarding common English speech acts.

Table 3.
ANOVA Test for the Contributions of Identity Processing Styles to L2 Speech-act Knowledge

	<i>SS</i>	<i>Df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Regression	871.332	3	290.444	63.429	.000
Residual	540.324	118	4.579		
Total	1411.656	121			

Table 3 displays the standardized beta coefficients that determine the extent of contribution each type of the identity processing style makes to L2 learners' speech-act knowledge.

Table 4.
Coefficients for the Contribution of Informational, Normative, and Diffuse-avoidant Identity Processing Styles to L2 Speech-act Knowledge

<i>Predictor Variable</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Information-oriented Style	.473	8.228	.000
Normative Style	.264	4.591	.000
Diffuse-avoidant Style	.093	2.172	.032

Information-oriented style has the largest β coefficient ($\beta = .473, t = 8.228, p < .05$), revealing that informational identity processing style was a significant

moderate contributor to pragmatic knowledge of the speech acts; however, normative style was weak predictor ($\beta = .264$, $t = 4.591$, $p < .05$). Moreover, diffuse-avoidant style was a significant albeit a very poor predictor of L2 speech act knowledge ($\beta = .093$, $t = 2.172$, $p = .032 < .05$).

Research Question Two

The second research question aimed at examining the contributions of the three types of identity processing styles to the pragmatic production or performance of the EFL learners regarding the most common English speech acts. Therefore, another multiple regression was employed after checking that the prerequisite assumptions as aforementioned for question one were without any critical violations. The informational, normative, and diffuse-avoidant identity processing styles as the predictor variables an Iranian EFL the speech-act performance scores obtained through conducting role-plays as the predicted variable were fed into a standard regression analysis utilizing the Enter method.

The constructed model showed an R value of 0.625 and an R^2 of equaled 0.391, evidently signifying that the constructed model could explain about 39.1 percent of the total variance in L2 learners' productive knowledge of common English speech acts. As presented in Table 5 below, the application of the ANOVA test [$F(3, 121) = 25.234$, $p = 0.000$] demonstrated that the produced regression model could significantly determine L2 learners' productive knowledge of common English requests, apologies, refusals, compliment/compliment responses, and complaints.

Table 5.
ANOVA Test for the Contributions of Identity Processing Styles to L2 Speech-act Performance

	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Regression	515.096	3	171.699	25.234	.000
Residual	802.914	118	6.804		
Total	1318.010	121			

To find a more accurate estimate of the contributions of the three types of identity processing styles to learners' pragmatic production of frequent English speech acts the standardized beta coefficients in the next table should be referred to.

Table 6.
Coefficients for the Contribution of Informational, Normative, and Diffuse-avoidant Identity Processing Styles to L2 Speech-act Performance

<i>Predictor Variable</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>P</i>
Information-oriented Style	.322	4.594	.000
Normative Style	.211	3.012	.003
Diffuse-avoidant Style	.121	2.321	.022

Like the previous research question, information-oriented style showed the highest β coefficient ($\beta = .322, t = 4.594, p < .05$), representative of a significant moderate predictor of productive capability of learners with regard to the target speech acts. Both normative ($\beta = .211, t = 3.012, p = .003 < .05$) and diffuse-avoidant ($\beta = .121, t = 2.321, p = .022 < .05$) styles were significant, notwithstanding, poor contributors to the productive knowledge of L2 speech acts.

Discussion

This study attempted to investigate the relationship between identity processing styles and Iranian EFL learners' knowledge and production of common English speech acts through the correlational *ex post facto* design. Results of data analysis using multiple regression revealed some significant findings. First, information-oriented processing style turned out to be a moderately significant predictor of both knowledge and production of common English speech acts including requests, refusals, apologies, complaints, and compliments and compliment responses, the obtained β coefficient value was slightly higher for predicting the speech act knowledge ($\beta = .473$) than the production ability for the aforementioned speech acts ($\beta = .322$). Second, the normative style was weak but a significant predictor of the knowledge and production of L2 speech acts with a higher coefficient value for the knowledge dimension of the speech acts like the previous finding ($\beta_{\text{knowledge}} = .264 > \beta_{\text{production}} = .211$). Finally, the diffuse avoidant identity processing style was a very weak, albeit a significant contributor to L2 speech act competence dimensions investigated in the current study ($\beta_{\text{knowledge}} = .093 > \beta_{\text{production}} = .022$).

The more significant contribution of informational identity processing style to both L2 pragmatic knowledge and production regarding common English speech acts can be accounted for by the characteristics of learners who possess this identity style. As mentioned by Berzonsky (2011), information-oriented individuals are more effective communicators and social collaborators, and they are more willing to engage in interaction with people around them. Willingness to communicate in the target language and more tendency to engage in conversations with others encourages individuals to receive more input and output in the L2. As cited in the pragmatic literature (e.g., Taguchi, 2011, 2015; Taguchi & Yamaguchi, 2019) and the earlier empirical studies (Garcia, 2004) in this regard, higher degrees of willingness to communicate and more interaction will set the stage for the development of more effective pragmatic knowledge, in this study speech act knowledge, and hence actual pragmatic performance. Moreover, according to Schwartz (2011), individuals with dominant informational identity style are more language-sensitive and pay attention to different layers of the expressed ideas and sentences which pragmatically imply that these learners pay more attention to the appropriate socio-pragmatic norms and the pragmalinguistic forms. They will try to assess how to put their own meanings into the lexicogrammar, and as we know from the pragmatics literature, all of these peculiar features can give a boost to pragmatic competence development.

The less significant contribution of normative identity processing style to L2 pragmatic knowledge and performance compared with the informational style can be justified by learners' less willingness to communicate in comparison with the first group of learners. According to Berzonsky and Kinney (1994), learners with dominant normative identity processing styles tend to engage in conversations with other people after evaluating social values and standards. These peculiar features of the normative style have a negative side because they are unwilling to easily engage in conversations with others, and they have a positive side in that normative learners are sensitive about how people express their own ideas in accordance with their standards and values. This second feature is an indirect facilitator of pragmatic and semantic meanings since the learner tries to uncover other persons' ideological and intellectual predispositions as manifested in their language. Inevitably, these learners should assess semantic, pragmatic, and sociocultural dimensions of what they hear and what they want to say, all of which, according to pragmatic literature, can pave the way for the better attainment of pragmatic knowledge.

Additionally, these people are less open-minded than the informational style individuals, and they do not engage in conversations until other people initiate the conversations. People with a normative identity processing style also tend to interact with those people whose values and the standards have a kind of resemblance with their ideas and values. These internal tendencies hinder the learner from extensive engagement with the people around them specifically in a socially and culturally heterogeneous environment like an L2 classroom. As a consequence, these people receive less linguistic and pragmatic input, less pragmatic intake, and output. The less presence of the aforementioned input-intake-output impedes pragmatic competence and production development, according to Rose (2009) and Taguchi and Roever (2017).

Based on the study findings, the diffuse-avoidant identity processing style was a very weak contributor to L2 speech-act ability and performance. This finding can be explained by the fact that individuals with diffuse avoidant-identity processing styles are more emotional in their decisions, attitudes, and behaviors in the outer social context, and they are less language-sensitive as cited by Cote and Levine (2002). These individuals are less interested in what is happening around them, and they are more introverted and more involved with their feelings and emotions. They try to avoid encounters with people that and they require constant assessment and evaluation of the linguistic and nonlinguistic dimensions of what they hear. These features including less language sensitivity, reluctance to engage with the surrounding environment, less use of cognitive and metacognitive strategies and more reliance on emotional aspects of the events insinuate that these learners are not good language learners in general and good pragmatic knowledge intakers in particular based on the pragmatic development theories (Kasper & Rose, 2002).

Finally, the stronger predictability power of informational and normative processing styles and even the diffuse-avoidant style for speech acts knowledge in comparison with speech-act production/performance is more related to the

demanding nature of pragmatic production rather than pragmatic knowledge as claimed by many pragmatic experts (e.g. Barron, 2003; Taguchi, 2017). Taguchi (2017), for example, argued that pragmatic knowledge is a kind declarative knowledge, and its development is easier than pragmatic production which puts the learner in the situation to deal with sociocultural and contextual appropriacy that is perplexingly challenging for the L2 learners. Generally, learners cannot efficiently put into practice what they have acquired during their own learning experiences and how to map out form-meaning-context realizations of the language (Bella, 2014).

Conclusion and Implications

The present investigation came to some important conclusions as follows. First identity processing styles were generally found to be significant contributors to both L2 speech-act knowledge and performance. Second, the information-oriented style could moderately predict L2 learners' knowledge and performance regarding common English speech acts. Thirdly, the normative style was a weak predictor; however, the diffuse-avoidant style was a very poor predictor of the speech-act related pragmatic competence and performance. Fourth, the aforementioned identity processing styles were slightly stronger contributors to speech-act knowledge than speech act production.

The findings of the present research can have some pedagogical implications for L2 teachers and learners. Teachers, for instance, are recommended to determine their learners' dominant identity processing styles and try to tailor the classroom practices based on these learner differences that exert an undeniable influence on L2 learners' pragmatic development and performance. Particularly, those learners with diffuse-avoidant style need to be handled more seriously because they cannot expand the pragmatic knowledge and performance capabilities like learners with informational and normative identity processing styles. The insights gained from the present study can also inform EFL materials developers' practice as they are advised to take account of learners' individual differences in general and identity processing styles in particular when producing textbooks and other content materials. In essence, unless learners' individual differences are taken into account in every aspect of education including instruction, materials development, testing, and evaluation, not an effective learning truly engaged with learners' desires, needs, and goals can be achieved.

Like all other studies in applied linguistics, this study had its own limitations and was bound to some delimitations. The researchers did not control the age and gender of the participants. Moreover, due to the difficulty of conducting role-plays, recording, and then transcribing them for measuring the productive speech-act knowledge of the learners, they were only required to engage in interactions only based on one of the scenarios for each of the five types of common English speech act. Further research can be done on the relationship between identity processing styles and other types of pragmatic knowledge such

as implicatures and conversational routines with larger samples and other pragmatic assessment instruments. Moreover, the interaction between these identity styles and various forms of personality types and their relationship with various aspects of L2 pragmatic competence can provide a promising range of new topics for upcoming studies using methodologically sound procedures and better data collection tools.

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Immunity among Iranian EFL Teachers: Sources, Impacts, and the Developmental Path

Research Article

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Received: 2020-04-11 | Revised (2): 2020-07-31 | Accepted: 2020-08-01

Abstract

As a novel concept in teacher psychology, language teacher immunity is a strong indicator of how teachers thrive or survive in the face of adversity. Research on language teacher immunity is still in its nascent stage, and the present qualitative study tries to fill the gap in the existing literature. This study aimed to investigate the possible sources of immunity among Iranian EFL teachers, the impact immunity may have on teachers' classroom practices, and intervention strategies EFL teachers suggested to influence the development of immunity. Based on interviews with 13 seasoned high school EFL teachers, we found that four main stressors, namely, personal-level, school-level, organization-based, and sociocultur-

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al stressors, were the sources of maladaptive immunity development. The only cause for the development of positive immunity in EFL teachers was altruistic motivation. It was further found that those EFL teachers with positive immunity kept functioning effectively in their classrooms, whereas teachers with maladaptive immunity set into a state of indifference towards their students and complacency without exercising agency. These teachers had surrendered in the face of a multitude of adversities they faced during their professional life. The findings also indicated that in order to influence the development of immunity formation process to gear it towards an adaptive one, teachers' economic situation should be improved by increasing their salaries, praising and appreciating their efforts, organizing practical in-service teacher training courses, and supporting them at schools by principals and other educational authorities.

Keywords: language teacher immunity, teacher motivation, Iranian English teachers, teacher stress, immunity type

Introduction

Over the past half a century abundant research on 'learner-centered' approaches have focused on language learners' psychology and well-being (Mercer et al., 2016; Sampson, 2016) but language teachers' psychology has been given short shrift in the field of English as a second/foreign language (ESL/EFL) learning and teaching. Therefore, investigating language teacher psychology is essential not only in relation to learner achievement, but because teachers themselves deserve their professional dignity regarded, their viewpoints validated, their agency respected, and their voices and concerns heeded (Moskowitz, 2018). Research in language teacher psychology is still in its early stages, and there exist underdeveloped areas and clear gaps in language teachers' psychology (Collie et al., 2018; Mercer et al., 2016). Those areas and gaps include: the connection between teachers' identity and other factors of their psychology, the interconnection of teachers' emotions and beliefs, the link between teachers' motivation and their psychology and social setting, teachers' autonomy, and teachers' emotions. In line with the above gaps, more scholars have addressed other gaps that exist in the area of teachers' psychology such as the impact of perfectionism on the psychological states of EFL teachers (Mahmoodi-Shahreabaki, 2016), the effect of culture on EFL teachers' burnout (Saboori & Pishghadam, 2016), the impact of EFL teachers' job (dis)satisfaction on their job performance (Soodmand Afshar & Doosti, 2015, 2016) examining L2 teachers' hopefulness on their teaching commitment and motivation (Hiver, 2016a), and investigating EFL teachers' demotivation in culturally specific contexts (Yaghoubinejad et al., 2016) .

Since researching language teachers' psychology is in its infancy (Hiver, 2018), it has given rise to the emergence of new concepts and constructs. One of these novel constructs is language teacher immunity (Hiver, 2015; Hiver, 2017; Hiver & Dörnyei, 2017). Language teacher immunity has been defined as "a robust armoring system that emerges in response to high-intensity threats and allows teachers to maintain professional equilibrium and instructional ef-

fectiveness” (Hiver, 2017, p. 269). In stressful and adverse conditions, this immunity can take on two global types: productive (positive) and maladaptive (negative). Research on language teacher immunity is in its nascent stage and needs to be fine-tuned by further investigation (Hiver, 2016b). Furthermore, as examining novel constructs is essential to illuminate understanding of teachers’ psychology (Collie et al., 2018), the present study, then, endeavors to find out what factors caused the development of a given immunity type, the impact that immunity might have on EFL teachers’ classroom practices, and interventions that can put EFL teachers on the productive immunity development path. This study is the follow-up to our previous study (Haseli Songhori et al., 2018) in which we investigated the language teacher immunity among Iranian English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers through self-organization perspective. The findings of the previous study revealed that maladaptive immunity was a dominant type of immunity among Iranian English language teachers. It was also found that both productively and maladaptively immunized teachers went through the four stages of self-organization process in forming their immunity type. Hopefully, the findings of the present study can help fill the gap in the existing literature on language teacher psychology, in general, and language teacher immunity, in particular.

This qualitative study, therefore, aimed to find the answers to the following research questions:

- 1) What are the possible sources of immunity among Iranian EFL teachers?
- 2) What impact does language teacher immunity have on Iranian English language teachers’ classroom practice?
- 3) What are the most effective intervention strategies which positively influence the development of the Iranian English language teachers’ immunity according to the Iranian EFL teachers?

Review of the Related Literature

Language Teacher Immunity

The concept of language teacher immunity was put forward by Hiver (2015) and Hiver & Dörnyei (2017) so as to fill the lacuna in language teacher motivation and professional identity. Language teacher immunity is a robust armoring system that emerges in response to adverse conditions (Hiver, 2018) and ensures the survival of a system (Hiver, 2015), here a language teacher. The concept of teacher immunity puts forward a framework that elucidates the processes through which teachers in general, and language teachers in particular, attempt to come up with a defense mechanism to buffer or assuage the effects of unpleasant disturbances that might threaten their motivation to teach and their professional identity (Hiver, 2016b; Hiver & Dörnyei, 2017). The metaphor of teacher immunity is derived from biological immunity and has two global manifestations: productive (positive) and maladaptive (negative) (Hiver, 2015). Language teacher immunity in its productive representation protects teachers from the effects of certain adversities because of their personality,

while others with maladaptive immunity experience increased risk regarding the negative consequences from stressors (MacIntyre et al., 2019).

Differentiating Language Teacher Immunity from Cognate Constructs

In order to gain a better understanding of language teacher immunity, it should be differentiated from other cognate concepts that have been put forward since the 1970s when individual well-being was a central concern in psychology (Hiver & Dörnyei, 2017). These concepts include resilience, adaptability, buoyancy, coping, burnout, and engagement. In the field of educational psychology, these concepts are well-attested, but in applied linguistics, and specifically in language teacher psychology research, they are under-researched.

There is a multidisciplinary interest in the concept of resilience, and this interest has culminated in various definitions. In their study on teachers and resilience, Pearce and Morrison (2011) defined it as “the process of, capacity for, or outcome of successful adaptation despite challenging or threatening circumstances” (p. 48). According to this definition, resilience is not an innate quality; rather, it is a relative, developmental, and dynamic concept that leads to adaptation in the face of challenges (Gu & Day, 2007). Considering the nature of resilience, it seems to be similar to the concept of language immunity. However, Hiver (2018) differentiates language teacher immunity from resilience based on three aspects. Firstly, language teacher immunity is an emergent outcome of self-organization which is an adaptive reaction to domain-specific crises, while resilience is the commonplace outcome of ordinary systems for adaptation. Secondly, language teacher immunity is dual-natured: safeguarding the teacher against adversities or threatening their effectiveness and functioning, whereas resilience promotes individuals’ positive functioning. Thirdly, through analytical narratives, language teacher immunity becomes part of teachers’ professional identity. Nevertheless, resilience has not been explicitly involved in the formation of professional identity.

Adaptability is an essential personal capacity that enables one to successfully adjust to changing circumstances inherent in life (Collie & Martin, 2016). Collie and Martin (2017) define adaptability as an “individual’s capacity to use strategies to regulate their thoughts, actions, and emotions in order to effectively respond to new, changing, or uncertain situations” (p. 30). Three key terms in this definition are change, novelty, and uncertainty. In order to deliver effective instruction (Margolis, 2018), teachers should be able to constructively respond and react to changing, novel, and uncertain situations which are inherent in their profession (Collie & Martin, 2016). In language learning and teaching contexts, examples of these situations are limited and shrinking budgets, teaching new courses, working with students from unfamiliar cultures, and being agile enough to handle multilevel classrooms (Margolis, 2018).

Like resilience, adaptability aims at enhancing one’s positive functioning. Therefore, it is considered as a strategy or skill which individuals must adopt to deal with the demands of the situations which are novel, changing, and uncer-

tain. In some studies, (e.g., Le Cornu, 2009; Mansfield et al., 2012), teachers' adaptability has been viewed as one of the core components of resilience. Consequently, the differentiation between resilience and language teacher immunity applies to adaptability too.

To the best of our knowledge, to date, no study has investigated the concept of buoyancy in language teacher research. Thus, it makes a new line of investigation in the field of language teacher psychology. Parker & Martin (2009) defined buoyancy as the individuals' self-perceptions to their ability to successfully handle the hassles of daily life such as a bad mark on a test, competing deadlines, pressure, and challenging tasks. On the surface, resilience and buoyancy appear to be conceptually similar, but they are different in that research on resilience investigates chronic and extreme life adversities which are threats that could undermine development (Collie & Martin, 2016), whereas buoyancy research zeroes in on the everyday setbacks and struggles which characterize the course of everyday life and work (Parker & Martin, 2009). These setbacks and struggles cannot necessarily be taken as adversities, hence not threatening developmental processes. Therefore, buoyancy has been equated to "everyday resilience" (e.g., Martin & Marsh, 2008; Martin et al., 2013).

Coping strategies are vital as an individual grapples with adversities. Compas et al. (2001) defined coping as "conscious volitional efforts to regulate emotion, cognition, behavior, physiology, and the environment in response to stressful events or circumstances" (p. 89). This definition implies that coping refers to the strategies used following the appraisal of a stressful event (Fletcher & Sarkar, 2013). Put it another way, coping can be taken as "processes that are enacted in response to stress" (Compas et al., 2014, p.72). Adopting certain coping strategies in response to stressful situations can be adaptive such as problem-solving, seeking support, reappraisal, information-seeking, emotion expression and regulation, or maladaptive like avoidance, escape, rumination, denial, helplessness, passivity, confusion, concealment, isolation, self-pity, dependency (Skinner & Zimmer-Gembeck, 2015). Coping and language teacher immunity share adaptive and maladaptive dimensions. Coping is just regulating teachers' actions in stressful events. It is an element that contributes to the formation of immunity. Also, since coping strategies are responses a teacher adopts to deal with a challenging situation, they do not include explicit developmental elements in professional identity formation.

Other concepts that are similar to language teacher immunity are burnout and engagement. Burnout as a multidimensional syndrome and a psychological erosion process is associated with organizational and work stress (Maslach & Leiter, 2008) and is the result of the prolonged involvement in stressful environments (Richards et al., 2016). Burnout has three interrelated components *emotional exhaustion* which is assumed to develop first (Maslach & Leiter, 2016) refers to "feeling emotionally and physically drained by one's work" (Richards et al., 2018, p. 3). Emotional exhaustion, then, leads to *depersonalization* (also called *cynicism*) which relates to the negative, unsympathetic attitude toward others in the workplace (Richards et al., 2016). As depersonalization

continues, the individuals starts to develop critical attitudes toward their work (Richards et al., 2018). This last component is *reduced personal accomplishment* which refers to feelings of inefficacy and a lack of achievement and productivity in work (Maslach & Leiter, 2008). The converse of burnout is engagement which is a positive construct. Engagement is a productive and fulfilling state that teachers have in their work. Engagement can be regarded as the positive extremes of the three dimensions of burnout (Maslach, 2011). Comparing engagement and burnout, it can be said that teachers who enjoy engagement have a state of high energy in their job rather than emotional exhaustion, they are strongly involved in teaching rather than being depersonalized, and they have a strong feeling of efficacy rather than inefficacy. As mentioned above, it is the dual nature of language teacher immunity that distinguishes it from other similar concepts.

Comparing language teacher immunity to its cognate constructs shows that language teacher immunity is a stronger predictor of how language teachers survive or thrive in their profession. Considering the tremendous impact language teacher immunity has on teachers' daily classroom teaching, their motivation, and professional identity, language teacher immunity is considered as a useful construct in offering more insight into teacher's cognition, experiences, and identities (Hiver & Dörnyei, 2017).

Language Teacher Immunity, Teacher Effectiveness, and (De)motivation

To date, research on language teacher immunity (e.g., Haseli Songhori et al., 2018; Hiver, 2016b, 2017) has shown that classroom practice and effectiveness of teachers hinges significantly upon the immunity type that they have developed and acquired over their career. There is a remarkable difference between teachers with productive immunity and those with maladaptive one vis-à-vis their instructional abilities. While productive immunity provides teachers with a robust armoring mechanism which helps them bounce back and overcome challenges, upheaval, and adversities in their classrooms and teaching profession (Hiver, 2018), maladaptive immunity debilitates teachers through adopting skewed coping strategies which culminate in aversion to change, apathy, cynicism, indifference, and fossilization and plateauing (Haseli Songhori et al., 2018; Hiver, 2017).

Productive teacher immunity equips teachers with the following characteristics: *specificity* (that helps teachers respond appropriately to specific perturbations they encounter); *memory* (prior encounter and handling of upheaval helps teachers to intelligently respond to future disturbances); *adaptability* (an aspect of resilience that evolves in response to changes to help teachers bounce back from adversity and function effectively); and *durability* (teacher immunity sustains its protective capacity in the face of stress, upheaval, and failure) (Hiver & Dörnyei, 2017). Teaching is a stressful profession (MacIntyre et al., 2019; Talbot & Mercer, 2019), and only those teachers that possess the above-mentioned characteristics will survive and thrive. If they do not, they will ulti-

mately plateau and fossilize. Plateauing prevents teachers from growth, and to top it off, it can be contagious (Milstein, 1990). That is, novice teachers' identity is, to some extent, influenced by their experienced colleagues who suffer from inertia and fossilization.

Language teacher immunity originates from the factors that motivate or demotivate teachers in their profession, and, as a result, solidifies into their professional identity (Hiver, 2017). Teacher motivation is "one of the crucial factors which might have to do with the success or failure of educational systems" (Soodmand Afshar & Doosti, 2015, p. 2). Motivation is squarely linked with job satisfaction which may have serious positive or negative consequences for not only teachers' well-being and health, but also for the quality of education (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017).

Motivation has been defined in different ways by different scholars and many "theoretical strands have been put forward to explain the relationship between individual motivation, job satisfaction, and performance at work" (Müller et al., 2009, p. 579). Ryan and Deci (2000) offer a process-oriented definition which covers both motivation and demotivation definition. Their definition is "to be motivated means to be moved to do something. A person who feels no impetus or inspiration to act is thus characterized as unmotivated, whereas someone who is energized or activated toward an end is considered motivated" (p. 54). Therefore, motivation can be considered as a drive or motive that pushes an individual towards achieving a goal. Research findings on motivation have generally identified three sources or types of motivation: Extrinsic motivation which is concerned with aspects of the job not inherent in the work itself, such as salary and employment and promotion opportunities (Moses et al., 2017); intrinsic motivation which has to do with "satisfaction of needs and interests, emotional payoffs, and the internal desire for personal growth, intellectual fulfillment and meaningfulness often found in educational settings" (Hiver et al., 2018, p. 24); and altruistic motivation which is the personal desire to help students to succeed and considering teaching as a socially valuable job (Müller et al., 2009). Why teachers choose teaching as their profession and remain in it hinges, to a large extent, upon their specific motivation. When teachers start their careers, their motivations are shaped and reshaped by ongoing experiences, emotions, and stressors they encounter (Hiver et al., 2018). Research in educational mainstream has identified various sources of stress that can negatively impact teachers' motivation. These include: discipline problems, time pressure, workload, poor working conditions, students' diversity, lack of teacher agency, lack of recognition and value, low remuneration, lack of facilities, lack of resources and administrative support (De Costa et al., 2019; Rahmati et al., 2019; Skaalvic & Skaalvic, 2017; Wieczorek, 2016). These stressors are experienced by all teachers the world over and have the potential to undermine teachers' motivation. Iranian language teachers are no exception. As research in the field of teacher motivation is still in its nascent stage (Urđan, 2014), investigating factors that motivate and demotivate teachers in the Iranian EFL context is also under-researched.

Iran is a culturally specific context (Yaghoubinejad et al., 2016) with its own unique system in teacher recruitment, material development, and curriculum implementation in the centralized, state-run education system (Sadeghi & Ghaderi, 2018) with little room for teachers' autonomy and agency which can contribute to teachers' demotivation. The findings of several studies (e.g., Akbari & Eghtesadi Roudi, 2017; Roohani & Dayeri, 2019; Sadeghi & Sa'adatpourvahid, 2016; Soodmand Afshar & Doosti, 2015, 2016; Soodmand Afshar & Hamzavi, 2017; Yaghoubinejad et al., 2016) investigating motivating and demotivating factors among Iranian EFL teachers working in state-run schools have yielded relatively similar results. As a couple of studies indicate, the only type of motivation that aids teachers to function effectively in the face of a slew of demotivating factors is the altruistic motivation (Haseli Songhori et al., 2018; Rahmati et al., 2019; Yaghoubinejad et al., 2016). On the contrary, a large number of teachers working in junior and senior high schools suffer from high levels of job-related stress (Sadeghi & Sa'adatpourvahid, 2016) and grapple with daily hassles in workplace, which, more often than not, culminates in their demotivation and burnout. The demotivating factors reported in several studies conducted in Iran are more or less similar to other foreign contexts barring some context-specific ones. Iranian state-sector EFL teachers consider the following as big threats to their motivation: lack of administrative support, students' disruptive classroom behavior (Roohani & Dayeri, 2019), lack of autonomy and agency, parents' high expectations, limited or lack of facilities in schools and classrooms (Rahmati et al., 2019), unsatisfactory supervision and monitoring of teachers, and students' demotivation (Soodmand Afshar & Hamzavi, 2017). In their study, Yaghoubinejad et al. (2016) reported the following as the culture-specific demotivating factors among Iranian junior high school teachers: lack of social recognition and social respect and value, inadequate remuneration, and lack of support and understanding regarding English education in schools.

Method

Because of the interpretive aspects (Merriam, 2009) of this study, a qualitative research design was employed for the collection and analysis of the empirical data. A qualitative research design, according to Creswell (2012), enables researchers to "develop an in-depth exploration of a central phenomenon" (p. 206). In the current study, the central phenomenon is the quest for the roots of immunity and its impacts on the classroom practices of EFL teachers in Iran as well as changing or tweaking the immunity development process.

Context

The government of Iran is the provider of education for almost everyone. The education system is centralized (Sadeghi & Ghaderi, 2018) and is aimed at the matriculation exam (Konkur Exam) that takes place at the end of high school and is a mandatory exam for students if they want to gain entrance into universities and other higher education institutions. Any decision having to do with

the education, such as designing the curriculum, writing and selecting textbooks, and recruiting and training teachers, including English language teachers, is made under the direct supervision of the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Science, Research, and Technology.

Before 2012, there were some teacher education centers responsible for training would-be teachers, but in 2012, a state-run teacher education university, called Farhangian University, was founded, and this university is the sole provider of teacher training programs across Iran (Kuusisto et al., 2016). Typically, teacher training programs are completed within four years after which the graduates receive their Bachelor's degree. Upon graduation, they start their teaching career at different schools. Iranian school teachers have to teach 24 hours per week, and this workload is mandatory. Their monthly salary ranges from 3500000 to 4500000 Tomans (Soodmand Afshar & Doosti, 2015). Due to high rates of inflation, this salary is low and insufficient, and most teachers have to have a second job in order to meet just the basic needs of their life. This has resulted in a decline in teachers' social status and motivation to teach. On the other hand, some teachers have kept functioning effectively for intrinsic reasons, such as having a positive internal derive toward helping students learn, and feeling internally satisfied with serving the society (Soodmand Afshar & Doosti, 2016).

Participants

Convenience and snowball sampling techniques were used to recruit 13 EFL teachers working in state-run high schools. They ranged in age from 31 to 53 (average 40.85). Eight of the participants were male and five were female. All the participants were seasoned English language teachers (6 years to 30 years of experience) who were quite familiar with the high school settings and the motivating, demotivating, and stress-causing factors and the coping strategies that teachers use to deal with these factors. The participants' complete background information is presented in Table 1.

Table 1.
Demographic information of the participants

Participants	Age	Degree	Teaching experience (years)	Gender	Education
Interviewee 1	39	MA	16	Male	Teaching
Interviewee 2	36	BA	6	Female	Teaching
Interviewee 3	37	MA	16	Female	Teaching
Interviewee 4	53	MA	30	Male	Teaching
Interviewee 5	39	MA	23	Male	Teaching
Interviewee 6	34	MA	8	Male	Teaching
Interviewee 7	31	BA	6	Male	Translation
Interviewee 8	48	BA	25	Male	Teaching
Interviewee 9	48	MA	26	Male	Teaching
Interviewee 10	32	BA	8	Female	Teaching
Interviewee 11	35	MA	10	Female	Linguistics
Interviewee 12	48	MA	27	Female	Teaching
Interviewee 13	51	MA	29	Male	Linguistics

Instruments

In this study, face-to-face, semi-structured interviews were the main data collection instrument. Before conducting the interviews, an interview protocol was designed to be used as a guide during the interviews. Besides, the participants' answers made the interviewer ask some probing questions (Hatch, 2002) to increase the depth of the interviews. The interview protocol began with a description of the purposes of the study to the participants. Then, questions were asked to gather the participants' demographic information along with the main questions regarding the views and opinions of the participants vis-à-vis the possible sources of immunity among Iranian EFL teachers, the effect of a certain type of immunity on EFL teachers' classroom performance, and the most effective intervention strategies which could positively influence the development of the Iranian EFL teachers' immunity.

Procedure

The first researcher conducted all the interviews in quiet locations either at the university where he teaches or at the schools where the participants taught. Before each interview, the interviewer explained the purpose of the study to the interviewees, and they signed the ethics sheet that indicated their voluntary participation and confidentiality of their interview data. The interviews were conducted in Persian to ensure that the participants felt comfortable in discussing their experiences and expressing their feelings in their mother tongue. Each interview lasted between 25 to 40 min. The interviews were audio-recorded with a smartphone using Easy Voice Recorder (version 1.8.1). The interviews, then, were transcribed verbatim and used for data analysis.

In order to analyze the data, conventional content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) was used to identify themes and categories with the assistance of MAXQDA Analytics Pro software. In order to analyze the data, the following steps were taken based on Graneheim and Lundman's (2004) work. As a first step, the interview transcripts were read several times to gain a sense of the whole. Then, the transcripts were divided into meaningful units and these units were also condensed. These condensed units were subsequently abstracted and labeled with subthemes. Based on comparing their similarities and differences, the ensuing subthemes were then sorted into themes. Finally, themes were formulated which were the expressions of latent content of the transcripts. Table 2 presents an example of how themes were formulated.

To increase trustworthiness and reliability in this study, the analysis was strengthened by 'member checking' and 'peer debriefing' (Ary et al., 2018). In order to carry out member checking, also called 'respondent validation' (Merriam, 2009), during the analysis of the data, examples of the data, along with the interpretations, were sent to some of the participants to solicit their comments and feedback about the findings which were later included into the research process through confirming, changing, or fine-tuning the interpretations. Then, a friend of the first author, who was a disinterested peer and an expert in quali-

tative research and was familiar with the research context and methodology, took the role of a peer debriefer who carefully and critically analyzed a sample of interviews. The discussion between the first author and his friend on what they had found determined that the interpretations were reasonable.

Table 2.
Theme formulation process

Meaningful unit	Condensed meaningful units	Subthemes	Theme
A stress-causing factor that happens inside my classroom is that my students show no interest in learning English! And this disinterest demotivates me because I do not get positive feedback from the students	Students showing no interest in learning English	Lack of interest among students	Students' demotivation
One of the factors that causes teachers' stress in classroom contexts is the lack of motivation in students. The main reason for this demotivation is rooted in our society where students see no point in learning English. As an EFL teacher, I get frustrated because of this situation.	Students who lack motivation	Demotivation in students	Students' demotivation
Meaningful unit	Condensed meaningful units	Subthemes	Theme
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Findings

In the analysis of the interview transcripts, some themes were identified vis-à-vis sources of immunity and intervention strategies to gear the immunity development toward a positive, adaptive one.

Sources of English Teachers' Immunity

As mentioned above, the sources of immunity in language teachers have to do with the factors that motivate or demotivate them in their careers. The demotivating factors are at the core of maladaptive immunity development. These demotivating factors are the stressors that EFL teachers face and the skewed and wrong strategies they adopt in tackling these stressors. Consequently, the final outcome of this process over the years is maladaptive immunity which has symptoms like frustration, cynicism, aversion to change, callousness, apathy, emotional exhaustion, resignedness, inefficacy, jaded indifference (Hiver & Dornyei, 2017). On the other hand, teachers with adaptive immunity enjoy the following characteristics: specificity, memory, adaptability, and durability (Hiver, 2017). They have developed a robust armoring system in dealing with stressors and adversities in their profession. The interview data of the study revealed four major types of stressors which were considered by the interviewees as the sources of maladaptive immunity. These were: *personal-level*, *school-level*, *organization-based*, and *sociocultural* stressors. The first two types are considered as micro-level and the other two as macro-level stressors. The interviewees mentioned only one source for the positive immunity among EFL teachers: intrinsic and altruistic motivation.

Sources Related to the Maladaptive Immunity

Although every teacher possesses a unique profile of what types of stressors might afflict them, the analysis of the interview data indicated that school-level stressors were the most reported stressors among the four stressor types. Among these, *unsupportive principals* were mentioned with the highest frequency by the interviewees as the trigger of stress in English teachers. This seems to be due to lack of autonomy and agency on the part of teachers and the views the principals have towards students' grades because higher grades indicate better achievement. Therefore, the school principals are very strict with teachers and force them to follow the exact syllabus and school regulations. As a result, "teachers become mere implementers of prescribed initiatives and schemes without recourse to their own professional knowledge and experience" (Ghorbani, 2009, p. 132). The following extracts were taken from the EFL teachers' interview data as evidence in this regard.

Extract 1: *Once I taught in a school whose principal had imposed some strict regulations. She didn't consider whether I was a good teacher or not. All she thought about was obeying those strict school regulations. This really annoyed me and made me apathetic towards my students! (Interviewee 12)*

Extract 2: *I am a teacher and love to be independent and autonomous in my teaching. But our principal continually checks on me and limits me and it*

seems that she puts shackles on me. The present situation makes me emotionally drained and I feel I have no enthusiasm in my job anymore.
(Interviewee 3)

The next stressor experienced by EFL teachers which was also reported with rather high frequency was *students' demotivation*. One main reason which causes students to become demotivated in learning English is that they see no practical use for learning a language in their real life. This can have a strongly negative influence on English teachers' motivation to teach. The following extracts express this concern as a stressor:

Extract 3: *One of the factors that causes teachers' stress in classroom contexts is the lack of motivation in students. The main reason for this demotivation is rooted in our society where students see no point in learning English. As an EFL teacher, I get frustrated because of this situation.* (Interviewee 13)

Extract 4: *A stress-causing factor that happens inside my classroom is that my students show no interest in learning English! And this disinterest demotivates me because I do not get positive feedback from the students.* (Interviewee 4)

Inappropriate classroom setting was another factor that caused stress in EFL teachers. Learning English requires a separate classroom with audio-visual facilities. However, in almost all schools in Iran the same classroom which is allocated for learning and teaching chemistry, physics, geography, etc., it is also used for teaching English. Therefore, EFL teachers have to resort to the traditional method of language teaching and only use the textbook and whiteboard for teaching English. As interviewee 2 stated, "*lack of facilities makes EFL teachers like me feel stressed and frustrated, and just use their traditional method of teaching*". Other stressors identified as school-level ones were *students' misbehavior* and *oversized and heterogeneous classes*. Like the aforementioned stressors, these two also put much stress on teachers and could cause teachers' demotivation because EFL teachers stated that they could not control the students in their classrooms and gradually became indifferent towards students and their profession.

The interviewees of the current research also identified a number of *organization-based triggers* of maladaptive language teacher immunity. Organization-based factors are at macro level and pertain to the provincial education offices and the Ministry of Education. For this type of stressor, the data revealed that the interviewees talked about four different factors that caused stress in teachers. The first factor is *no/inappropriate supervision on teachers' work*. This stressor is quite demotivating for EFL teachers because, as a couple of the in-

interviewees mentioned, the teachers think that they are doing something worthless in class.

Extract 5: *Nobody cares about what is happening in my class and what I am teaching to my students.* (Interviewee 5)

Extract 6: *Well, when a teacher puts much energy in class and they notice that nobody cares, then that teacher experiences stress and little by little becomes demotivated.* (Interviewee 7)

The second organization-based stressor expressed by the interviewees was *teachers' financial dissatisfaction*. The economic status of teachers in Iran is one of the main stressors they experience in their careers. Their low remuneration and bad economic situation constantly pester them to the extent that they become dissatisfied with their job (Soodman Afshar & Doosti, 2015). The following extract indicated how this financial dissatisfaction triggered stress in the teacher.

Extract 7: *Financial dissatisfaction has a tremendous negative impact on my mind and soul. This stressor causes me not to put my optimal effort in teaching. I just try to quickly finish class and go on my second job to be able to support my family.* (Interviewee 5)

Insufficient class time and *introduction of new books* are other stressors that are directly related to the organization-based factors. Class time and new books are imposed on teachers from education offices and the Ministry of Education. Teachers have no agency to use their initiation in designing materials for their class. This really weakens teachers' autonomous motivation (Hiver et al., 2018). These stressors were mentioned by the interviewees as the following:

Extract 8: *One thing that makes me stressed is the new books introduced by the Ministry of Education. They introduce new books but it is not clear for the teachers what they have had in mind in introducing the new book. The books are supposed to improve students' listening and speaking skills, but the only thing that is not taken into account in the actual classrooms is the development of these skills.* (Interviewee 10)

Extract 9: *What students are going to learn in one hour and a half per week? What the teachers are going to teach to their students during this very limited class hour? These put a lot of stress on English teachers.* (Interviewee 1)

Regarding personal-level stressor, *teachers' lack of English knowledge* was a major trigger of stress among the study participants. This lack of knowledge can pertain to teachers' lack of technical or content knowledge. Quite surprisingly, only two interviewees mentioned personal-level stressors and this type of stressor as the only one. The remaining 11 interviewees did not talk about their personal-level stressors. The following extracts taken from those two EFL teachers' interviews substantiated this concern.

Extract 10: *The problem that I have seen in English teachers is their weakness in skills related to English language and its teaching. Most of the teachers, consciously or unconsciously, are not familiar with the new teaching methods. If they are, they think that these new methods are not applicable in our context. For this reason, they are scared to use new methods or avoid them altogether.* (Interviewee 4)

Extract 11: *Teachers' lack of English language knowledge and their weakness in speaking and listening skills put them in a lot of stressful situations in class. And due to this they have come to this conclusion that they are just repeating very limited grammar and vocabulary every year.* (Interviewee 6)

The last category of stressors is sociocultural ones. *Lack of teacher social status* and *little value for English language* were two stressors reported by interviewees. As teachers are like the slaves and implementers of the prescribed curriculum, they gradually lose their respect in the eye of the people. This has a detrimental impact on teachers' morale and motivation. The following extract indicates the EFL teachers' resentment with their lack of social status.

Extract 12: *Our society does not understand the importance of teachers and the job they do. Unfortunately, this lack of understanding puts a lot of mental pressure on teachers.* (Interviewee 5)

When people and society do not respect and appreciate teachers and their job, one consequence would be little value for English language itself. As a trigger of stress in EFL teachers, this interviewee expressed his opinion in this regard in the following extract:

Extract 13: *The reason for the little value that English receives is related to the society. When students have no motivation and purpose in learning English, so, they say to themselves 'why try to learn it'. English language and its learning seem useless to them.* (Interviewee 13)

Sources Related to the Positive Immunity

Despite the various sources of stressors like low remuneration, lack of supervision on teachers' work, unsupportive principals, demotivated students which had afflicted almost all English teachers, English teachers who were adapting towards productive immunity expressed their positive attitudes towards their career and students, "*Every year I am learning positive things to help me continue my career for thirty years. This is because I love teaching and my students*" (Interviewee 6), or "*I didn't surrender when faced with lack of appreciation from Education office. I just stuck to my goals and purposes in teaching English for the sake of my students*" (Interviewee 4).

The analysis of the data revealed, as is understood from the above quotes, that EFL teachers kept functioning effectively due to their intrinsic and altruistic motives. Although some teachers used their creativity and imagination in their teaching, but the only source of the positive immunity was expressed by the teachers as 'loving the job', 'loving students', and 'helping the society'. Several participants stated that despite the many stressors and demotivating factors, they tried to remain motivated and efficacious because they loved their students. The following extracts show EFL teachers' love for their students.

Extract 14: *Under no circumstances I ignore my students. It's true that I face several adversities in my work environment, but when I enter the class and look at my students, all my worries, anger, and other negative feeling disappear. My students are innocent!* (Interviewee 3)

Extract 15: *I don't allow my principal's disrespect and bad behavior directly or indirectly influence my job. I manage my classroom in a way that the students don't feel that they have a bad principal. I won't let negative things impact my relationship with my students.* (Interviewee 4)

Effect of Teacher Immunity Type on Classroom Practice

As mentioned earlier, language teacher immunity affects whatever teachers do in their professional life. The qualitative data regarding the effect of adaptive and maladaptive teacher immunity on classroom practice clearly show the divide between those teachers who have adaptive immunity and the maladaptively immunized teachers.

The teachers who reported to have developed adaptive immunity seemed to have the capacity to adopt effective strategies to deal with the stressful events that they confronted in their classrooms. For instance, in order to deal with impolite students, interviewee 8 resorted to a strategy which he had developed during his professional life.

Extract 16: *Those students should have a clear picture of my reaction in their mind. They should know that I may inform their parents about their bad behavior in class. (Interviewee 8)*

Also, interviewee 11 had developed a strategy of talking to and convincing impolite students.

Extract 17: *I do my best to talk to them. My personal experience tells me that talking to them and convincing them that their behavior is not appropriate works to a great extent. (Interviewee 11)*

The experiences and strategies that teachers have learned from stressful situations in class have made teachers to be quick and powerful in responding to the same stressful events as they happen in the classroom setting. As a couple of interviewees mentioned, in the face of lack of facilities they had encountered during their years of teaching, they quickly use other things available in class to teach English to their students.

Extract 18: *I know that my classroom has no facilities to make learning English easier. So I just use the whiteboard and my marker in a way to make learning English fun for my students. (Interviewee 2)*

Extract 19: *When I'm going to work on student's listening and speaking skills which are emphasized in the newly introduced books, the first thing that I do is to use my mobile to play them a clip to improve their listening and ask them questions in English to help them speak as well. (Interviewee 10)*

On the other end of the immunity spectrum, that is, maladaptive immunity, teachers are afflicted with indifference and self-complacency in class. They have become so over the years in their career by adopting strategies that appear to be the easiest solutions for them when facing stressful events in their classrooms and even at school level. The teachers with maladaptive immunity have developed an everlasting resistance to taking risks, using modern technology in class, sticking to their old control routines. In general, we can say that they are suffering from fossilization and inertia. What was explained above is evident in what the interviewees said about the maladaptively immunized teachers.

Extract 20: *These teachers have no interest in their job. They are never willing to update their knowledge. They are just trying to satisfy their financial needs. (Interviewee 11)*

Extract 21: *Unfortunately, teachers with maladaptive immunity are like fossils. They do not believe in novelty, creativity, using technology, etc. they just stick to their old beliefs in teaching English and continue that forever. (Interviewee 1)*

All in all, teachers' performance in class is directly influenced by their immunity type, either adaptive or maladaptive. Faced with adversities, language teachers constantly try to come up with a strategy to deal with stressors and over the years the coping strategies that they have used solidify in them and turn them into an adaptively or maladaptively immunized teacher. Now, the question is "What can be done to manipulate the immunity formation stages in teachers so that inclination towards maladaptive immunity is controlled and adaptive immunity is reinforced and encouraged?"

Interventions to Influence Immunity Formation

As Hiver (2015) explains, most of the times we see that the process of immunity development results in maladaptive immunity formation and this underscores the need to come up with ways to influence this process and introduce elements that help the system to move to the other direction. Since the process of immunity formation is dynamic and cannot be blocked, some effective interventions must be introduced during the developmental process of maladaptive immunity.

The qualitative data analysis revealed that the participants had very similar ideas regarding the interventions that can be made to help teachers, specially novice teachers, to move on the path towards adaptive immunity development. These similar ideas originate from the fact that the state-run education system is the same across the country. In total, six intervention strategies were proposed by the participants. These are presented here according to their frequency. The first intervention strategy that the study interviewees unanimously mentioned was improving teachers' financial condition. Due to low remuneration that language teachers receive, their main concern and stressor that is always on their mind is supporting their family financially. The following excerpts reflect what the interviewees thought about teachers' economic status.

Extract 22: *Teachers have a lot of financial problems. I know a teacher who has been teaching for 26 years but he cannot support his son to get married. This person is so busy making money that has no time to spend time and energy on his classroom. (Interviewee 2)*

Extract 23: *My disappointing economic status has a great impact on my teaching in the classroom, my relationship with my students and professional behavior. (Interviewee 5)*

Another intervention strategy that the participants believed can be done to encourage teachers and motivate them was praising and appreciating teachers' efforts. Almost all the participants stated that teachers', especially successful teachers', efforts and success in teaching are not valued and appreciated, and this was considered as a huge demotivating factor that led the teachers towards being indifferent to their job and students.

Extract 24: *I think teachers should be appreciated by their school authorities or the education offices. But they are totally ignored.* (Interviewee 7)

Extract 25: *One factor that can motivate teachers is appreciation. Others should praise them and value their efforts. These can be done by authorities and the educational system. But, unfortunately, teachers are not appreciated at all.* (Interviewee 13)

No proper supervision on teachers' teaching in the classroom was the concern that most of the interviewees expressed. They believed that teachers receive almost no feedback from supervisors or the schools' or education offices' authorities. Interviewee 8 went on to the point that he called the teachers and their classroom "deserted islands".

Extract 26: *Teachers think that they and their classrooms are like a deserted island where nobody sets foot. So anything that they do in the classroom is just for themselves and nobody supervises them.* (Interviewee 8)

Other participants expressed their concern in the following extracts.

Extract 27: *There is no one to supervise teachers in their classrooms and tell them what their English language problems are and if their teaching method is suitable or not.* (Interviewee 4)

Extract 28: *In practice, I think there is no difference between successful and unsuccessful teachers because there is no supervision on what teachers do in class and how they teach.* (Interviewee 5)

The next intervention strategy that most of the interviewees highlighted was organizing appropriate in-service teacher training courses. They complained about the ineffectiveness of these sessions in training teachers to help them use new methods of teaching or utilize technology in classroom. The following reports by the interviewees are evidence of the inappropriateness of in-service teacher training courses.

Extract 29: *The in-service teacher training sessions are like ordinary meetings where teachers meet their friends and nothing special happens. Teachers just get the points or marks that they need to be recorded in their records. (Interviewee 9)*

Extract 30: *We have courses called 'in-service teacher training sessions', but they are just a waste of time. The education office organizes a session, some teacher explains something, and it's over. Nothing is added to the teachers' knowledge. (Interviewee 12)*

The last intervention strategies that the participants mentioned pertained to the system of recruiting teachers and updating teachers' technological knowledge either by themselves or the authorities.

Extract 31: *I think in future the system of employing should be stricter. The authorities should not allow unqualified graduates to become teachers. (Interviewee 9)*

Extract 32: *Most of the teachers, consciously or unconsciously, are not aware of the importance of using novel methods and technology in class and think that these are not applicable in our classrooms. For this reason, they approach them with panic or avoid them altogether. (Interviewee 4)*

On the whole, the findings regarding the immunization process indicate that it does not happen overnight. It is a process that may take months or even years to complete. The development of teacher immunity is squarely linked with the issue of how to motivate teachers in order to assist them to not only stay in the profession, but to thrive in it. Thus, the appropriate intervention strategies employed by the Ministry of Education, education offices, school authorities are of paramount importance in inspiring and energizing teachers.

It should be noted that, as mentioned above, only two interviewees mentioned personal-level stressors which were related to the EFL teachers themselves. The data show that what they proposed as intervention strategies regarding those teachers who faced personal-level stressors was that these types of teachers should keep themselves up to date by reading about and enhancing their knowledge of new teaching methods as well as using state-of-the-art technology and mobile applications in their teaching. Also, by improving their vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation and by preparing appropriate lesson plans before starting their classes, they can overcome their personal-level stress and try to gear their immunity formation path towards the positive one. It should also be noted that since EFL teachers are mostly exposed to contextual stressors, rarely did they mention personal intervention strategies.

Discussion

The purpose of this qualitative study was to address the paucity of the literature regarding the EFL teachers' immunity (either positive or maladaptive), its effect on teachers' classroom practices, and the interventions strategies to gear the immunity process towards a productive one. From the analysis of the teachers' accounts, a number of insights can be provided. First, it was noticed, as predicted, that each participant was reluctant to talk about the idea that they might be suffering from maladaptive immunity. This was evident in what Hiver (2016b) stated: "... teachers were not only familiar with the idea of teacher immunity, but they were surprisingly quick and happy to nominate people to whom this applied—very rarely to themselves" (p. 260). This can be explained by the cultural values that restrict people to talk about their shortcomings and problems, and feel that they might be judged by others.

Second, the sources of immunity, especially maladaptive immunity, were manifold. Generally speaking, language teachers in Iran are in constant encounter with demotivating factors both at macro and micro levels. Several studies that have been conducted in Iranian context in recent years (e.g., Akbari & Eghtesadi Roudi, 2017; Haseli Songhori et al., 2018; Rahmati et al., 2019; Sadeghi & Khezrlou, 2016; Sadeghi & Sa'adatpourvahid, 2016; Soodmand Afshar & Doosti, 2015, 2016; Yaghoubinejad et al., 2016) indicate that EFL teachers are working in undesirable and deteriorating conditions. More often than not, these unfavorable conditions are conducive to English teachers' low self-efficacy, resilience, classroom affectivity, openness to changes, attitudes to teaching, coping strategies, and high levels of burnout. Maladaptive immunity is very much similar to burnout and the reasons of these psychological erosions are similar too. Teachers dissatisfaction with their work conditions because of the presence of several types of stressors and adversities reverberated throughout the teachers' accounts, as they described the situation in state-run schools. This is in line with findings of Akbari & Eghtesadi Roudi (2020) and Rahmati et al.'s (2019) recent studies. In these studies, the scholars found out several potential stressors of which inadequate salary, English language and its teachers' low social status, teaching demotivated students, attitudes of principals, limited teaching time, parental expectations, and ineffective teacher training courses had the greatest impact on English teachers' motivation and their commitment to their job. Also, low social status of English teachers and English language itself make teachers and learners demotivated. In our interview data some participants were critical of their job value and English language status as perceived by the society at large. According to Hiver et al. (2018), when a language is not favored in the society and learning it has no immediate reward, learners lose their motivation in learning the language and teachers may, in turn, get frustrated and demotivated. This finding is also in line with Harrison's (1983) social competence model of burnout. According to this model, individuals who enter human service occupations such as language teaching are highly motivated and have a sense of perfectionism so as to be beneficial for others. But when the sense of having any value and effect for others and the society is lost, burnout is a likely consequence. Therefore, EFL teachers who are teaching

poorly motivated and proficient students, more often than not feel that their efforts cannot bear fruit and may be of little help to students. The result of this feeling of lost effectiveness and value is, thus, burnout and maladaptive immunity.

On the other hand, regarding the positive immunity, the findings of the study delineated that EFL teachers with positive immunity considered teaching as a vocation because they held a strong and inherent interest in teaching and they believed that their work contributes to making a difference in students' lives (Hong, 2012) and helps the society at large. Some of the interviewees clearly stated that the authorities lack of attention and appreciation leave "scars" on teachers' mind. But despite these scars, they kept functioning effectively based on their intrinsic/altruistic motivation. This type of motivation can lead to the adoption of positive, constructive coping strategies whereby EFL teachers consider stressful events in their profession as an opportunity rather than a threat and do their level best to adjust themselves to the stressful events and take advantage of them. This finding that intrinsic and altruistic motivation keeps English teachers functioning effectively in their profession is also echoed by Soodmand Afshar and Doosti (2015, 2016). In their studies they concluded that despite many demotivating factors that Iranian English teachers were afflicted with, they were satisfied with intrinsic/altruistic aspects of their profession such as considering teaching as an interesting job, having positive feelings towards helping students learn, and feeling intrinsically satisfied with serving their society.

Third, the findings of the study show that teachers' classroom practices are directly and significantly affected by the positive and maladaptive immunity types. Teachers with positive immunity and those with maladaptive immunity seem to be on the opposite ends of a spectrum in terms of their classroom practices. While the positively-immunized teachers used their own creativity and initiation to teach English to students despite the many stressors they faced, the teachers with maladaptive immunity just remained indifferent and apathetic towards students and kept plateauing. One thing that was evident in interviewees report, as mentioned above, was that teachers with positive immunity tried to strive and thrive in their profession just because of intrinsic and altruistic motivations. This is in line with the findings of Khani and Mirzaee (2014). In this study EFL teachers experienced and dealt with similar stressors and adversities in their work environment and used coping strategies to mitigate the effects of disturbances on their profession. Facing micro-level stressors, EFL teachers can resort to various constructive coping strategies (Akbari & Eghtesadi Roudi, 2017) and work engagement (Amini Faskhodi & Siyyari, 2018) that they have acquired, adapted, and adopted over their careers, they can help the teachers to remain efficacious. In most cases, especially in terms of macro-level stressors where teachers can do nothing but grin and bear it, therefore, what keeps them functioning effectively is their internal desire to help the students and the society. Ryan and Deci's (2000, p. 56) definition of intrinsic motivation as "the doing of an activity for its inherent satisfactions rather than for some separable consequence" clearly indicates that positively-immunized

teachers do not have instrumental reasons behind their classroom practices. The only drives that motivate them are the positive experience of teaching itself, the love of students, and improving their own abilities.

Fourth, pertaining to the intervention strategies to influence the development of language teacher immunity, the participants of the study offered some practical solutions and strategies that help teachers get motivated. According to Hiver (2015), the most effective intervention strategies are likely to take place during the formation of maladaptive immunity. And these interventions are nothing but factors that motivate teachers because immunity is directly linked with motivation.

The interventions that the interviewees talked about could be mostly implemented by the Ministry of Education and the education offices. Offering motivators like higher salaries, praising and appreciating teachers, supervising teachers' practices in the classroom, organizing suitable in-service teacher training courses, and systematic teacher recruitment requires the attention of education authorities. Teachers' autonomy and agency are not effective in these cases because they are macro-level responsibilities not under teachers' jurisdiction. Teachers' agency can only be effective in keeping themselves up-to-date, motivating their students, managing parental expectations, and compensating for the lack of facilities in the classrooms. As a result, EFL teachers are emotionally inflicted and suffer because they feel that no matter how hard they struggle and regardless of their agentive actions, their effort to teach English is doomed to fail due to unsupportive macro-level policies. Thus, under these circumstances, EFL teachers can be just passive actors (Khani & Mirzaee, 2014) and slaves of the system (Namaghi, 2006) who have no choice but to acquiesce to unwelcome adversities and stressors.

The findings related to the intervention strategies are not in line with what Hiver (2015, 2017) offered as solutions to influence the immunity development in teachers. In his studies, Hiver has proposed three necessary components to influence the immunity formation process. These are: 1) triggering dissonance in the process through awareness-raising to help teachers realize that the existing form of immunity is maladaptive; 2) providing teachers with transforming coping strategies that may enable teachers to find new answers to old questions; and 3) helping teachers to create narratives of resolution so that they can personalize in order to stabilize the new identity. Hiver's strategies are at the level of theory because he has not investigated the practical solutions and intervention strategies offered by EFL teachers. The findings of the present study, we believe, propose practical solutions in order to influence the immunization process.

Conclusion

From the findings of the study we conclude that influencing language teacher immunity formation is a matter of motivating teachers through the interventions suggested by the interviews. Immunity formation is not a simple, linear

process. Rather, it is a complex one that evolves in the course of teachers' career. As a result, just saying something motivating and inspiring to the teachers with the hope of making them aware of the immunity development is not effective. Education authorities must take into consideration the interventions that are influential in motivating and energizing teachers and these interventions cannot be implemented overnight. Instead, these interventions should be steady so as to target the maladaptive immunity process to alter its path towards adaptive immunity formation.

There are some limitations to this study. First, the number of participants was limited. A larger sample can produce more generalizable findings in Iran and other similar contexts. Second, although the concept of teacher immunity was originally put forward for language teachers, it can also be attributed to all teachers working in any educational system because those teachers could be unaware of their immunity type and its impact on their professional careers. Third, the study only sampled participants from senior high schools. Recruiting teachers from junior high schools to participate in a study like this would lead to better findings in terms of generalizability and application in future studies.

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Models of Dynamic Assessment Affecting the Learning of English Lexical Collocations

Research Article

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Received: 2020-01-04 | Revised (2): 2020-07-30 | Accepted: 2020-08-24

Abstract

Given the importance of collocations, different attempts have been made to facilitate their learning. One such attempt has been the application of dynamic assessment models. This study compared the effectiveness of three DA models including Budoff's Learning Potential measurement, Group Dynamic Assessment, and Intensive Mediated Learning Experience with conventional instruction on the learning of English lexical collocations. One hundred-twenty male students studying English at Allame Helli 5 High School were selected through convenience sampling. A researcher-made collocation comprehension test, containing 100 items, was used as the pre-test. The students were divided into four intact groups. Each group received a different treatment for 16 sessions. A multiple-choice test and a fill-in-the-blanks test, each consisting of 30 items, were used as the post-tests. Analysis of data using one way ANOVA showed that the

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Intensive-MLE model was more effective than the other models on both comprehension and production of English lexical collocations. The findings may have useful implications for teachers, students, instructional materials designers, and language assessors.

Keywords: Budoff's learning potential measurement, dynamic assessment (DA), group dynamic assessment (G-DA), intensive mediated learning experience (Intensive-MLE), lexical collocations.

Introduction

The importance of the role that collocations can play in the use of language has been shown over the years. Shin and Nation (2007) point out that the proper use of collocations helps learners to develop language fluency and nativelike language use. Fan (2009) argues that because collocations are an essential element of language, they should be included in second language instruction programmes.

For collocations to be learnt effectively, we may need careful methods of teaching and assessing. In this regard, Poehner (2008) believes that in Dynamic Assessment (DA), teaching and assessing are an integrated activity. DA has its several models which may be helpful for effective instruction of language components. Among the prevailing models are Buddoff's Learning Potential Measurement Approach (LPMA), Group Dynamic Assessment (G-DA), and Intensive Mediated Language Experience (Intensive-MLE), the potential effect of which we examined on learning collocations.

DA is grounded on the concept of Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). In this regard, Lantolf (2006) argues that the distance between learners' unassisted level and assisted levels is known as the ZPD. DA promotes performance through mediation (Alavi & Taghizadeh, 2014).

The first model to be discussed is the Learning Potential Measurement of Budoff, in which it is believed that if a child is provided with information about a test, the impact of background on their test performance might be reduced (Sternberg & Grigorenko, 2002). Sternberg and Grigorenko (2002) proposed two formats of DA procedures - sandwich and cake formats. In the former, a 'sandwiched' phase of mediation is placed after a pretest and before a posttest.

The next model is Group Dynamic Assessment (GDA). Grounded in the sociocultural theory (SCT) of Vygotsky, GDA is claimed to have the capacity to capture learners' ZPD in groups (Poehner & Lantolf, 2011). According to Poehner (2009), GDA consists of two different approaches: concurrent and cumulative. Based on the concurrent approach, though mediation is provided for an individual learner, the exchange that is initiated by the first interactant in the form of a question or comment can create an occasion for another's contribution. In cumulative GDA, students are primary interactants, interacting with their teacher. Although both concurrent and cumulative approaches are of the same

level of importance, for the purpose of this research, we just focused on the cumulative approach.

Mediated Learning Experience (MLE) is the last model to be discussed. It is based on one of the broad schools of thought in DA known as Interactionism. Feuerstein et al. (1988) enumerate eleven attributes which differentiate between MLE and other models of interaction. In Intensive MLE, the assessor provides learners with as much mediation as they can, and an adult mediator performs the task along with the learner, all the time noting the way the learner responds to mediation and making changes when needed (Poehner, 2008).

Previous studies have already dealt with DA. However, to the best knowledge of the present researchers, little, if any, research has considered the comprehension and production of lexical collocations based on the application of the above-mentioned DA models. Accordingly, this study focused specifically on the effect of the mentioned models on the comprehension and production of lexical collocations. It is aimed at answering these research questions:

1) Are Budoff's Learning Potential measurement, G-DA, Intensive MLE, and conventional instruction differentially effective on the comprehension of English lexical collocations?

2) Are Budoff's Learning Potential measurement, G-DA, Intensive MLE, and conventional instruction differentially effective on the production of English lexical collocations?

Literature Review

Collocation

The inevitable contribution of collocations to vocabulary development is of little doubt (Nation, 2001). According to Lewis (2000), collocations are phenomenal, because they involve the natural go-togetherness of words in context. The co-occurrence is based on a regular basis, rather than being based on a random basis. Based on linguistic and lexicographic literature, collocations are considered as language entities which are different from free word combinations and idioms.

According to Siepmann (2005), we can approach collocations from three main perspectives including the frequency-based, the semantically-based approach, and the pragmatic approaches. He claims that statistically significant co-occurrences of words are of interest in the frequency-based approach, whereas the semantically-based approach sheds light on the lexical relationship between the elements of collocations. Meanwhile, based on the pragmatic approach, the syntactic anomalies of collocations are due to the pragmatic regularities.

According to Nesselhauf (2003), for language learners, collocations may stand for great sources of difficulty. Hence, finding better ways of effective teaching of collocations is of great concern. This problem has been addressed

by several researchers. In one such attempt, Bahns and Eldaw (1993) investigated the way German learners of English used collocations and concluded that EFL learners lack an adequate knowledge of English collocations.

In a Croatian EFL context, Takač and Lukač (2013) investigated the role of Adjective-Noun (AN) collocations in language learning. The results showed that certain adjectives (*big, strict, good, bad, different, negative, important*) were overused, whereas specific adjectives were not used (e.g., *a responsible person*). They just used highly frequent collocations which were general-use adjectives.

Considering the Iranian EFL context, Zarei and Koosha (2002) investigated the problems that Iranian advanced learners had in producing English lexical collocations. They examined the collocational errors of high proficiency level Iranians. They came up with five problematic patterns of collocations. They also observed that the production of English collocations was demanding for Iranian advanced learners of English.

Such results imply that we are in need of effective ways of teaching and assessing collocations. The reserachers of this study were interested in finding out whether, and to what extent, applying models of Dynamic Assessment (DA) can influence the learning of lexical collocations. For manageability reasons, we have focused on three prevailing models of DA, namely, Budoff's LPM, G-DA and Intensive MLE.

Assessment

A distinction is normally made between two broad terms, namely, assessment and testing. Assessment means informal data collection about students' knowledge. Assessment involves collecting information through several informal information gathering methods. Moreover, assessment is not time and context constrained. Testing, however, is a formal and standardized context through which students' performance on a specific task is scored based on some predetermined set of rules (Law & Eckes, 1995).

In addition, a distinction is also made between traditional testing and alternative assessment. In traditional testing, tests play the role of a means of estimating learners' competence, and interpretation of learners' performance is solely based on scores (Rezaee et al., 2013). On the other hand, alternative assessment is a reaction to traditional testing and is more focused on student-centered forms of assessment, and the main focus is on the process of learning (Hamp-Lyons, 1997).

According to Matsuno (2009), in contrast with traditional testing, alternative assessment concentrates on the process of learning, and assessment is at the service of promoting student learning. The purpose of teaching and the desired outcomes are of great importance in choosing from among different alternative assessment techniques.

According to Law and Eckes (1995), alternative assessment provides teachers with an opportunity to understand their students' weaknesses and strengths in different contexts. Alternative assessment has been claimed to have many advantages. It carefully evaluates and analyzes instruction (Ghanavati Nasab, 2015).

Amongst the models of alternative assessment, it seems that DA plays a key role in fulfilling the aim of assessment alternatives. Therefore, in line with the objectives of this study, we focused on DA and applied three of its models to the teaching of lexical collocations.

Dynamic Assessment

According to Lunt (1993), traditional testing aims at measuring actual development, which is often misinterpreted as being a measure of potential. The goal of DA is to see how a learner's learning strategies can be improved and how this improvement can be guaranteed.

Poehner and Lantolf (2003) believe that higher forms of thinking emerge from our social and cultural interactions with others and with physical things. Roosevelt (2008) states that based on Vygotskian perspective, trying to help learners to keep their own ZPDs is at the heart of education. Lantolf and Thorne (2006) believe that integration of mediation into the assessment process determines whether or not a procedure is dynamic.

In DA, we deal with those kinds of interactions which are beneficial for learners' development. In this regard, Lidz and Gindis (2003) believe that not all interactions are the same, and we have to distinguish between those interactions that improve learners' development and those that do not. According to Poehner (2008), DA can be looked at from two perspectives. The first one is interventionist and the second one is interactionist.

Poehner (2008) states that in interventionist DA, standardized mechanisms of assistance are used to produce quantifiable results, based on which we can make comparisons between and within groups. He believes that interactionist type of DA is concerned with the development of learners without much attention to the effort required. In the interactionist approach, what provides assistance is actually the interaction that happens between the mediator and the learner. It is for this reason that the learner's ZPD is of great importance (Lantolf & Poehner, 2005).

Amid the prevailing models of interventionist DA are Guthke's *Lerntest Approach*, Budoff's *LPM*, Brown's *Graduated Prompt Approach*, and *Testing-the-Limits Approach* of Carlson and Wiedl (2000). The concern of Budoff's work was the extent to which standardized measures of intelligence produce valid results (Poehner, 2008). Poehner argues that the mediation phase in this approach is standardized, and it includes instruction in problem solving strategies. Poehner (2005) states that according to Budoff, the sign of learning potential is the degree of positive change that learners experience as a result of in-

struction. Differences in individuals' results, which may be due to different ways of training, are not taken into account. He also argues that in Budoff's approach to DA, optimizing standardization of procedures is significant, and thus mediators cannot depart from the standardized procedures to help a particular learner.

According to Elkonin (1998), interaction is a source of development, and Budoff's claim about how much environment can influence test performance and how much of the performance is because of the learner is against Elkonin's claim of ZPD. Therefore, we may say that the views of Budoff are, in fact, completely rooted in rather traditional viewpoints to psychological measurement.

Guthke (1993) argues against the idea of a single ZPD that pertains to one's general intellectual potential or learning capability; instead, he claims that there are several ZPDs pertaining to different domains. Guthke and his colleagues' work was built upon Budoff's work, and they developed their own model of DA, which they called *Lerntest* and later as *Leipzeig Learning Test (LLT)*.

In contrast to Budoff's static administration of tests, in Guthke's approach, we are allowed to assist learners during the test itself. According to Guthke and Beckmann (2000), the aim of Guthke was to include content areas like language aptitude in DA procedures, and separate DA procedures from intelligence testing. They also believe that in early versions, a single type of assistance was provided for a learner who had given an incorrect answer. If the learner still produced the incorrect response, the teacher would reveal the solution and move on to the next item.

Poehner (2008) believes that the Testing-the-Limits Approach is closely related to information-processing theory, which is in sharp contrast with other DA models that are based on SCT. He states that their work is similar to Budoff's. Carlson and Wiedl (2000) believe that the reason why some learners are disadvantaged is not their cognitive impairment, but their different backgrounds, and that it is through changing testing conditions that we can make the learners' backgrounds the same. Carlson and Wiedl aimed at choosing among those procedures that lead to improved performance, and specifying the level of usefulness of each procedure for each kind of learner (Sternberg & Grigorenko, 2002).

According to Poehner (2005), Carlson and Wiedl (2000) offered two techniques of intervention: providing feedback and verbalizing cognitive processes. In contrast to other DA approaches, this approach is in favour of interrupting the administration of the test in order to provide learners with feedback and to get learners to verbalize rather than just presenting an intervention phase (Poehner, 2005).

Brown's Graduated Prompt Approach has much in common with Guthke's LLT. In this approach, a list of standardized hints and prompts is available which can be applied from most to least implicit (Poehner, 2008). Transfer tasks make this model a unique one. In other words, in this procedure, we first

teach examinees problem solving techniques based on which they find and apply a set of principles. When students are able to solve problems independently and become proficient in doing so, the next step is to figure out the capability of individuals in transferring their new ability to novel problems (Poehner, 2005).

Interactionist DA may be regarded as a process of improving the works done in interventionist DA. By interactionist DA, we mostly mean Feuerstein's MLE. In this approach, we interpose ourselves between the task and the child. By doing so, we can both assist the child and assess his/her reaction to assistance (Poehner, 2008).

According to Feuerstein, in Intensive MLE, we provide learners with as much mediation as possible in a task and are cautious about how the learners respond to mediation. The goal is to understand if learners have the potential to change cognitively during the assessment process (Poehner, 2005).

The next model is Group Dynamic Assessment (G-DA). According to Petrovsky (1985), a group is an association of people who have been brought together by chance and have no particular bond that connects them together other than time or, perhaps, space. According to Vygotsky (1998), it is possible to construct a group ZPD when we allow each individual to negotiate for mediation with other individuals.

Poehner (2009) points out that in education, the fact that social activities and development of the mind are not separable is of much importance. Simply put, there is no need for teaching to wait until learners are ready. Still, it may have a role in assisting learners to come up with new developmental views. In addition, he believes that one-to-one and group-based DA procedures are based on the general principles of mediation, but they are different in that G-DA has to pay attention to group's ZPD.

There are two approaches to Group DA; one of them is concurrent and the other one is cumulative Group DA. In the former approach to Group DA, the teacher normally interacts with learners as a whole group. However, in cumulative Group DA, there are a number of one-on-one interactions. In other words, each individual is a primary interactant and interacts directly with the teacher. (Poehner, 2009).

Previous Studies on DA

Several studies have been conducted on various aspects of DA. A case-study was conducted by Nassaji and Cumming (2000) in which 95 interactive dialogue exchanges between a 6-year-old Persian-speaking English learner and his Canadian teacher were analyzed. The results showed how scaffolding helped the teacher and the student to construct a long-term written conversation. In this study, the importance of language as a unified, interactive phenomenon was highlighted.

In a different study, Poehner (2008) observed that mediation lead to an improved understanding of various language aspects. Likewise, Ableeva (2008)

concluded that employing DA enables both teachers and learners to discover and solve potential sources of difficulty that learners are likely to experience in their listening and reading comprehension classes.

Davoudi and Ataei Tabar (2015) investigated the effect of using a computerized dynamic test of writing (CDTW) on L2 writing performance of Iranian EFL students. They found that the students' performance in four major sub-skills of writing improved. Moreover, Lantolf and Poehner (2011) reported the development of students' grammar ability after the application of DA. In still another study, Sadeghi and Khanahmadi (2011) investigated the contribution of dynamic assessment to EFL learners' grammar development. The finding of their study was indicative of the potential value of instruction based on DA, particularly when it came to the teaching and learning of L2 grammar. A case study done by Xiaoxiao and Yan (2010) showed that dynamic assessment has the potential to improve learners' performance in a writing course. In a similar study by Ebadi and Saeedian (2016), the effectiveness of computerized dynamic assessment (CDA) on reading comprehension was reported. Similar results had been reported earlier by Naeini (2014), as well as Pishghadam et al. (2011). These findings were later confirmed by Ebadi and Saeedian (2016).

Mardani and Tavakoli's (2011) findings confirmed the effectiveness of the interactionist model on EFL students' reading comprehension. In another study, Ajideh and Nourdad (2012) attempted to find out if the application of DA has any meaningful effect on the reading comprehension of learners in an EFL context. They, too, concluded that teaching through DA was beneficial for improving students' reading comprehension. Birjandi et al. (2013) also confirmed the practicability of implementing DA procedures in metacognitive awareness of reading strategies.

Tavakoli and Nezakat-Alhossaini (2014) carried out another study, the purpose of which was to examine the effect of applying corrective feedback by using DA techniques on learners' understanding of reported speech. The findings revealed that applying DA procedures in combination with error correction was more effective in improving the way learners understood and produced the structures of reported speech than error correction alone. In another study on the effectiveness of DA on improving learners' grammatical knowledge, Malmeer and Zoghi (2014) reported that, compared to children, DA was more effective on adult learners' grammar development.

Hessamy and Ghaderi (2014) investigated the effectiveness of DA procedures on improving the vocabulary knowledge. They concluded that DA can have the role of a constructive supplement to the conventional testing procedures. In one of the few studies on collocations, Hashemi and Eskandari (2017) investigated the effect of DA on EFL learners' learning of both congruent and incongruent collocations. The results suggested that the students in the experimental group, who had received instruction through dynamic assessment strategies, experienced a considerable improvement in their collocational knowledge.

Over the years, many studies have shown the importance of innovative models of assessment. Amongst those models, DA plays a pivotal role, and it has a variety of models. Nevertheless, the literature suffers from a paucity of research with regard to the application of DA models to each language component. The objective of this study was to help bridge a part of the existing gap and to compare the effectiveness of DA models, specifically Buddoff's LPM, G-DA and Intensive-MLE on the productive as well as receptive knowledge of lexical collocations.

Method

Participants

The final number of the participants of this study included 120 (in four groups of 30 students) male Iranian EFL learners, studying English in Allame Helli 5 high school. They were selected through convenience sampling based on availability. Indeed, the participants were selected in the form of four intact high school classes. The mean age of the participants was 17.

Instruments

The following instruments were employed for the purpose of data collection in this study:

Preliminary English Test (PET). In order to make sure that all the students were almost at the same level of general language proficiency, a version of PET (2010) was administered. This test includes 70 items in four sections. The time allotted for reading and writing sections was 90 minutes; in addition, 35 minutes were allocated for the listening section, and 10-12 minutes for the speaking section. Although PET is a standardized test the reliability and validity of which are already established, because it was being used in the new context of this study, its reliability was re-estimated using the KR-21 formula, and the reliability index turned out to be .81.

The Pre-Test of Collocations Comprehension. The researchers developed and administered a pre-test to check the comprehension of collocations. It was in multiple choice format and contained 100 items. Each of the items included a stem in which an element of a collocation was missing, and the words which completed those elements properly were available in the choices. The students were to choose the correct choice. An hour was allocated to the administration of this test. The KR-21 reliability of this test was estimated to be .79. Also, its validity was confirmed through expert judgment. It was shown to three professors in the field, and they agreed that the test was suitable for checking students' comprehension of collocations. It should be noted that the content of this test was based on McCarthy and O'Del (2005).

Collocation Comprehension Post-test. A researcher-made collocations' comprehension test was administered as the post-test. It contained 30 items in multiple choice format. Those collocations which were correctly answered by more than 10% of the students were excluded from the post-test. In each item, an element of a collocation was missing and the words which completed those elements properly were given in the alternatives.

Example

A group of wolves together is called a ... of wolves.

- a. flock b. herd c. pack d. bunch

The students were required to choose the correct alternative. It took almost 15 minutes to administer this test. The KR-21 reliability of this test was estimated to be .80. Also, its validity was confirmed through expert judgment.

Collocation Production Post-test. A researcher-made collocations production test was administered as the post-test to gauge the participants' productive knowledge of English lexical collocations. This test consisted of 30 items in fill-in-the-blanks format. Each item included a stem that contained one of the target collocations. An element of each collocation was missing in each item. The students were to fill the blanks with their own words. In this test, the Persian equivalents of the target collocations were provided.

Example:

The country has a/an ... economy that is badly in need of repair (اقتصاد بیمار).

The students were given 20 minutes to respond to the items of this test. The index of the internal consistency of this test was estimated to be .70, and three experts of EFL confirmed its validity.

Procedures

Initially, 160 students with the above-mentioned characteristics were selected through convenience sampling. To homogenize the students, the researchers administered the version of the PET described before. Those students whose score was extreme (over a standard deviation below or above the mean score) were not included in any statistical analysis. After homogenizing the students, 120 students remained out of 160. Then, each intact class was randomly assigned to a different treatment condition. Group 1 received instruction through Budoff's Learning Potential measurement, group 2 through Group Dynamic Assessment (G-DA), and group 3 through Intensive Mediated Learning Experience (Intensive MLE). The fourth group served as a control group, receiving conventional treatment.

Before starting the treatment, the pretest of collocations comprehension was given to the students in all the groups to ensure that the participants did

not know the target collocations beforehand. For treatment, all the four groups participated in 16 class sessions of the English course. As a part of the class sessions, English lexical collocations were taught to all the four groups. However, while each of the three experimental groups was taught through one of the DA models, the control group was exposed to conventional instruction.

In the first group, students were taught using Budoff's LPM. In this model, the mediation phase of teaching was important. Here, mediation was similar to treatment. What was different was that the teacher intervened whenever needed, and by doing so, made the collocations easier to understand. In each session, 30 minutes of the class time was allotted to work on 6 target collocations. In each session, we gave a collocation test. While students were taking their tests, the teacher started to sandwich a mediation phase to help them answer more easily. During the mediation phase, the teacher used some prefabricated procedures like explanations, suggestions and prompts to help students achieve the correct answer for each question on their own. The goal was to help the students to notice the correct use of collocations. For example, one of the students had problem with the collocation '*burst into laughter*'. As mediation, the teacher said *what is the meaning of laughter, Ali?*, and the student answered 'خنده' in Persian. The teacher continued the mediation by saying that *'in Persian, for 'خنده' we say 'ژد زیر خنده', Am I right?* He continued the mediation by asking *Now, open your dictionary to see what we can use for laughter.* The teacher left the student without giving the answer. The teacher did so about all other collocations.

In the second group, the students were taught using Group Dynamic Assessment (G-DA). G-DA has two versions/approaches: concurrent and cumulative. In this study, we focused on the cumulative approach. In this approach, the teacher provided students, one by one, with mediation prompts until each student achieved the correct answer. For this, a list of standardized prompts was needed. These prompts ranged from implicit to explicit. For implicit hints, we alerted the students that there were mistakes; we also gave them indirect hints about the mistakes. For explicit prompts, we provided the solution. In each session, the teacher gave a collocation test. Because of time constraint, six collocations were included in each test. If a student had a problem, the teacher corrected them with standardized prompts, both implicit and explicit. The prompts in our study were based on what Pohner (2009) provided in his work, and we slightly changed them to make them suitable for our study. The prompts were as follows:

1. Pause
2. Repeat the collocation with a questioning tone
3. Repeat only the part of the collocation that included error
4. Point out a mistake with the collocation, "What is wrong with that collocation?"
5. Refer to the mistake
6. Ask questions that require a choice between two things
7. Identify the correct response
8. Explain why

In the third group, the participants were taught through Intensive MLE. According to Feuerstein et al. (1988), enhancing students' improvement in a flexible way is one of the key features of MLE. In this approach, a list of attributes was used. Being intensive depends on the application of those attributes. In other words, the more the teacher applied the attributes, the more intensive the mediation was. In this study, the mediator used three of these attributes including reciprocity and intentionality, transcendence and meaning mediation.

Through intentionality and reciprocity, the teacher mediated an object or an activity for the students. Mediation was done through transforming the stimulus, making it more salient to the learner, and changing its frequency.

Transcendence was against the idea of teaching to the test. The teacher taught students to do tasks independently. In mediation of meaning, the teacher made students understand meaning through explaining the meaning of each collocation. Not doing so, students would have been left with only a partial understanding of the world around them.

The teacher designed a mediational instrument to show the mediator-learner interactions. The mediational instrument was not prescriptive. In the first session, the teacher distributed the exam papers amongst the students. Then, to fulfill intentionality, the teacher asked each student to think aloud to show his self-strategy. Next, if the student's self-strategy resulted in the correct answer, to fulfill the mediation of meaning attribute, the teacher showed them the importance of their self-strategy by saying motivational sentences like '*you are taking the right path*'. Next, to fulfill transcendence, the teacher asked them to apply that self-strategy for answering other questions.

However, if their self-strategy did not lead to the correct answer, to fulfill reciprocity, the teacher showed the student that he did not know the correct answer, either. In MLE, the student is a co-constructor of knowledge. Therefore, the teacher, with the help of the student, came up with the solution. By helping them to change their way of approaching collocation related questions, the teacher tried to change the way students approached the collocations.

In the fourth group (control group), the students were taught the collocations through conventional instruction. They experienced no mediation. The teacher taught the collocations in his own method. For teaching each collocation, he provided the students immediately with the meaning of the collocations. He did not have a mediational phase in his teaching. That is, the teacher explicitly taught the lexical collocations to the students.

One week after the treatment period, the collocations production and comprehension tests were administered in two separate sessions as the post-tests. It is worth mentioning that the same teacher taught in all the four classes and the researcher administered the tests.

Data Analysis

Different types of statistics were used to analyze the collected data. Descriptive statistics was employed to summarize the participants' performance on the post-tests. The One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to see if the differences among the scores of the four groups on the post-tests were significant.

Results and Discussion

Results

Research Question One. Research question one was about the effects of three DA models and conventional instruction on the comprehension of English lexical collocations. To address this question, first, descriptive statistics was summarized for the collocations comprehension post-test. The results are provided in Table 1.

Table 1.
Descriptive Statistics for the Collocations Comprehension Post-test

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	Minimum	Maximum
LPM	30	25.07	2.12	0.39	20.00	29.00
G-DA	30	25.23	2.69	0.49	20.00	29.00
MLE	30	28.27	1.84	0.34	24.00	30.00
Control	30	22.03	2.66	0.49	16.00	28.00
Total	120	25.15	3.21	0.29	16.00	30.00

Before using the One-way ANOVA to compare the participants' scores on the post-test, the assumptions of ANOVA were checked. Table 2 shows the results of checking the assumption of normality of data for the collocations comprehension post-test.

Table 2.
Results of Normality Test for the Collocations Comprehension Post-test

Group	Statistic	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a		Shapiro-Wilk		
		N	Sig.	Statistic	N	Sig.
LPM	0.126	30	0.200	0.967	30	0.460
G-DA	0.146	30	0.104	0.939	30	0.084
MLE	0.261	30	0.052	0.843	30	0.054
Control	0.109	30	0.200	0.980	30	0.822

As indicated in Table 2, the distribution of data is normal at %95 confidence level. Furthermore, it was necessary to check the assumption of homogeneity of variances. Table 3 contains the summary of the results:

Table 3.*Equality of Variances Test Results for the Post-test of Collocations Comprehension*

Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.	Levene Statistic
Post test	1.622	3	116	0.188

As it is shown in the above table, the assumption of equality of variances is met. Accordingly, the ANOVA procedure was used to see if the mean differences among the groups on the collocations comprehension post-test are meaningful. The results of One-way ANOVA are presented in Table 4:

Table 4.*One-way ANOVA Test Results for the Collocations Comprehension Post-test*

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	583.233	3	194.411	35.124	0.000
Within Groups	642.067	116	5.535		
Total	1225.300	119		$\omega^2 = .78$	

Table 4 shows significant mean score differences among the groups ($F_{(3,116)} = 35.12, P < .005$). Meanwhile, the index of the strength of association shows that 78 percent of the observed variability is accounted for by the intervention. To locate the significant mean differences, the pairwise Tukey test was used. The results of the comparisons are shown in Table 5. The Tukey test showed that all the three groups have performed significantly better than the control group. This shows the effectiveness of each of the approaches to DA compared to the conventional treatment on the receptive test of collocations. Moreover, the scores of the MLE group on the comprehension of lexical collocations test are significantly higher than each of the other two approaches. However, LPM and G-DA are approximately at the same level of effectiveness on the comprehension of collocations.

Table 5.*Results of Tukey Post hoc Test for Collocations Comprehension*

Dependent Variable		Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
LPM	G-DA	-0.167	0.607	0.993
	MLE	-3.200	0.607	0.000
	Control	3.033	0.607	0.000
G-DA	MLE	-3.033	0.607	0.000
	Control	3.200	0.607	0.000
MLE	Control	6.233	0.607	0.000

Research Question Two. The second research question investigated the differences among the effects of Budoff's Learning Potential measurement, G-DA, Intensive MLE and conventional instruction on the production of English lexical collocations. To this end, descriptive statistics was summarized for the collocations production post-test. Table 6 shows the results:

Table 6.
Descriptive Statistics for the Collocations Production Post-test

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
LPM	30	24.63	2.57	19.00	30.00
G-DA	30	24.80	3.09	17.00	30.00
MLE	30	28.13	2.05	23.00	30.00
Control	30	21.43	2.67	16.00	27.00
Total	120	24.75	3.52	16.00	30.00

Table 6 shows that the groups have performed differently on the collocations production post-test. Before comparing the group means, the assumption of normality of data for the collocations production post-test was checked. The results are presented in Table 7. The table suggests that the distribution of data is normal.

Table 7.
Results of Normality Test for the Collocations Production Post-test

Group	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	N	Sig.	Statistic	N	Sig.
LPM	0.164	30	0.038	0.943	30	0.111
G-DA	0.126	30	0.200	0.972	30	0.598
MLE	0.219	30	0.077	0.837	30	0.053
Control	0.149	30	0.086	0.956	30	0.251

Then, homogeneity of variances was checked. In Table 8, the significance level suggests that there is no violation of this assumption.

Table 8.
Equality of Variances Test Results for the Collocations Production Post-test

	Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Post test	1.537	3	116	0.209

Next, the mean scores were compared using One-way ANOVA. The results of the test are given in Table 9.

Table 9.
One-way ANOVA Results for the Collocations Production Post-test

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	673.900	3	224.633	32.711	0.000
Within Groups	796.600	116	6.867		
Total	1470.500	119		$\omega^2 = .715$	

Table 9 shows a significant difference among the groups ($F_{(3,116)} = 32.71$, $p < .005$). Meanwhile, the index of the strength of association shows that more than 71 percent of the observed variability is accounted for by the intervention. To find where the significant differences lie, the post hoc Tukey test was used. The results of the pairwise comparisons are shown in Table 10. The Tukey test indicated that all the three groups have significantly outperformed the control group, suggesting the effectiveness of each of the approaches to DA compared to conventional treatment on the production of English lexical collocations. Moreover, MLE is significantly more effective than the other two approaches. However, no significant difference was found between the effectiveness of Budoff's LPM and G-DA on the production of English lexical collocations.

Table 10.
Results of Tukey Post hoc Test for Collocations Production

Dependent Variable		Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
LPM	G-DA	-0.167	0.677	0.995
	MLE	-3.500	0.677	0.000
	Control	3.200	0.677	0.000
G-DA	MLE	-3.333	0.677	0.000
	Control	3.360	0.677	0.000
MLE	Control	6.700	0.677	0.000

Discussion

The analysis of the collected data showed that each of the approaches to DA is more effective than conventional treatment on both receptive and productive knowledge of lexical collocations. This finding implicitly supports Poehner's (2008) finding that DA results in improved understanding of different language aspects. Also, this finding is also compatible with those of Ableeva (2008), who showed that DA enhances the development of comprehension skills among EFL learners. In addition, this finding indirectly corroborates the findings of the studies by Ashraf et al. (2016), Mardani and Tavakoli (2011), Ajideh and Nourdad (2012), and Ebadi and Saeedian (2016), who showed the significant effect of DA on EFL learners' listening and reading comprehension ability. In addition, Malmeer and Zoghi (2014), as well as Tavakoli and Nezakat-Alhossaini (2014) showed the effectiveness of DA on improving learners' grammatical knowledge.

This finding can be justified on grounds that DA leads to students' internalization and understanding of learning materials (Poehner, 2008). That is, as a result of learners' exposure to DA, the learned materials become internalized and better understood, and learners can improve their comprehension ability in comparison with those provided with conventional instruction. Another justification for this finding can be Ableeva's (2008) argument that, as a result of exposure to DA, learners will be able to find out the probable sources of problems that may hinder their comprehension.

The finding that each of the approaches to DA is more effective compared to the conventional treatment on the production of English lexical collocations is congruent with the findings of Hashemi and Eskandari (2017), who reported that dynamic assessment can contribute substantially to collocations learning. Given that collocation learning is considered as a kind of vocabulary learning, this finding also implicitly supports Hessamy and Ghaderi's (2014) findings that DA significantly affects the vocabulary learning of EFL learners.

In justifying this finding, it might be said that DA makes vocabulary learning (in fact, collocation learning is considered within the scope of vocabulary learning) easier for EFL learners by engaging both teachers and students in a more dynamic process in which the potentials and differences of the learners can be used as an asset for their development in an interactive system (Hashemi & Eskandari, 2017).

Moreover, MLE was conducive to the comprehension of English lexical collocations significantly more than each of the other two approaches. This finding is consistent with Naeini's (2014) study which showed that MLE has a positive effect on the reading comprehension of EFL students. Another study the results of which are indirectly in line with those of the present study is the one by Hessamy and Ghaderi (2014), in which it was found that MLE significantly affects learners' vocabulary learning.

This finding can be justified on the ground that MLE can help learners solve their problems through mediation. Moreover, it can help them gain more control over the use of language. In addition, it leads to the co-construction of ZPD (Ash & Levitt, 2003) and, consequently, to fundamental changes in the learners' conceptions of selecting one option from existing options. Similarly, as Walqui (2006) confirms, MLE can facilitate the understanding of ideas and self-correction through reciprocal activities. Furthermore, as Isman and Tzuriel (2008) state, MLE interactions have the potential to facilitate the use of learning strategies and the development of cognitive functions. Through MLE, learners internalize the mentioned processes and mechanisms of change. When learners receive MLE, they develop the ability to learn from exposure to learning contexts, both formally and informally (Isman & Tzuriel, 2008). This finding can be justified by the argument made by Hessamy and Ghaderi (2014) that MLE improves the involvement of learners in the learning process by increasing their motivation and reducing their anxiety.

Furthermore, MLE was significantly more effective on the production of lexical collocations than each of the other two approaches. Although no study was found on the effect of MLE on the production of English lexical collocations, this finding can be implicitly congruent with the finding of the study done by Amiri and Saberi (2016), who showed significant improvements in the writing skill of learners in an EFL context after the application of MLE. An argument which can be put forth in justifying this finding is that MLE can help learners better learn communication and take a strategic orientation to learning (Behroozizad et al., 2014). That is, learning communication associated with MLE can play a mediating role in the effect of MLE on the production of English lexical collocations.

Conclusion and Implications

Conclusion

The observation that all of the three groups using DA scored significantly better than the control group leads one to the conclusion that DA, regardless of its type, is more promising than conventional instruction in L2 collocations teaching. Therefore, teachers may be advised to replace their conventional instruction with DA-based teaching. Moreover, Intensive MLE resulted in improving students' collocational knowledge better than the other two DA models. From this, it can be concluded that in the Iranian context, when the situational constraints allow, Intensive MLE should be given priority because it can help students become independent in solving language-related issues.

Moreover, Suwantarathip and Wichadee (2010) showed that students' anxiety and stress levels can be reduced through cooperative learning. In line with Suwantarathip and Wichadee's (2010) study, Johnson and Johnson (2005) observed that cooperative learning creates a sense of achievement. Since in all DA models, the teacher is not the authority and the whole class is student-centered, and the teacher always wants to provide students with a sense of self-efficacy and achievement, we can call DA a semi-cooperative learning approach. Therefore, we can conclude that DA models can reduce students' anxiety and stress levels.

The main difference between these three models can be the way they mediate between students and teachers. In all the mentioned models, the teacher is a friend rather than an authority in the classroom. The way Budoff's learning potential measurement mediates is different from how the two other models mediate. Therefore, each model can affect each aspect of language differently. From this, it can be concluded that teachers should be eclectic about choosing the best model. They should decide upon their needs and choose the most beneficial one.

It can also be concluded that because in G-DA, we were dealing with groups of students as a whole, the teacher-student interactions may have resulted in more positive developmental outcomes for each learner in comparison with those interactions in the two other models, in which interactions were person by person.

Therefore, we can make use of DA models to help students to comprehend and produce English lexical collocations more effectively and effortlessly, assess and instruct simultaneously, have a less stressed environment, help students to improve their comprehension and production of other aspects of language, help students to solve their problems through mediating, and gain control over the use of language. This study suggests that Intensive-MLE can fulfill, to some extent, all the above-mentioned features, and teachers and students will benefit from it more than the two other DA models.

These findings can have useful implications, both theoretical and practical, for different stakeholders. Teachers can apply these models of DA to improve the effectiveness of their teaching and assessing at the same time. In addition, the result of this study can help curriculum designers to design course books in line with DA models to pave the way for teachers to assess and instruct more effectively.

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ENGAGE Model as an Innovation in the EFL Classroom: Perceptions of Cognitively More and Less Active EFL Learners

Research Article

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Received: 2020-04-26 | Revised (2): 2020-08-11 | Accepted: 2020-08-15

Abstract

The present study was an attempt to investigate the perceptions of cognitively more and less active EFL learners about using the ENGAGE Model, as an innovation, in the EFL classroom. The participants of the study were 10 intermediate level male EFL learners in a language institute in Iran who were randomly selected out of 60 homogeneous participants of the

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study. Of the 10 participants, 5 were cognitively more active and 5 cognitively less active individuals. They were selected based on their answers to a validated cognitive profile questionnaire. An interview guide was used to elicit the perspectives of cognitively more and less active EFL learners on the ENGAGE Model in the EFL classroom. The findings of the study showed that the cognitively more active learners enjoyed the ENGAGE Model class more than the cognitively less active ones. Likewise, the cognitively more active learners benefited from the course more than their counterparts in the cognitively less active camp. They assessed themselves more positively in terms of L2 speaking and writing. Both cognitively more and less active learners mentioned that they liked the ENGAGE Model classroom and found it more engaging than the other methods they had experienced before. However, the cognitively less active learners reported exhaustion, saying that the assignments were beyond their ability and that they could not cope with all of them. The findings have practical implications for EFL classrooms.

Keywords: cognition, ENGAGE model, speaking performance, writing performance, EFL learners

Introduction

Foreign language educators have been concerned with the understanding of challenges in learning foreign languages for a long time. According to Baker (2015, p. 424), teaching EFL students the literacy skills, which they will require for their success in tertiary institutions abroad has attracted more attention in recent years. Other studies (e.g., Baker, 2015; Kim & Craig, 2012; Kozulin, 2002; Kung, 2013) have noted that writing and speaking skills are most problematic for EFL students.

A lot of research studies (Borich, 2016; Darling-Hammond, 2016; Muijs & Reynolds, 2017; Nilson, 2016; Rivers, 2018) have been done by educational researchers to help students gain the required skills. However, we cannot rely on one methodology exclusively, as Kumaravadivelu (2003) acknowledges, “there is no best method there ready and waiting to be discovered (p. 12).” He goes on further to believe that it is futile to look for one best method.

Hodge et al. (2009) have stressed that students entering colleges are not competent enough in terms of authority and concern with the social context. They have warned that such learners are poor in terms of self-authorship and critical thinking and suffer from weak social relations in the academic context. Hodge et al., (2009, p. 18) have also stated that “self-authorship enables learners to evaluate information critically, form their own judgments, and collaborate with others to act wisely.” The lack of a well-sequenced, centralized, and strong educational method in teaching L2 in the world in general and in the Iranian context in particular has created many problems for L2 teaching and learning (Akbari, 2015; Hyland, 2018).

Halsey (2011) presented her naturalistic-oriented educational proposal, namely the *Energizing, Navigating, Generating, Applying, Gauging, and Extend-*

ing(ENGAGE) Model, in her book titled “*Brilliance by Design*”, which paved the way for the emergence of educational program changes in America, especially in California, where Halsey and Halsey (2017) and also Halsey et al. (2018), used the model to develop an educational program stressing the environmental issues. The program, which starts from the kindergarten period and continues to the end of the high school, focuses on learners, not teachers, for the instructional design and delivery (Halsey, 2011). Though old traditional and modern methods of language teaching have found their ways to the Iranian educational system (Safari & Rashidi, 2015), to the knowledge of the present researchers, the ENGAGE Model has not been employed as a teaching method in the English Language Teaching (ELT) domain in the Iranian context yet.

Besides, cognition, which has been defined as “the mental action or process of acquiring knowledge and understanding through thought, experience, and the senses” (<https://www.goodreads.com/genres/cognition>), plays a significant role in the learning process in general and in L2 development in particular. In this regard, attitudinal cognition has focused on both cognitively more and less active learners. It has emphasized that cognition has a significant position in attitude change (Rosenberg & Abelson, 2017). Likewise, Housen and Simoens (2016) argue that cognitive status and perspectives of learners affect their L2 acquisition. Wang et al. (2015), who investigated learner’s cognitive behavior in discussion settings, also found that less cognitively active learners need more time to develop L2 compared to their cognitively more active peers. So, failure in fulfilling some of the educational objectives of L2 learning programs might have its roots in the lack of compatibility between the programs and the learners’ cognitive profiles, and a consideration of this issue might be of help. Therefore, the present qualitative study aimed to investigate the perceptions of cognitively more and less active EFL learners about using the ENGAGE Model, as an innovation, in the EFL classroom.

Literature Review

Cognitively more and less active learners might differ in their L2 language performances as they enact differently in other fields (Eysenck & Keane, 2018). The ENGAGE Model activities proposed by Halsey (2011) and expanded by Halsey and Halsey (2017) can pertain to learning EFL and constitute a different mechanism of instruction which would impact how students learn, what they learn, how they use the learning outcome in their personal life and the social context in which they live as well as the immediate environment around them.

The ENGAGE Model

Halsey (2011) presented the ENGAGE Model as a naturalistic-oriented educational proposal in California, where Halsey and Halsey (2017) and Halsey et al. (2018) used it to develop an environmental education program. The primary instructional focus of the program is on the learners (Halsey, 2011). As Halsey

(2016) stated, the human brain does a lot of things when subjected to a lecture, and this is frequently done by it. Since the traditional approaches toward teaching are not able to engage the learners' minds, Halsey and Halsey (2017) suggested the employment of active learning techniques through naturalist education programs. The ENGAGE Model proposed by Halsey (2011) is an example of these strategies with the potential to take a six-step approach to teach the content with the use of active learning strategies together with the utilization of meaningful interpretations (Halsey & Halsey, 2017, p. 3). It is argued that the ENGAGE Model is a model where students are actively involved in mastering knowledge and skills and applying them to real problems utilizing technological tools available. Halsey and Halsey (2017) suggested that the ENGAGE Model works regardless of the fact that single modality teachings such as lectures are not efficient due to their passive nature. This model can be employed by a single interpreter, who works with a group on the trial or at the time that the content is taught in conventional settings.

Nevertheless, individuals' engagement in the learning process cannot take place easily. Significant confidence and courage will be required by the trainers to help learners engage in the proposed activities by the model and keep their willingness at its highest, because most individuals are used to sit-and-get passive presentations. Yet, learners' involvement can be considered a crucial factor to make them remember teaching content and use the obtained knowledge in changing their behaviors (Halsey & Halsey, 2017).

Rundel (2018) employed the ENGAGE Model in training awareness toward ecosystem issues and stated that in case students find something valuable, and in danger, they will learn to protect it throughout their life. Halsey and Halsey (2017) recommend to work through the six steps of 1) Energizing learners, 2) Navigating content through short discussions, 3) Generating meaning for the content by employing meaningful interpretation, 4) Applying learning to the real -life, 5) Gauging and celebrating learning through self-evaluation, and 6) Extending learning to action.

Kim et al. (2017) used the ENGAGE Model in the domain of nursing practices and found the benefits of a regional evidence-based practice (EBP) fellowship program. In this regard, they found "improvement in the EBF beliefs had direct effects on improvements in job satisfaction of the participants" (p. 90). Likewise, Glance et al. (2018) have developed a model for teaching clinical skills in the assisting professions, namely learn, expand, and engage (LEE), which has been inspired by Halsey's (2011) ENGAGE Model. They have presented their teaching model based on the principles in constructivist philosophies, learner-based, and flipped-classroom pedagogy concepts. The use and incorporation of the advantages of multiple helping professions facilitate the objectives of this model to help postsecondary educators establish learning contexts that allow the students to achieve the high levels of knowledge, which has been illustrated in the modified version of Bloom's Taxonomy (Brown, 2007). Halsey et al. (2018) also proposed that the ENGAGE Model can be used for curriculum development in the educational settings aiming at paving the ground for more

awareness toward the environment, wildlife, global issues, and consequently more responsible life-long learning.

Cognitive Learning

Psychologically speaking, the term cognition is often accompanied by information processing within the domain of cognitivism (Sternberg & Sternberg, 2009). As Eysenck and Keane (2018) argue in their seminal book "*Cognitive Psychology*", human cognition could be considered as *conscious* and *unconscious*, *concrete* or *abstract*, and *intuitive* (such as knowledge of a language) and *conceptual* (such as a model of a language). Also, Jordan et al. (2008) argue that individuals might be cognitively more or less active in the learning process. In this regard, Coltheart (2001), who clearly described the basic theoretical assumptions of cognitive neuropsychology, argues that cognitively more active learners employ specific strategies in the storage of data in certain places of their brains. One fundamental presumption is associated with modularity, according to which the cognitive system includes different modules or processors that operate comparatively in an independent or separate way from each other (Chomsky, 1979; Eysenck & Keane, 2018). It is assumed that these modules indicate features of domain specificity, which means they respond to just one special class of stimuli. For instance, a face-recognition module can potentially exist with reactions when a face is presented (Eysenck & Keane, 2018). Nevertheless, Fodor (1983) has stated that human beings have different input modules engaged in encoding and identifying perceptual inputs. Multiple dimensions of visual stimuli (e.g., color, form, and motion) are processed in special brain areas and seem to have the characteristics of domain-specificity. In contrast, several evolutionary psychologists point out that a great number of systems, processing information, are modular, and they have named this the "massive modularity hypothesis" (see Barrett & Kurzban, 2006, for a review). Accordingly, it is argued that complex processing may have higher efficiency in the case that we have access to different special modules compared to the situation that fewer general processing functions are available. The debate still goes on, but human beings may possess some general processors for coordination and integration of the outputs of the special modules or processors which work independently from the domain (Eysenck & Keane, 2018).

Application of cognitive neuropsychology generally takes place on special dimensions of cognitive functioning, including the studies on language (Eysenck & Keane, 2018; Page, 2006). Numerous studies have been conducted on the reading and spelling of individual words by patients whose brains have been impaired, but fewer studies have been carried out regarding text comprehension (Harley, 2004). Nevertheless, professionals in cognitive neuropsychology have currently taken more general aspects of cognition into account, among which thinking and reasoning can be mentioned (Eysenck & Keane, 2018; Page, 2006).

Cognitive learning research has vastly relied on studying language development among human beings (Adams, 2015; Barrett & Kurzban, 2006; Burri et al., 2017; Chomsky, 1979; Coltheart, 2001; Gilabert & Barón, 2018). In this regard, Housen and Simoens (2016) argue that the cognitive status of learners plays a significant role in the L2 learners' development concerning the difficulty and complexity of second language acquisition. In their study on student's cognitive behavior, Wang et al. (2015) found that less cognitively active learners need more time to develop L2 compared to their cognitively more active peers. Robinson (2001) investigated differences of individuals, cognitive capabilities, aptitude complexes, as well as learning conditions in second language acquisition and specified the necessity of differentiation between high and low aptitude learners in the studies pertained to cognitive learning and learning abilities.

Goh (2008), who studied metacognitive instruction for second language listening development, found that metacognition helps L2 learners gain a more comprehensive approach to improving their abilities. It can help L2 learners develop metacognitive processes that could improve their listening. Poehner and Swain (2016), in their theoretical arguments concerning L2 development as a cognitive-emotive process, stated that the cognition and emotion can be found in dialectic association with each other and accordingly, their presence is always evident in psychological activities, such as L2 development (p. 219). Sato (2017) studied interaction mindsets, interactional behaviors, and the development of L2 to provide an affective-social-cognitive model. The results showed that the learners' interaction mindsets had mediating effects on the development of L2, and their interactional behaviors were affected subsequently. Rassaei (2015) examined recasts, field dependence/independence cognitive styles, and L2 development. In this regard, it was hypothesized that learners with field independence and field dependence cognitive styles took different benefits from recasts. Leonard and Shea (2017) investigated the development of L2 speaking over studying abroad and concentrated on fluency, accuracy, complexity, as well as underlying cognitive factors. The researchers adopted a multidimensional attitude toward developing L2 speaking ability. Moreover, the way through which changes in the fundamental cognitive variables of linguistic knowledge and processing speed interacted with complexity, accuracy, and fluency throughout a 3-month Spanish study abroad session was also examined. Learners having higher levels of L2 linguistic knowledge and possessing higher speed in L2 processing before their experience of study abroad gained more significantly in accuracy and syntactic as well as lexical complexity throughout studying abroad.

Burri et al. (2017) found that the joint development of student teachers' cognition and identity could "foster the process of learning to teach pronunciation" (p. 128). Furthermore, Zabihi (2018) studied the role of cognitive and affective factors in measures of L2 writing and found that higher working memory capacities could help in the direct prediction of higher L2 writing scores considering complexity and fluency, while it had negative effects on the learners' accuracy scores. Similarly, Doughty (2019) argued cognitive language

aptitudes and considered two analyses from a longitudinal study with the use of aptitude for the prediction of achievement in language learning. From his perspective, the conceptualization of aptitude was regarded as a specific capacity for learning languages and a ceiling on success (p. 101). It means that, for any given individual, if there is considerable motivation, alignment of the personality aspects will be observed along with the excellence of the learning conditions. The eventual achievement is determined by aptitude differences.

The present study can take significance from different perspectives: Firstly, since instructing learners with the ENGAGE Model strategies has proved successful in other disciplines (Halsey & Halsey, 2017; Halsey et al., 2018; Kojuri et al., 2015), it could be worthwhile to check the merits of the method in the ELT domain and in an EFL context such as Iran, an environment in which learning English has become synonymous with experiencing a lot of problems, though it is felt and considered a necessity. Halsey (2011) asserts that “teaching, in any forum, is the art and science of bringing out the brilliance that drives transformations” (p. xi). With this knowledge, educators will have a basis for making program changes. Secondly, in every educational setting, some learners are susceptible to suffer from low cognitive perceptions of the world around them. Foreign language learners are not exceptions (Bygate, 1987, 2018; Hyland, 2018). Thirdly, materials developers, language teachers, and EFL learners would benefit from the outcomes of the present study and invite the positive effects of the ENGAGE Model into the ELT settings, and this way promote the quality of EFL teaching/learning. EFL students need a more student-centred approach, which fosters collaborative learning incorporating peer tutoring and group work (Ockey et al., 2015). In this regard, the researchers tried to adopt an approach to teaching embedded in naturalist theories focusing on the active engagement of learners in the learning process, like the one introduced by Halsey (2011) called the ENGAGE Model. Indeed, the principal message of the ENGAGE Model is that individuals’ learning will be the best when they contribute actively and critically to the learning process and employ their learning in their real-life conditions (Halsey & Halsey, 2017, p. 4). Informed by the previous research on natural learning, which mainly focuses on helping people to get involved in their learning (Bowman et al., 2015; Caine, 2018; Cambourne, 1988), this study investigated how Iranian EFL learners would identify with the ENGAGE Model during speaking and writing development period and the ways they would benefit from this experience. Therefore, this study aimed to answer the following research question:

What are the perspectives of cognitively more and less active EFL learners on employing the ENGAGE Model in the EFL classroom?

Method

Participants

The participants of this study were 10 randomly selected homogeneous participants out of 60 intermediate level male adult EFL learners in one of the lan-

guage institutes in Ardabil, Iran. Of the 10 participants, 5 were cognitively more active and 5 cognitively less active individuals based on the results of cognitive profile questionnaire. They were asked for their ideas about employing the ENGAGE Model in EFL classrooms and the impact it had on their L2 speaking and writing.

Instruments

The data for the current study were collected using a standard version of the Preliminary English Test (PET), a validated cognitive profile questionnaire (Appendix A), and an interview guide. The PET was used to select homogeneous learners. It should be noted that the distribution of scores on the PET test met the normality assumption. As displayed in Table 1, the ratios of skewness and kurtosis over their standard errors were lower than +/- 1.96. The KR-21 reliability for the PET was .91.

Table 1.
Descriptive Statistics: PET (Subject Selection)

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance	Skewness		Kurtosis		KR-21
					Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error	
PET	80	60.34	5.979	25.330	.508	.287	-.138	.566	.91
Normality					Ratio	1.45	Ratio	-.243	

The cognitive profile questionnaire was developed and validated by the researchers in this study to measure the cognitive profile of the EFL learners. The scale included 30 items and covered six domains of *Engagement, Relationship, Persistence, Critical thinking, Planning, and Purposive learning*. The reliability of the scale was calculated to be 0.86 based on Cronbach's alpha with 245 Iranian EFL learners. The content validity of the scale was also confirmed by three experts in TEFL relying on expert judgment validity. As it is a cognitive scale, they were knowledgeable in the domain of cognition and psycholinguistics as well. The validity of the scale was also confirmed through factor analysis.

An interview guide was used to elicit the perspectives of cognitively more and less active EFL learners on the ENGAGE Model in the classrooms in which it was employed. According to Jupp (2006), semi and unstructured interviewing lets the interviewee guide the course of the interview, and it prevents limiting the discussion to what has been predetermined by the researcher.

The first items of the interview were developed by the researchers based on a thorough review of the related literature and consulting with educationalists and experts in the field. The final draft was checked with five Ph.D. holders in TEFL who were experienced in the domain of ELT. Hence, it enjoyed expert judgment validity.

Procedure

The study, based on which the present paper is written, enjoyed a sequential mixed methods design with two quantitative and qualitative phases. In the quantitative phase, which was a quasi-experimental study, 60 homogeneous male EFL learners were randomly selected out of 80 intermediate participants. The results of a standard Preliminary English Test (PET) was used to select the participants. The pretests' result of speaking and writing were also used to form the two experimental (ENGAGE Model) and control (TBLT) groups of the study. Both groups comprised of cognitively less and more active learners in equal numbers. They went through the stages of pretesting (as mentioned above), intervention (as presented below), and post-testing. The treatment period lasted for 10 sessions in which the researchers used principles of the ENGAGE Model (Halsey, 2011) in the experimental group and TBLT in the control group. A summary of the ENGAGE Model used in the quantitative phase of the present study is given in Table 2 below.

Table 2.
A Summary of the ENGAGE Model in the EFL Classroom

Step	Learning Process	Activity Types	Examples	Homework
1	Energizing Learners	Warm ups, ice-breaking discussions, talking about daily life issues, and motivating students through using gestures and postures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Think about what it has taken for you to give up work, family, or private time to learn something new. • What do you remember about a particular class you attended that motivated you to feel excited before you even got there? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do a quick Internet search on your subject (making friends). • Interview two people before your class. • Develop interview questions and bring them to the class.
2	Navigating Content	Asking the students to navigate what they have gained in the energizing session and develop the new content.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers and learners negotiate on decisions to be made about assignments, activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use stories that embed the learning. • Think/pair/share-think about something, then pair up with someone and share it with them. • Practice a skill and then describe to a partner what they are actually doing as they are doing the skill
3	Generating Meaning	Asking the students to present oral reports to the classroom about the current events, their life and their feelings about recent events in the immediate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which objective is most important to you? Creating dynamic meetings or Creating a one-day workshop. • Now think about why this is important for you. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss the following topics for the next session. • When was the last time you remember someone helping you to generate meaning regarding your learning?

Step	Learning Process	Activity Types	Examples	Homework
		social context and the like.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will your knowledge of the importance of generating meaning impact your future learning endeavors? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What did the facilitation do to help you discover the value of the new concepts in your life?
4	Applying to Real World	Asking the students study about the topic selected in the classroom.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the internet, get involved in the social media, collect information about a specific issue, and then present your own perspectives in the classroom. • Students will cover an article about giving advice. <p>Should the students be interested in this issue, the researcher may decide to use it for an interview or conversation topic.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk about the effect of making new friends and having a network of people around.
5	Gauging and Celebrating	Employing self-assessment (SA) in the classroom context. Teaching SA principles and how to develop self-assessment speaking and writing checklists. Practicing self-assessment on the speaking and writing activities and tasks. Scoring self-performance based on the checklist.	Students are asked to assess themselves at the end of each session of the classroom and see how well they learn what is taught. Students receive relative feedback by the teacher, something which is decreased as the learners increase in the quality of their self-assessment. Various quizzes and classroom discussions will be presented in the intervention sessions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Record a talk and send it to your friends and receive responses. • Use the sentences of from different sources and the internet to make questions and asks each other to complete the exam papers they have developed. • Evaluate yourself as being excellent, good, bad, or in need of more work.
6	Extending Learning to Action	Asking the students to use what they have learned in speaking and writing about different issues.	Lecture about various topics, take part in debates and discussions in English and if possible use what you have learned in the social media to find international friends, watch films, and solve the daily life issues and enjoy living through the English language world.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will you extend your learning so you have a greater transfer from learning to achieving business results through application of new skills? • What other great ideas keep learning alive for you?

In the control group (the TBLT group), the researchers focused on TBLT, an extension of the principles of Communicative Language Teaching. The TBLT group in the present study was exposed to real-world language. The research-

ers did not interrupt learners while they were speaking. Nor did they fine-tune their production. This resulted in a less stressful situation for the learners. After the intervention, the participants in the experimental and control groups received the speaking and writing posttests which were the same as the pretests.

In the first phase of the study, the results of different data analyses indicated that cognitively more and less active EFL learners significantly differed in their L2 speaking and writing performance in response to being taught with the TBLT or the ENGAGE Model. Also, cognitively active learners could outperform the cognitively less active ones in both the experimental and control groups (Esfandiari, 2020).

Following the quantitative phase of the study in which the experimental and control groups received treatments on their speaking and writing abilities using the ENGAGE Model and TBLT respectively, in the qualitative phase of the study whose results are reported in this article, the researchers conducted an interview with 10 of the participants (5 cognitively more active and 5 cognitively less active EFL learners) to elicit their perspectives on employing the ENGAGE Model in EFL classrooms. As the first step in qualitative data analysis, following principles of the grounded theory, the data collected through interviews were coded using open and axial coding procedures (Creswell & Clark, 2017) to find the points of view and perspectives of cognitively more and less active EFL learners in terms of employing the ENGAGE Model in EFL classrooms. As the second step, labels in the cognitive profile questionnaire were grouped together based on the similarities of the processes they signified to come up with a smaller group of cognitive processes. Then, the scores assigned to these categories by the participants were well inspected and interpreted to see if any patterns could be identified for the cognitively more and less active participants.

Results

The interview was a face to face semi-structured interview involving 10 randomly selected participants. Of the 10 participants, 5 were Cognitively More Active (CMA) and 5 Cognitively Less Active (CLA) individuals based on the results of their cognitive profile questionnaire. The data were analyzed and categorized through open coding (general related views) and axial coding (specific issues) as follows:

Item One:

How do you feel about the method your teacher used in the classroom this term?

As Table 3 below shows, cognitively more active learners enjoyed the class more than the cognitively less active ones. To put it more accurately, the cognitively less active learners found the ENGAGE Model classroom boring. The reason they have mentioned reverts back to the number of tasks they had been assigned.

Table 3.
Participants' Viewpoints about the ENGAGE Model in EFL Classroom

	Viewpoint	Frequency		Percentage	
		CMA.	CLA.	CMA.	CLA.
1	We felt in ease as the class was very friendly.	5	5	100%	100%
2	The teacher was energetic and through energizing the students at the beginning of any classroom session he motivated us to learn more.	5	3	100%	60%
3	Sometimes the students talked about their experiences which was really interesting and we did not feel we were in the class.	5	3	100%	60%
4	It was interesting as almost all the students were involved in the classroom activities.	5	2	100%	40%
5	We had to read a lot even outside the classroom to be well-prepared and play a significant role in the classroom discussions.	5	3	100%	60%
6	The think aloud protocols and brainstorming techniques we used were really valuable as we could think of various dimensions of an issue.	5	2	100%	40%
7	Not only could we improve our English but also our understanding of the world around.	5	3	100%	60%
8	The class was boring and we had to study a lot of material outside the book.	0	5	0.00%	100%

Item Two:

How well have you learned to improve your writing from the feedback provided by the teacher?

The most frequently mentioned viewpoints in this regard are categorized in Table 4 below. It is worth mentioning that the present researchers realized that for the students to understand the written feedback, individual feedback conferences could be beneficial. These conferences were held each session about the returned assignments, and the students used the opportunity of reading what the teacher had written on their papers. The conferences were held in classroom environment and usually continued between one to five minutes. Throughout these conferences, the teacher illustrated some errors the students had made, while focusing on recurring mistakes. Opportunities were also provided for the students to raise their questions about their assignments and the feedback that the teacher had provided. The conferences were conducted mainly in English, though for some clarifications, Persian was also used whenever required.

Table 4.
Students' Viewpoints about the Teacher's Feedback on their L2 Writing

	Writing Conference Questions		
	Very Confident	Confident	Not Confident
1. Feeling about writing in English	CMA (80 %)	CMA (20 %)	CMA (0.00 %)
	CLA (10 %)	CLA (20 %)	CLA (70 %)

2. The amount of effort one makes on the writing assignment.	Significant Effort	Appropriate Effort	Inadequate Effort
	CMA (80 %)	CMA (10 %)	CMA (10 %)
	CLA (10 %)	CLA (10 %)	CLA (80 %)
3. Understanding the feedback on the writing assignments	Mostly Understand	Somewhat Understand	Inadequately Understand
	CMA (90 %)	CMA (10 %)	CMA (0.00 %)
	CLA (10 %)	CLA (20 %)	CLA (70 %)
4. Understanding the teacher's comments on the assignments.	Mostly Understand	Somewhat Understand	Inadequately Understand
	CMA (90 %)	CMA (10 %)	CMA (0.00 %)
	CLA (20 %)	CLA (10 %)	CLA (70 %)
5. Ability to correct mistakes using the feedback from the teacher	Yes	Maybe	No
	CMA (90 %)	CMA (0.00 %)	CMA (10 %)
	CLA (20 %)	CLA (20 %)	CLA (60 %)

When the students were required to explain about their confidence level regarding English composition, a significant number of cognitively less active learners (70%) reported a lack of confidence. Despite the teacher's surprise by the considerable number of students lacking confidence, studies have indicated that EFL students are sometimes willing to evaluate their writing skills at a level which is significantly lower than what their teachers believe to be (Matsuno, 2009). In the same way, most of those students (80%) did not believe they had put in enough effort for the assignment.

The students' ideas about cases three and four concerning the degree to which they could figure out the teacher's feedback and comments were quite dissimilar. Seventy percent of cognitively less active students answered that they understood only 50% or less of the feedback and comments the teacher had given. In contrast, 90% of the cognitively more active students said that they understood 50% or more of the feedback and comments the teacher provided. Finally, only one student of the cognitively more active group said that he could not correct his mistakes by utilizing the feedback provided by the teacher, possibly due to the lack of understanding of the code the teacher used. In contrast, more than half of the cognitively less active students (60%) reported having missed this ability.

Item Three:

How well have you learned to improve your speaking from the feedback provided by the teacher?

The most frequently mentioned viewpoints by the students concerning their L2 speaking development stemming from the feedback provided by the teacher are categorized in Table 5 below. When the teacher asked the students about their confidence level with regards to speaking in English, the vast majority of cognitively less active learners (80%) indicated that they did not feel confident about their speaking skills. The majority of the cognitively less active learners

(90%) did not feel they had made enough effort on their speaking assignments, either.

Table 5.

Students' Viewpoints about the Effect of their Teacher's Feedback on their L2 Speaking Development

1. Feeling about speaking in English	Very Confident	Confident	Not Confident
	CMA (70%) CLA (10%)	CMA (30%) CLA (10%)	CMA (0.00%) CLA (80%)
2. The amount of effort one makes on speaking assignment	Significant Effort	Appropriate Effort	Inadequate Effort
	CMA (70%) CLA (0.00%)	CMA (20%) CLA (20%)	CMA (10%) CLA (90%)
3. Understanding the feedback on the assignment	Mostly Understand	Somewhat Understand	Inadequately Understand
	CMA (80%) CLA (0.00%)	CMA (20%) CLA (20%)	CMA (0.00%) CLA (80%)
4. Understanding the teacher's comments on the assignment	Mostly Understand	Somewhat Understand	Inadequately Understand
	CMA (90%) CLA (10%)	CMA (10%) CLA (10%)	CMA (0.00%) CLA (80%)
5. Ability to correct mistakes using the feedback from the teacher	Yes	Maybe	No
	CMA (90%) CLA (20%)	CMA (10%) CLA (30%)	CMA (0.00%) CLA (50%)

The students' ideas about the degree to which they could understand the teacher's feedback and comments were as follows: Eighty percent of cognitively less active learners answered that they did not understand the feedback the teacher provided and the teacher's comments well, while 90% of the cognitively more active students indicated that they understood the feedback the teacher provided and the teacher's comments fairly well. Finally, only one student of the CMA group answered that he was moderately able to correct his mistakes by using the feedback provided by the teacher, while the rest (90%) were quite successful in this regard. In contrast, more than half of the CLA students (60%) reported to have missed this ability.

Item Four:

Both you (as students) and your teacher negotiated on decisions to be made about assignments and activities. How do you feel about that?

As Table 6 below shows, in terms of taking the responsibility of learning, which is one of the most significant factors in the negotiated syllabus focused on in the ENGAGE Model, more than half of the cognitively less active learners (60%) indicated that they could not take the responsibility for their learning. Similarly, the majority of the cognitively less active learners (70%) did not feel they could be autonomous in learning and promoting their power of learning.

Table 6.
Students' Viewpoints about their Teacher-Student Negotiations on Decision Making

	Much to Very Much	Moderately	Little to A little
1. Taking the responsibility of learning	CMA (80 %)	CMA (20 %)	CMA (0.00 %)
	CLA (30 %)	CLA (10 %)	CLA (60 %)
2. Feeling autonomous in learning and promotion of the power of learning	CMA (80 %)	CMA (10 %)	CMA (10 %)
	CLA (10 %)	CLA (20 %)	CLA (70 %)
3. Accurate mastery of language forms	CMA (80 %)	CMA (10 %)	CMA (10 %)
	CLA (10 %)	CLA (20 %)	CLA (70 %)
4. Application of learned material to new contexts	CMA (80 %)	CMA (10 %)	CMA (10 %)
	CLA (10 %)	CLA (10 %)	CLA (80 %)
5. Understanding of language rules	CMA (80 %)	CMA (10 %)	CMA (10 %)
	CLA (20 %)	CLA (20 %)	CLA (60 %)
6. Facilitating the learning process	CMA (90 %)	CMA (20 %)	CMA (0.00 %)
	CLA (20 %)	CLA (10 %)	CLA (70 %)

Concerning the accurate mastery of language forms, a large majority of the cognitively more active learners (80%) thought that teacher-student negotiations on decision making had helped them gain proper mastery over language forms, while only a small minority of the cognitively less active individuals taking part in the study (10%) supported this idea. In addition, the majority of CMA learners (80%) stated that teacher-student negotiations on decision making had helped them apply the learned materials to new contexts, while only a minority of the CLA individuals taking part in the study (10%) supported this idea.

In terms of understanding language rules, only a small number of CLA learners (20%) felt that teacher-student negotiations on decision making had helped them understand language rules well, while the majority of the CMA individuals taking part in the study (80%) supported this idea. Likewise, only a minority of CLA learners (20%) remarked that teacher-student negotiations on decision making had facilitated the learning process for them, while a vast majority of the CMA individuals taking part in the study (90%) supported this idea.

Item Five:

Do you think you can employ your classroom learning in your daily life?

As it is evident in Table 7, both cognitively more and less active learners, who were interviewed presented similar ideas in this regard. They believed that in case they lived in a situation where English was spoken in the social context and consequently it could be used in commerce, educational settings, and tourism industry, the classroom learning could be more useful. Meanwhile, in term of being sensitive to the environmental issues, air pollution, wildlife, and humanitarian concepts, both groups evaluated the classroom method very useful.

Table 7.*Participants' Viewpoints about Employing Their Classroom Learning in Daily Life*

	Viewpoint	Frequency		Percentage	
		CMA.	CLA.	CMA.	CLA.
1	We used classroom learning in case it were spoken in the social context.	5	5	100%	100%
2	We used classroom learning in case it were spoken in commerce.	5	4	100%	80%
3	We used classroom learning in case it were spoken in educational settings.	5	4	100%	80%
4	We used classroom learning in case it were spoken in tourism industry.	5	5	100%	100%
5	We used classroom learning in case it were sensitive to the environmental issues such as wildlife and air pollution.	5	5	100%	100%
6	We used classroom learning in case it were sensitive to humanitarian concepts.	5	5	100%	100%

Item Six:*Do you think you can assess your own writing?*

Table 8 displays the frequencies and percentages of the participants' preferences of the types of errors to be focused on while assessing their writings. The results showed that:

1. Cognitively less active students (50%) preferred task achievement errors to be focused on more than the cognitively more active group (30%).
2. Cognitively more active students (40%) preferred vocabulary and expression errors to be focused on more than the cognitively less active group (10%).
3. Cognitively less active students (50%) preferred grammatical errors to be focused on more than the cognitively more active group (20%).
4. Cognitively more active students (50%) preferred errors related to content and ideas to be focused on more than the cognitively less active group (10%).

Table 8.*Frequencies and Percentages of Types of Errors to be Focused on in Assessing L2 Writing*

		N	Cognition			Total
			CMA	CLA	Neutral	
Errors to be focused on in assessing L2 writing in the self-assessment process	Task achievement	N	3	5	2	10
		%	30%	50%	20 %	100.0%
	Vocabulary/ Expressions	N	4	2	4	10
		%	40 %	10 %	40 %	100.0%
	Grammatical	N	2	5	3	10
	%	20 %	50%	30%	100.0%	
	Content/Ideas	N	5	1	4	10
	%	50%	10%	40%	100.0%	
Total		N	14	13	13	40
		%	35%	32.5 %	32.5 %	100.0%

Item Seven:

Do you think you can assess your own speaking?

Table 9 displays the frequencies and percentages of the participants' preferences of the types of errors to be focused on while assessing their own speaking. The results show that:

1. Cognitively more active students (50%) preferred pronunciation errors to be focused on more than the cognitively less active group (30%).
2. Cognitively more active students (50%) preferred lexical item errors to be focused on equal to the cognitively less active group (50%).
3. Cognitively less active group (50%) preferred grammatical errors to be focused on more than the cognitively more active group (30%).
4. Cognitively more active students (50%) preferred errors related to cohesion and coherence to be focused on more than the cognitively less active group (20%).

Table 9.

Frequencies and Percentages of the Types of Errors to Be Focused on in Assessing L2 Speaking

		Cognition			Total	
		CMA	CLA	Neutral		
Errors to be focused on in assessing L2 speaking in the Self-assessment process	Pronunciation	N	5	3	2	10
		%	50%	30%	20%	100.0%
	Lexical items	N	5	5	0	10
		%	50%	50%	0.0%	100.0%
	Grammatical Accuracy	N	3	5	2	10
		%	30%	50%	20%	100.0%
	Cohesion and Coherence	N	5	2	3	10
		%	50%	20%	30%	100.0%
	Total	N	18	15	7	40
		%	45%	37.75%	17.250%	100.0%

Item Eight:

Is there anything you would like to say about the ENGAGE Model?

Both cognitively more and less active learners mentioned that they liked the ENGAGE classroom and found it absolutely friendly compared to the previous classes and methods. Also, they emphasized that the knowledge or information they could receive throughout the semester was more than what they had received in previous semesters. In addition, they felt highly motivated in the classroom and could connect the classroom learning to their extracurricular activities and studies. However, the cognitively less active learners reported to have got tired as the classroom assignments were beyond their ability and they had not been able to cope with all of them.

Table 10.
Participants' Viewpoints about ENGAGE Model

	Viewpoint	Frequency		Percentage	
		CMA.	CLA.	CMA.	CLA.
1	I found this method absolutely friendly.	5	5	100%	100%
2	I found this method more useful than previous classes and methods.	5	5	100%	100%
3	I could receive more information than the previous methods.	5	5	100%	100%
4	I felt highly motivated in the classroom.	5	5	100%	100%
5	I could connect the classroom learning to their extracurricular activities and studies.	5	5	100%	100%
6	I got tired as the classroom assignments were beyond my ability	0	5	0%	100%

An important issue which is worth mentioning is that, in the negotiated syllabus stressed in the ENGAGE Model, a key feature is the matter of shared decision-making which invites all students to participate and have their share in influencing the decisions. However, it is the views of the most vocal which seems to be heard, not of those who keep silent and do not share their opinions. Unfortunately, the cognitively less active learners in the present study belonged to a greater degree to the latter group.

Discussion and Conclusion

The findings of this study, i.e., the satisfaction and success of cognitively more active learners in the ENGAGE Model class, are in line with Housen and Simoens' (2016) study of the impact of individuals' cognitive abilities on their L2 acquisition. They asserted that cognitive perspectives of learners affect their L2 acquisition, and this fact plays a significant role in the L2 learners' development concerning the difficulty and complexity of second language acquisition. Hence, cognitively more active EFL learners are expected to enjoy a more fruitful development compared to their cognitively less active counterparts. Likewise, as second language development is mostly a cognitive process (Sato, 2017; Skehan, 1998), more active learners in terms of cognition are assumed to develop their L2 more successfully and faster than the cognitively less active ones. Sato (2017) studied interaction mindsets, interactional behaviors, and L2 development to develop an affective-social-cognitive model. The results indicated that L2 development was mediated by learners' interaction mindsets, which in turn affected their interactional behaviors. Sato's study shows that cognitive processes affect the L2 development of the given learners. The present study is also supported by Halsey and Halsey's (2017) study on connecting Californians with the Chaparral through the ENGAGE Model in which they designed an educational program mainly relying on environmental issues to make students aware of the wildlife, environment, and the ecosystem in which they were living.

As both cognitively more and less active learners in the present study positively reflected on the model in their L2 speaking and writing irrespective of their cognition level, it can be argued that the ENGAGE Model has been helpful in making individuals with different cognitive orientations active in an educational setting. This in itself can take support from cognitive learning assumption of modularity (Chomsky, 1979; Fodor, 1983). In fact, the assumed language module in which both L2 speaking and L2 writing can be placed presumptuously works actively with less reliance on the broad concept of cognition. That is why individuals with different cognitive levels can develop their L1 effectively, if not perfectly in some specific cases (Coltheart, 2001).

Another study which can be referred to in an attempt to justify the success of the ENGAGE Model in both cognitively more and less active learners in terms of their L2 writing and speaking is Zhang and Hyland's (2018) research on student engagement with teacher and automated feedback on L2 writing. They found that the corrective feedback (CF) presented by the teacher can make the learners focus on the errors they have committed and try to avoid them in the coming trials.

The ENGAGE Model, which proved useful in L2 development, can be discussed in terms of its steps and their operationalization in the EFL domain likewise as presented in the following sections.

Energizing learners, as the first step, consists of encouraging learners to concentrate on and stimulating them about training that they are going to experience (such as having a podcast on the topic, distribution of the relevant materials and study guides) (Kilbourne, 2011). At the beginning of the session, energizing can also consist of giving thanks to learners for their participation and engaging them immediately by raising powerful opening questions, carrying out interactive activities, or illustrating key training objectives (Halsey et al., 2018). In the L2 speaking classroom, based on the ENGAGE Model warm-ups, ice-breaking discussions, talking about daily life issues, and motivating students through using gestures and postures are taken into consideration (Scrivener, 2012; Sert, 2015). Also, this step deals with motivation, both internal and external, which has been proven to be hugely influential in L2 development (Csizér, 2017; Ushioda & Dörnyei, 2017).

Navigating content, the second step in the ENGAGE Model, focuses on the use of different strategies (such as visual, auditory, kinesthetic) to make various brain parts involved. The trainer uses alternative techniques of teaching and reviewing the content by role-playing, games, or group activities (Halsey, 2018). In the L2 speaking class, asking the students to navigate what they have gained in the energizing session and develop the new content is of paramount significance. Likewise, the teacher and learners negotiate on decisions to be made about assignments and activities. This indicates the application of a process-based syllabus (Breen, 1987) and a negotiated syllabus (Clarke, 1991) in the EFL pedagogy.

Generating meaning, as the third step, urges the learners to clarify the value of the new information they have learned and the way it will assist them, for example, learning more successfully and diagnosing the problem while learning (Halsey, 2011). In the L2 speaking and writing class, this step is operationalized through asking the students to present oral reports to the classroom about current events, their life and their feelings about recent events in the immediate social context and the like. This is partially in line with TBLT principles proposed by Ellis (2003), especially the real-life language tasks.

Applying to the real world, as the fourth step, signifies that learners need opportunities during the teaching/learning process to show their mastery of the new abilities (e.g., learning pronunciation, intonation, lexical resources, or real-world practice). In the L2 class, this notion is implemented through asking the students to study the topic selected in the classroom, use the internet, get involved in social media, collect information about a specific issue, and then present their perspectives in the classroom. Such tasks have been employed in action research (Smith & Rebolledo, 2018).

Gauging and celebrating, as the fifth step of the ENGAGE Model, concentrates on learners' assessing their learning and development and the degree to which they have learned-through a quiz, crossword puzzle, or lecturing to others-and celebrating their accomplishment. This concept is operationalized by employing teaching self-assessment principles and how to develop self-assessment speaking and writing checklists in the classroom context.

Extending learning to action, as the sixth step of the ENGAGE Model, pertains to follow-up activities (e.g., e-mail reminders or buddy systems) to help ensure that learners act on their intentions to make use of their new knowledge or abilities (Halsey, 2011). This step is applied to the L2 speaking and writing classes by asking the students to use what they have learned in speaking and writing about different issues. They are encouraged to talk about various topics, take part in debates and discussions in English, and, if possible, use what they have learned in social media to find international friends, watch films, solve daily life issues, and enjoy living through the English language world. This is in line with competency-based learning in the ELT domain (Nodine, 2016; Waddington, 2017).

In the third place, it was revealed that in L2 speaking and writing, students with a cognitively active profile benefited from the ENGAGE Model. In comparison, cognitively less active students slightly suffered from its implementation. Active learning concentrates on the engagement of learners in activities or tasks, which can help the learners in thinking about and analyzing the information, which has been taught. This learning may potentially take place at any step or level of a lesson, from the students' engagement in the topic, up to their active and conscious participation in the discovery of language and rules, to free, active production. Also, Bell and Kahrhoff (2006, p. 1) stated that during the process of active learning the students have active engagement in the establishment of an understanding of the facts, ideas, as well as skills by completing the instructor directed tasks and activities. Every kind of activity, which leads

to the students' engagement in the learning process can be relevant to this concept. Likewise, Cacioppo and Freberg (2018) argue active planning as a firm step in cognitive learning.

Cognitively more active learners seem to have more tendency toward dealing with active learning techniques, which could affect students' creative thinking, and this demonstrates that creative thinking, as a component of cognition, can be changed via education (Bakır, 2011). In addition, cognitively more active individuals take greater responsibility for their learning, and this promotes their power of knowledge and autonomy in this learning process (Robinson, 2001). This has been enriched in the ENGAGE Model in which a privilege has been given to the negotiated syllabus. Consequently, the ENGAGE Model can be considered as effective and also in line with the cognitive learning concepts such as responsibility-taking and deep thinking.

According to the findings of cognitive psychology, learning in general and language learning in particular, deal with different processes such as attention, perception, learning, memory, problem solving, reasoning, and thinking (Eysenck & Keane, 2018). In this regard, different language skills, including speaking and writing, could be considered as cognitive tasks (Cacioppo et al., 2008).

As the quantitative phase of the study demonstrated, employing the ENGAGE Model influenced the EFL learners' speaking and writing performance though the cognitively more active learners benefited more from this model's application (Esfandiari, 2020). Besides, it was revealed that L2 learners benefit more from navigating content and connecting their learning to real-life situations. The model was concluded to be beneficial to the students because it involves them in the various aspects of a problem. The multidimensionality and dynamic nature of the ENGAGE Model (Halsey, 2016) gives rise to the development of scholarship among students. This is what the present study findings are also indicative of. Energizing learners involves getting learners to focus on and get excited about training. In the L2 class, asking the students to navigate what they have gained in the energizing session and develop the new content is of paramount significance. Likewise, the teacher and learners negotiate on decisions to be made about assignments and activities, which is a characteristic of process-based approaches to syllabus design. In addition, task-based language teaching does not take account of learners' cognitive profile, but in the ENGAGE Model cognitively more active individuals take a greater responsibility for their own learning and this promotes their power of learning and autonomy in the learning process (Robinson, 2001). Consequently, the ENGAGE Model can be considered as more effective and also in line with the cognitive learning concepts such as responsibility taking and deep thinking.

The conclusions that can be drawn from this study can assist other teachers and researchers who are considering the use of the ENGAGE Model to enhance their course learning outcomes. The idea that a number of students still have a preference for less active models does not make much sense and suggests that teachers, syllabus designers, and researchers need to employ more active models such as the ENGAGE Model and investigate the way they will assist and improve

students' learning. The findings of this study showed that the use of the ENGAGE Model is significant if teachers decide to enhance learning outcomes. Also, the data revealed that cognitively more and less active learners liked the ENGAGE Model classroom and highlighted that the knowledge and information they received were more than what they had received in ordinary classrooms. Another significant finding was that learners felt highly motivated and could connect classroom learning to extracurricular activities. The purport of the findings might be that, syllabus designers need to immerse learners in new ideas and act as an excellent gateway for improving quality content. The findings imply that EFL teachers and stakeholders should increase interaction and higher-order thinking, and make connections to learners' previous learning. All of these components need for new models of English language teaching and learning. Materials developers in the ELT domain also could employ the findings of the present study and those of the similar ones to present tasks in which learners' awareness toward active learning is enhanced. Such tasks may help the learners move towards self-assessment, autonomy, and meaningful learning.

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Appendix A Cognitive Profile Questionnaire

Please read the following statements and write the numbers that best describe you within the cells in front of the statements. This is not a test and you do not even need to write your name on it. This is a study the results of which will be used for improving teaching programs; so, please give your answers sincerely, as only this will guarantee the success of the investigation. Thank you very much for your kind attention.

A. Personal information

Gender	Male <input type="checkbox"/>	Female <input type="checkbox"/>				
Age	15–20 <input type="checkbox"/>	20–25 <input type="checkbox"/>	older than 25 <input type="checkbox"/>			
Years of studying English	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>	more than 5 <input type="checkbox"/>
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	
1	2	3	4	5	6	

No	Items	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	I actively participate in learning activities in the classroom.						
2	I usually discuss important topics with my classmates.						
3	I willingly exert the effort necessary to comprehend complex ideas and master different skills.						
4	I actively communicate with the native speakers via social networks to improve my language skills.						
5	I usually think to find out how different pieces of information are related to each other either in my own words or when others utter something.						
6	I try to find out how parts of a text are related to each other when I read the text.						
7	I try to see how ideas are related to each other.						
8	I usually put information from different sources together before I draw conclusions.						
9	When I learn a new word or structure, I try to find more about it.						
10	Whenever I come up with a problem, it keeps my mind busy until I find a solution for that.						
11	I keep rehearsing new things I have learned in the class.						
12	I do not get bored when I read a book many times.						
13	I usually ask my professors to see if I have understood rightly.						
14	I usually give my best try to difficult concepts.						
15	I never skip sections of the text I am reading unless I am pressed for time.						
16	I revise a lot to deliver my best performance.						
17	I challenge ideas that I do not find convincing.						
18	When I read a book or an article, I usually question the validity of the ideas expressed.						
19	Details are as important to me as the overall message.						
20	I usually analyze complex ideas to understand them.						
21	I usually try to see what the underlying principles are in anything.						
22	I usually think about what to say or what to write before the class.						
23	Before a listening class I usually listen a lot.						
24	I speak to myself to be able to cope with possible challenges.						
25	I think about using different strategies to stay concentrated in the classroom.						
26	I usually program the ways through which I can push myself to remember words before using dictionaries.						
27	I try to find out where I can put to use what I have learned.						
28	I usually classify information to easily remember them.						
29	Where ever possible, I try to find examples for what I have learned.						
30	I try to figure out what purpose or purposes the material I am reading serve.						

THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION!

**Abstracts
of Papers
in Persian**

بررسی اعتبار سازه‌ای آزمون زبان انگلیسی وزارت

بهداشت

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تاریخ دریافت: ۹۸/۰۶/۱۱ | تاریخ ویرایش (۱): ۹۸/۱۲/۰۹ | تاریخ تصویب: ۹۸/۱۲/۲۶

چکیده

با در نظر گرفتن اعتبار به عنوان یک مفهوم واحد، این تحقیق اعتبار سازه‌ای آزمون زبان انگلیسی وزارت بهداشت را مورد بررسی قرار داد. به این منظور، ابتدا تحلیل پرسش، تحلیل پایایی، همبستگی پرسش به کل آزمون پیش از انجام تحلیل عامل بر روی نمرات ۹۸۷ شرکت کننده در آزمون انجام گرفت. با اینکه دریافتیم آزمون از پایایی بالایی برخوردار است، اما تحلیل پرسش و همبستگی پرسش به کل آزمون نشان داد که تعداد ۲۸ سوال دارای ایراد هستند. در مرحله بعد، با اجرای دو آزمون تحلیل موازی هرن و روش جزئی حداقل میانگین و لیسر بر روی داده‌هایی که از طریق تحلیل پرسش مورد غربالگری قرار گرفته بودند، تحلیل عاملی انجام شد. تحلیل موازی، تعداد مولفه‌ها را بیش از حد معمول نشان داد. اما آزمون جزئی حداقل میانگین نتایجی با ۲ تا ۷ مولفه را نشان داد. اگرچه نتیجه چهار مولفه‌ای آزمون جزئی حداقل میانگین در نگاه اول منطقی تر به نظر می‌رسید، اما نتایج کلی چندان راضی کننده نبود. نوزده پرسش بر هیچ مولفه‌ای بارگذاری نکردند و الگوی واضحی از بارگذاری بر روی مولفه‌ها برای بسیاری از پرسش‌ها یافت نشد. این نتایج را می‌توان شاهدی بر کاستی اعتبار سازه‌ای آزمون زبان انگلیسی وزارت بهداشت دانست.

کلیدواژه‌ها: ارزیابی زبان، آزمون مهارت زبان انگلیسی، اعتبار سازه‌ای، تحلیل عاملی، آزمون زبان انگلیسی وزارت بهداشت.

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پژوهش قوم‌نگارانه آموزش زبان فارسی و انگلیسی در مدرسه سفارت هند در ایران: درحاشیه قرارگرفتن زبان فارسی در موطن خود

مقاله پژوهشی

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چکیده

یکی از دغدغه‌های اصلی بسیاری از ملت‌ها در حاشیه قرارگرفتن زبان آنها است. عوامل بسیاری می‌تواند زبان‌های بومی را در معرض خطر قرار دهد از جمله، جهانی‌شدن، اهداف سلطه‌طلبانه مانند استعمارگری و فقدان برنامه‌ریزی و سیاست مناسب زبانی در سطح ملی و بین‌المللی. پژوهش حاضر، جستاری قوم‌نگارانه است برای بررسی وضعیت زبان فارسی در مقایسه با زبان انگلیسی در میان جامعه‌ای از هندیان مقیم ایران. داده‌های این پژوهش کیفی از طریق مصاحبه‌های شبه‌ساختارمند با هجده نفر از معلمان و والدین دانش‌آموزان مدرسه سفارت هند در تهران، انجام مشاهدات میدانی یک‌ساله در این مدرسه، یادداشت‌برداری با جزئیات دقیق و بررسی کلی منابع آموزشی فارسی و انگلیسی این مدرسه جمع‌آوری شد. تحلیل موضوعی داده‌ها حاکی از آن بود که زبان انگلیسی بالاترین جایگاه زبانی را در میان اعضای این جامعه دارد. این در حالی است که از یک سو اعضای این جامعه، برای رفع نیازهای آموزشی و ارتباطی خود در مدت اقامت در ایران به زبان فارسی نیاز مبرم دارند و از سوی دیگر، قانون مدارس اتباع خارجی ایران آموزش باکیفیت زبان فارسی و نظارت بر حسن اجرای آن را در مدارس اتباع غیرایرانی الزام‌آور دانسته است. این پژوهش نشان می‌دهد که چگونه ذهنیت به‌جامانده از دوره پسااستعمار و سیطره زبان انگلیسی به شیوه نواستعماری موجب

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بها دادن افراطی جامعهٔ مورد مطالعه به این زبان گردیده و این امر به همراه فقدان نظارت بر نحوهٔ اجرای سیاست‌های زبانی ایران و ضعف آموزش زبان فارسی موجب شده است که زبان فارسی در موطن خود به حاشیه رانده شود.

کلیدواژه‌ها: مدرسه سفارت هند در ایران، سیطره زبان انگلیسی، به حاشیه رانده شدن زبان فارسی، پژوهش قوم‌نگارانه، عوامل موثر

تحلیل انتقادی منشور اخلاق حرفه‌ای مترجمان ایران: موردی برای بازنگری

مقاله پژوهشی

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چکیده

مسائل اخلاقی در حوزه مطالعات ترجمه روزبه‌روز اهمیت بیشتری می‌یابد. منشورهای اخلاقی یا آیین‌های مربوط به رفتار حرفه‌ای مترجمان توسط انجمن‌های حرفه‌ای تعریف می‌شوند که به دنبال نهادینه کردن مجموعه اصول اخلاقی هستند و می‌کوشند اطمینان یابند همه اعضا در انجام حرفه خود این اصول را مد نظر قرار می‌دهند. مطالعه حاضر، با هدف بررسی مفروضات اساسی زیربنای منشور اخلاق حرفه‌ای مصوب برای مترجمان ایرانی و محدودیت‌های این منشور انجام شده است. هجده آیین اخلاقی انگلیسی برای مترجمان و مفسران از کشورهای مختلف جهان از اینترنت دانلود شد و مورد بررسی قرار گرفت تا ارزش کلی و اصول زیربنایی مشترک آنها شناسایی شود. سپس، اصول زیربنایی منشور اخلاق حرفه‌ای مترجمان ایران مورد بررسی قرار گرفت تا شباهت‌ها و تفاوت‌های اصلی بین این منشور و آیین‌های تحلیل شده از سراسر جهان مشخص شود. در نهایت، محدودیت‌های این منشور مورد بحث قرار گرفت. با تحلیل داده‌ها، مشخص شد که منشور اخلاق حرفه‌ای مصوب برای مترجمان ایران چندان کاربردی نیست و نمی‌تواند در نظم بخشی به عملکرد اخلاقی در حرفه ترجمه در بافت ایران موفق باشد. از این رو، این منشور قبل از به اجرا درآمدن، نیازمند اصلاحات بیشتر است.

کلیدواژه‌ها: منشور اخلاق حرفه‌ای، آیین‌های اخلاقی، اخلاق، اخلاق ترجمه، اخلاق

مترجم

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بررسی تاثیر شبکه‌های اجتماعی محدود و معمولی بر مهارت نوشتاری زبان‌آموزان زبان انگلیسی به‌عنوان زبان خارجی

مقاله پژوهشی

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چکیده

پیدایش انواع گوناگون ابزار فناوری آموزشی راه را برای معلمان و فراگیران همه رشته‌ها از جمله، فراگیری زبان دوم یا زبان خارجی در راستای اثربخش و جذاب‌تر کردن فرآیند آموزش و یادگیری هموار نموده است. هدف از مطالعه حاضر، مقایسه گروه معمولی واتس‌آپی که در آن اعضای گروه می‌توانند با یکدیگر تعامل داشته باشند و گروه محدود واتس‌آپی که در آن اعضای گروه نمی‌توانند با یکدیگر تعامل داشته باشند به‌عنوان دو نمونه از گروه‌های شبکه اجتماعی و اثر آنها بر بهبود یادگیری مهارت نوشتاری زبان‌آموزان انگلیسی به‌عنوان زبان خارجی، با تمرکز ویژه بر پاراگراف‌نویسی از نوع تحلیل فرآیند بوده است. در این راستا تعداد ۶۴ زبان‌آموز سطح متوسط زبان انگلیسی به‌عنوان زبان خارجی از طریق آزمون تعیین سطح آکسفورد همگن و به‌طور تصادفی به دو گروه مجازی تقسیم شدند. سپس یک پیش‌آزمون پاراگراف‌نویسی از شرکت‌کنندگان اخذ شد و پس از آن، هر دو گروه مجازی، براساس چرخه آموزشی مدل-تمرین-نتیجه، آموزش و مواد آموزشی یکسان دریافت نمودند. بعد از دوره آموزش، پس‌آزمون پاراگراف‌نویسی از شرکت‌کنندگان به عمل آمد. با توجه به هدف این مطالعه، تحلیل داده‌ها نشان داد که عملکرد شرکت‌کنندگان در گروه عادی واتس‌آپی که تعامل آنلاین با یکدیگر را تجربه کرده بودند، به طور قابل توجهی بهتر از گروه محدود واتس‌آپی بود. نتایج و یافته‌های این مطالعه می‌تواند برای فراگیران زبان دوم یا زبان خارجی، معلمان،

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پژوهشگران و کارشناسان این حوزه مفید باشد تا نسبت به استفاده و نقش کلیدی فناوری آموزشی و نقش مهم و اساسی تعامل در بهبود کیفیت فرآیند آموزش و یادگیری زبان آگاهی کسب کنند.

کلیدواژه‌ها: گروه معمولی واتس‌آپی، گروه محدود واتس‌آپی، فناوری آموزشی، شبکه‌های اجتماعی، مهارت‌های نوشتاری.

برداشت معلمان زبان از یک برنامه آموزش زبان: مورد برنامه اصلاح زبان انگلیسی ایران برای دبیرستان‌ها

مقاله پژوهشی

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چکیده

در تحقیق حاضر به بررسی کمی و کیفی ویژگی‌های برنامه جدید آموزش زبان ایران از نگاه مجریان مستقیم آن پرداخته شده است. به این منظور، مصاحبه‌ای با ۱۹ دبیر زبان مجری این برنامه انجام شد که در آن به توصیف تغییر جدید و برداشت‌شان از ویژگی‌های این تغییر، نظیر پیچیدگی، وضوح، امکان پذیر بودن آن پرداختند. پس از انجام تحلیل محتوایی بر روی متن مصاحبه‌ها، الگوهای به دست آمده در قالب پرسشنامه پنج‌درجه‌ای لیکرت برای نظرخواهی از ۲۵۶ دبیر زبان دوره متوسطه اول و دوم سراسر کشور مورد استفاده قرار گرفت. نتایج این مطالعه نشان داد که اگرچه مجریان برنامه جدید به دلیل مزایای نسبی آن در مقایسه با برنامه قبلی راضی هستند، اما از نقطه نظر دبیران، عوامل کلیدی همچون جدی گرفته نشدن مهارت‌های شفاهی به میزان کافی، سازگار نبودن برنامه با نیازهای طیف وسیعی از کاربران، عدم آموزش معلمان به منظور تقویت مهارت‌های آنها در استفاده از روش‌ها و تکنیک‌های متناسب با واقعیت کلاس‌های زبان داخل کشور که متاثر از محدودیت‌های بسیاری است و در عین حال، عدم نفوذ تغییر به لایه‌های مختلف نظام آموزشی و بسیج زیرمجموعه‌های تاثیرگذار در عملیاتی کردن تغییر، دستیابی موثر به اهداف برنامه را با اخلال مواجه کرده است.

کلیدواژه‌ها: مولفه‌های تغییر، رویکرد ارتباطی آموزش زبان، برنامه تغییر در آموزش زبان انگلیسی، آموزش دوره متوسطه، ارزیابی برنامه.

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یادگیری تلفیقی در توسعه مهارت‌های تولیدی انگلیسی به‌عنوان زبان خارجه: اجرای فعالیت‌های مبتنی بر شبکه در دبیرستان

مقاله پژوهشی

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چکیده

روش تدریس موسوم به آموزش ترکیبی که گاه از آن به‌عنوان برترین روش آموزش موجود نیز یاد می‌شود، مزایای آموزش مجازی و آموزش سنتی چهره‌به‌چهره را در هم می‌آمیزد. پژوهش حاضر به بررسی تأثیر یادگیری تلفیقی بر تنوع واژگان، تراکم واژگان و پیچیدگی نحوی مهارت گفتاری و نوشتاری زبان آموزان ایرانی انگلیسی به‌عنوان زبان خارجی در یک دوره ۹ ماهه در دبیرستان پرداخته است. دو دسته ۴۲ نفره همگن از دانش‌آموزان دبیرستانی انتخاب شدند. با استفاده از آزمون تعیین سطح تاپ‌ناچ یک دسته به‌عنوان گروه تلفیقی و دسته دیگر به‌عنوان گروه چهره‌به‌چهره در نظر گرفته شد. سپس، برای گروه تلفیقی وب‌سایتی به‌عنوان بستر فعالیت‌های مجازی از قبیل اتاق گفتگوی برخط، جلسه‌های بحث هم‌زمان و غیرهم‌زمان برای فعالیت‌های گفتاری و نگارش و همچنین یک فعالیت زبانی تکلیف‌محور طراحی شد. گروه چهره‌به‌چهره آموزش برابر اما متفاوتی دریافت کردند. در ابتدا و پایان سال تحصیلی ۹ ماهه، به‌منظور استخراج نمونه‌های گفتاری و نوشتاری دانش‌آموزان، از مصاحبه و تکلیف نگارش استفاده شد. سرانجام، پیکره به‌دست‌آمده از مصاحبه‌های اول و آخر و تکالیف نوشتاری به‌منظور مشاهده تغییر در ویژگی‌های زبانی، توسط دو رمزگذار مستقل مورد تحلیل قرار گرفت. برای یافتن تفاوت معنادار بین شاخص‌های ویژگی‌های زبانی در این دو پیکره از آزمون تحلیل واریانس یک‌طرفه استفاده شد. نتایج نشان داد که آموزش تلفیقی از نظر گفتار و

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نگارش، تأثیر مثبتی بر تنوع و تراکم واژگان دارد. با این حال، پیچیدگی نحوی گفتار و نوشتار برای گروه چهره‌به‌چهره معنی‌دار بود. از این رو، براساس نتایج به دست آمده، هنگامی که تمرکز توجه بر مهارت‌های تولیدی باشد، برتری آموزش تلفیقی نسبت به چهره‌به‌چهره مشهود است.

کلیدواژه‌ها: یادگیری تلفیقی، آموزش چهره‌به‌چهره، تراکم واژگانی، تنوع واژگانی، پیچیدگی نحوی.

تقویت ابراز عقیده در نگارش استدلالی فراگیران زبان انگلیسی از طریق تفکر مباحثه محور: تلفیقی امیدبخش

مقاله پژوهشی

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تاریخ دریافت: ۹۸/۰۸/۰۴ | تاریخ ویرایش (۴): ۹۹/۰۴/۱۲ | تاریخ تصویب: ۹۹/۰۴/۱۵

چکیده

تفکر مباحثه محور مسیری را برای فراگیران زبان انگلیسی به عنوان زبان خارجی می‌گشاید تا افکار خود را در قالب بحث ابراز کنند، بتوانند مخاطب مورد نظر را به طور مؤثر متقاعد کنند و برای طرز تفکرشان دلیل ارائه دهند که در نتیجه، به تجلی صدای فردی می‌انجامد. در این پژوهش به بررسی تأثیر آموزش تفکر مباحثه محور بر تقویت ابراز عقیده در مهارت نگارش گروهی از فراگیران دختر زبان انگلیسی به عنوان زبان خارجی با سطح متوسط مهارت زبانی پرداخته شده است. به این منظور، ۲۲ زبان آموز بر اساس نمونه‌گیری تصادفی انتخاب و به دو گروه آزمایش و گواه تقسیم شدند. برای اطمینان از همگن بودن شرکت‌کنندگان از نظر سطح بسندگی زبانی، از آزمون تعیین سطح آکسفورد استفاده شد. گروه آزمایش بر اساس الگوی آموزش مباحثه محور الکساندر (۲۰۰۸) در قالب بحث تحلیلی در خصوص هشت موضوع بحث برانگیز در طول ده جلسه تحت آموزش قرار گرفت. از طرف دیگر، از گروه گواه خواسته شد تا در فعالیت‌های کلاس نگارش عادی شرکت کنند. برای اندازه‌گیری ابراز عقیده، مقیاس ارزیابی میزان ابراز عقیده هلمز-پارک و استپلتون (۲۰۰۳) مورد استفاده قرار گرفت. یافته‌ها نشان داد که آموزش مباحثه محور، بحث منطقی، استدلال درست و ارزیابی منطقی و به تبع آن، تجلی صدای فردی را از طریق ابزارهای زبانی و بلاغی برمی‌انگیزد.

کلیدواژه‌ها: تفکر گفت‌وگو محور، فراگیران زبان انگلیسی به عنوان زبان خارجی، آموزش، ابراز عقیده، نگارش.

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سلطه اثبات‌گرایی در نوشتار دانشگاهی پژوهشگران حوزه زبان‌شناسی کاربردی ایران: رویکرد انتقادی

پیکره‌بنیاد

مقاله پژوهشی

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چکیده

نگارش علمی را می‌توان به‌عنوان یکی از مهارت‌های مهم آموزش عالی و یک پدیده اجتماعی از نظر بهره‌برداری‌های ایدئولوژیک مورد بررسی قرارداد. هدف از این تحقیق برده‌برداری از گفتمان هژمونیک غربی، مانند الگوهای مشروعیت‌بخشی درگفتمان دانشگاهی پژوهشگران حوزه زبان‌شناسی کاربردی ایران در سه پارادایم اصلی پژوهش بود. به این منظور، طبقه‌بندی پنج‌موفه‌ای مقوله اعتباربخشی ون لیوون (۲۰۰۸) به‌عنوان چارچوب تحلیلی مورد استفاده قرار گرفت. برای بررسی بسامد مشاهده‌شده در طبقه‌بندی‌های مذکور، مقاله‌های منتشرشده در مجله‌های علمی پژوهشی مورد تحلیل انتقادی قرار گرفتند و از آزمون مجذور کای برای پیدا کردن رابطه معنی‌دار آماری بین الگوهای مشروعیت‌بخشی و روش تحقیق‌ها استفاده شد. نتایج نشان داد از نظر آماری رابطه معناداری بین روش تحقیق کمی و کیفی و همچنین بین روش تحقیق کمی و ترکیبی وجود دارد. بنابراین، نتایج این تحقیق سلطه ایدئولوژی اثبات‌گرایی بر نگارش دانشگاهیان رشته زبان‌شناسی کاربردی ایران را روشن می‌سازد. در این رابطه، سیاست‌گذاران تحصیلات تکمیلی در وزارت علوم، تحقیقات و فناوری و هیات دبیران مجله‌های ایرانی در رشته

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زبان‌شناسی کاربردی می‌توانند نگرش جهانی و غربی به آموزش را به رویکردهای بومی‌تر تغییر دهند. همچنین، استادان دانشگاه و دانش‌جویان می‌توانند در پژوهش‌ها و گزارش‌های مطالعات علمی خود نگاهی دموکراتیک داشته باشند.

کلیدواژه‌ها: اثبات‌گرایی، نگرش دانشگاهی، رویکرد انتقادی پیکره‌بنیاد، گفتمان هژمونیک، سلطه.

سبک‌های پردازش هویت به‌عنوان پیش‌بینی‌کنندهٔ دانش و عملکرد منظورشناختی: مطالعه موردی کنش‌های کلامی متداول در زبان انگلیسی

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چکیده

سبک‌های پردازش هویت، آن دسته از فرآیندهای روان‌شناختی، فرهنگی-اجتماعی و شناختی هستند که هویت‌های مختلف افراد را در زبان مادری، زبان دوم و یا خارجی که سعی در یادگیری آن دارند، ایجاد می‌کنند، شکل می‌دهند و تثبیت می‌کنند. رابطهٔ بین این سبک‌های پردازش هویت و توانش منظورشناختی زبان‌آموزان در زبان دوم، موضوع مهمی است که تاکنون در حیطهٔ یادگیری زبان انگلیسی به‌عنوان زبان خارجی بررسی نشده است. براین‌اساس، این پژوهش با هدف بررسی رابطهٔ بین سبک‌های پردازش هویت اطلاعاتی، اجتنابی و هنجاری که به‌کمک مقیاس سبک‌های پردازش هویتی پرزونسکی (۲۰۱۱) اندازه‌گیری شده‌بودند با دانش و تولید کنش گفتاری ۱۲۲ زبان‌آموز ایرانی (۸۲ زن و ۴۰ مرد) با سطح بسندگی زبان فوق‌متوسط تا پیشرفته انجام شد. در این مطالعه، آزمون ۳۵ سوالی و چندگزینه‌ای تکمیل‌گفتمان اعتباریافته (MDCT) شامل پنج کنش کلامی انگلیسی (تقاضا، رد تقاضا، عذرخواهی، امتناع، شکایت و تعریف و تمجید/ پاسخ به تعریف و تمجید) و یک آزمون تعاملی ایفای نقش مرتبط مورد استفاده قرارگرفت. استفاده از رگرسیون چندگانه نشان داد که سبک‌های پردازش هویت اجتنابی و هنجاری، عوامل پیش‌بینی‌کنندهٔ معنادار اما متوسطی برای دانش و تولید منظورشناختی بودند،

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درحالی که سبک پردازش هویت اطلاعی، پیش‌بینی‌کننده‌ای با معناداری ضعیف بود. طبق این یافته‌ها، معلمان می‌توانند شیوه‌های آموزشی منظورشناختی خود را مطابق با سبک‌های پردازش هویت زبان‌آموزان مدیریت و متناسب‌سازی نمایند.

کلیدواژه‌ها: سبک‌های پردازش هویت، سبک اطلاعی، سبک اجتنابی، سبک هنجاری، دانش منظورشناختی زبان دوم، عملکرد منظورشناختی.

مصونیت در میان معلم‌های زبان انگلیسی به‌عنوان زبان خارجی: منشاء ها، تأثیرات و مسیر رشد

مقاله پژوهشی

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چکیده

مصونیت معلم زبان یک مفهوم جدید در روان‌شناسی معلم است که شاخصی قدرتمند در چگونگی رشد یا بقای معلمان در برابر مشکلات به حساب می‌آید. پژوهش در مورد مصونیت معلم زبان هنوز نوپا است و این مطالعه کیفی سعی دارد خلاء موجود در ادبیات مربوط به مصونیت معلمان را پر کند. در این مطالعه به بررسی منشاء احتمالی مصونیت در بین معلمان ایرانی زبان انگلیسی به‌عنوان زبان خارجی، تأثیر احتمالی مصونیت بر کلاس درس و راهکارهای مداخله‌ای پیشنهادی معلمان در ایجاد مصونیت معلمان پرداخته شده است. براساس مصاحبه با ۱۳ معلم باتجربه دبیرستان، دریافتیم که چهار عامل عمده استرس‌زا در سطح فردی، مدرسه، سازمانی و فرهنگی-اجتماعی منشاء ایجاد مصونیت ناسازگار هستند. تنها دلیل ایجاد مصونیت مثبت در معلمان زبان انگلیسی، انگیزه نوع دوستی بود. علاوه بر این مشخص شد که معلمان زبان انگلیسی با مصونیت مثبت، عملکرد موثری در کلاس‌های خود داشتند، در حالی که معلمان دارای مصونیت ناسازگار، نسبت به دانش‌آموزان خود احساس بی‌تفاوتی می‌کردند و بدون اجرای اقدام فردی، احساس رضایت داشتند. این معلمان در بسیاری از سختی‌هایی که در طول زندگی حرفه‌ای خود با آنها روبه‌رو بودند، تسلیم شده بودند. یافته‌ها همچنین نشان داد که برای تأثیرگذاری بر روند ایجاد مصونیت به طوری که به سمت مصونیت مثبت سوق داده شود، باید وضعیت اقتصادی معلمان با افزایش حقوق بهبود یابد، قدردانی و سپاسگزاری از تلاش‌های آنها انجام‌گیرد، دوره‌های کاربردی آموزش ضمن خدمت

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ترتیب داده شود و در مدارس ازسوی مدیران و سایر مقامات آموزشی مورد حمایت قرارگیرند.

کلیدواژه‌ها: مصونیت معلم زبان، انگیزه معلم، معلم‌های ایرانی زبان انگلیسی، استرس معلم، نوع مصونیت.

مدل‌های ارزیابی پویای موثر در فراگیری هم‌آیندهای واژگانی انگلیسی

مقاله پژوهشی

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چکیده

نظربه اهمیت هم‌آیندهای واژگانی، تلاش‌های گوناگونی برای یافتن راه آسان‌سازی یادگیری آنها انجام شده است. یکی از این تلاش‌ها به‌کارگیری مدل‌های ارزیابی پویا است. در این پژوهش، اثربخشی سه مدل ارزیابی پویا شامل مدل اندازه‌گیری پتانسیل یادگیری بوداف، ارزیابی پویای گروهی و مدل تجربه یادگیری با مداخله شدید بر یادگیری هم‌آیندهای انگلیسی با آموزش عادی مقایسه شده است. به این منظور تعداد ۱۲ دانش‌آموز پسر دبیرستان علامه‌حلی ۵ به‌صورت نمونه‌گیری آسان انتخاب شدند. یک آزمون درک هم‌آیندهای واژگانی که توسط پژوهشگران طراحی شده و شامل یکصد پرسش بود به‌عنوان پیش‌آزمون مورد استفاده قرار گرفت. دانش‌آموزان به چهار گروه دست‌نخورده تقسیم شدند. سپس هریک از گروه‌ها به مدت ۱۶ جلسه مورد آموزش متفاوت قرار گرفتند. یک آزمون چندگزینیه‌ای و یک آزمون پرکردن جای خالی، هریک شامل ۳۰ پرسش، به‌عنوان پس‌آزمون به‌کارگرفته شد. تحلیل داده‌ها با استفاده از فرآیند تحلیل واریانس یک‌سویه نشان داد که هم در درک و هم در تولید هم‌آیندهای انگلیسی، مدل تجربه یادگیری با مداخله فشرده، موثرتر از مدل‌های دیگر است. یافته‌های این پژوهش می‌تواند برای دانش‌آموزان، مدرسان، تهیه‌کنندگان مطالب درسی و نیز ارزیابان زبان کاربردهای سودمندی داشته باشد.

کلیدواژه‌ها: اندازه‌گیری پتانسیل یادگیری بوداف، ارزیابی پویا، ارزیابی پویای گروهی، تجربه یادگیری با مداخله فشرده، هم‌آیندهای واژگانی.

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مقاله پژوهشی

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تاریخ دریافت: ۹۹/۰۲/۰۷ | تاریخ ویرایش (۲): ۹۹/۰۵/۲۱ | تاریخ تصویب: ۹۹/۰۵/۲۵

چکیده

در پژوهش حاضر تلاش بر آن بود تا زبان‌آموزان انگلیسی به‌عنوان زبان خارجی که به‌لحاظ شناختی بیشتر فعال هستند و آنهایی که کمتر فعال هستند، درخصوص برداشتشان از استفاده از مدل تبیینی به‌عنوان یک نوآوری در کلاس انگلیسی مورد بررسی قرار گیرند. ده زبان‌آموز مذکر سطح متوسط انگلیسی به‌عنوان زبان خارجی از یکی از موسسه‌های زبان ایران در این تحقیق شرکت کردند که از بین ۶۰ زبان‌آموز همگن به‌صورت تصادفی برگزیده شدند. از میان این ده شرکت‌کننده پنج نفر از نظر شناختی بیشتر فعال و پنج نفر کمتر فعال بودند. این افراد براساس پاسخ‌هایشان به پرسشنامه معتبر مشخصات شناختی انتخاب شدند. برای استخراج دیدگاه زبان‌آموزان بیشتر و کمتر فعال شناختی در مورد مدل تبیینی از مصاحبه استفاده شد. یافته‌های این تحقیق مشخص کرد فراگیرانی که به‌لحاظ شناختی بیشتر فعال هستند نسبت به آنهایی که کمتر فعالند از کلاس روش تبیینی بیشتر لذت می‌برند. همچنین فراگیران فعال شناختی نسبت به زبان‌آموزان کمتر فعال از کلاس روش تبیینی بهره بیشتری بردند. آنها مهارت گفتاری و نوشتاری زبان دوم خود را مثبت ارزیابی کردند. هر دو گروه عنوان داشتند که از کلاس روش تبیینی خوششان آمده و این نوع کلاس نسبت به روش‌ها و کلاس‌هایی که پیش از آن تجربه کرده بودند

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جذاب تر است. با این وجود، زبان آموزانی که به لحاظ شناختی کمتر فعال بودند، بیان کردند که احساس خستگی می‌کردند زیرا تکالیف فراتر از سطح توانایی آنها بود و نمی‌توانستند از عهده همه آنها برآیند. یافته‌های این تحقیق در حوزه آموزش زبان انگلیسی به عنوان زبان خارجی کاربردهای عملی دارد.

کلیدواژه‌ها: شناخت، مدل تبیینی، عملکرد گفتاری، عملکرد نوشتاری، زبان آموزان انگلیسی به عنوان زبان خارجی.

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مدیر مسئول: دکتر اعظم سازور

سر دبیر: دکتر الهه ستوده نما

ویراستار زبان انگلیسی: دکتر شهره تیمورنژاد

ویراستار زبان فارسی: حمیده پشتوان

مدیر اجرایی: مریم شیردل پور

اعضای هیئت تحریریه

- **فاضل اسدی امجد**
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کلیه حقوق برای دانشگاه الزهراء (س) محفوظ است.

آدرس: تهران، ونک، دانشگاه الزهراء (س)، دانشکده ادبیات، کدپستی: ۱۹۹۳۸۹۱۱۷۶

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شاپای الکترونیکی: ۲۵۸۸-۵۶۳۴

سال چهارم
شماره دوم
پاییز و زمستان ۱۳۹۹
(دوفصلنامه - پیاپی ۸)

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