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# INVESTIGATING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LANGUAGE LEARNERS' CLASSROOM ANXIETY AND THEIR SELF-ESTEEM, GENDER, AGE AND EDUCATIONAL LEVEL

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## ABSTRACT

THE PRESENT STUDY WAS AN ATTEMPT TO EXPLORE THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EFL UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSROOM ANXIETY AND THEIR SELF-ESTEEM, GENDER, AGE AND EDUCATIONAL LEVEL. IT ALSO SOUGHT TO INVESTIGATE HOW WELL THE INDEPENDENT AFFECTIVE VARIABLE OF SELF-ESTEEM AND BACKGROUND VARIABLES OF GENDER AND AGE AND EDUCATIONAL LEVEL PREDICTED LANGUAGE LEARNERS' FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSROOM ANXIETY. THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSROOM ANXIETY SCALE AND THE ROSENBERG SELF-ESTEEM SCALE WERE ADMINISTERED TO UNDERGRADUATE ENGLISH TRANSLATION STUDENTS WHOSE AGE RANGED FROM 19 TO 48 ( $M=24.59$ ,  $SD=4.47$ ). THE RESULTS REVEALED A LOW LEVEL OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSROOM ANXIETY. THE FINDINGS WERE ALSO INDICATIVE OF THE FACT THAT SELF-ESTEEM HAD A SIGNIFICANT NEGATIVE RELATIONSHIP WITH FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSROOM ANXIETY WHILE AGE AND EDUCATIONAL LEVEL DID NOT REVEAL ANY SIGNIFICANT RELATIONSHIP. THE RESULTS OF MULTIPLE REGRESSION ANALYSES SHOWED THAT THE INDEPENDENT VARIABLES OF SELF-ESTEEM AND GENDER SIGNIFICANTLY PREDICTED THE LEARNERS' FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSROOM ANXIETY.

**KEYWORDS:** FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSROOM ANXIETY, SELF-ESTEEM, GENDER, AGE, EDUCATIONAL LEVEL

## 1. Introduction:

### 1.1. Preliminaries:

Foreign language learning is often associated with a specific type of anxiety called foreign language learning anxiety. In fact, since foreign language learning almost always occurs in the classroom context, this kind of anxiety is specifically known as foreign language classroom anxiety (FLCAS). In the social context of the classroom, learners have constant interaction with each other and with their teachers, and they are regularly being evaluated by their teachers and peers. This constant evaluative situation makes them susceptible to the feeling of discomfort and anxiety. Foreign language teachers have repeatedly reported that EFL learners who are competent in other situations experience an anxiety reaction which impedes their desirable performance in a foreign language class (Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope, 1986). Oxford (1999) also states that this anxiety is directly linked to performing in the target language rather than being a general type of anxiety. In fact, foreign language class can be much more anxiety-provoking compared to language learners' other courses (Liu, 2007; Ohata, 2005). Thus, language learning setting is likely to be prone to anxiety arousal (Price, 1991).

Krashen (1982, 1985) views anxiety as debilitating since it leads to affective filter which prevents language learners from fully processing language input. Consequently, language learners are not able to improve their language learning. Many scholars regard foreign language anxiety as one of the influential factors of the affective domain (Balemir, 2000, cited in Öztürk & Gürbüz, 2013). MacIntyre & Gardner, (1994, p. 283) define foreign language anxiety as "the feeling of tension and apprehension specifically associated with second language contexts, including speaking, listening, and learning". Horwitz *et al.* (1986) assert that foreign language anxiety cannot be simply viewed as a combination of fears, tension, and nervousness transformed to foreign language learning situation, but it is perceived as "a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process" (p.128).

As such, many studies have sought to investigate language learners' level of foreign language anxiety and its relationship with language achievement and such affective variables as shyness, self-esteem, introversion, motivation etc. (Yamini & Tahriri, 2006; Chu, 2008; Farjami & Amerian, 2012). Nevertheless, it seems that they have not succeeded in arriving at conclusive results and more studies are required in the area of foreign language anxiety and its relationship with affective variables.

### 1.2. Significance of the study:

Due to the fact that anxiety is one of the affective factors which may greatly influence different aspects of foreign language learning, it is vital to investigate language learners' FLCA level as well as those learners who are anxious in FL classes (Horwitz *et al.*, 1986). In addition, according to Campbell and Ortiz (1991), university students' foreign language anxiety must be considered "alarming" with half language learners experiencing the negative effects of learning anxiety.

In this connection, the motive behind conducting the present study was the fact that the results regarding the relationship between FLCA and gender are controversial. Moreover, the relationship between FLCA and age has been reported by few studies. Also, research investigating the impact of both self-esteem and the background variables of gender, age and educational level on EFL learners' FLCA seems to be scant. Finally, few studies have attempted to go beyond reporting the total level of FLCA and to analyze individual anxiety-provoking items related to the three underlying constructs of FLCA.

### 1.3. Research questions:

The present study aimed at revealing English translation students' level of foreign language classroom anxiety. Furthermore, it sought to investigate the relationship between FLCA on the one hand and their self-esteem, gender, age and educational level on the other. It was also intended to show how well these independent variables predicted EFL learners' level of FLCA. In this regard, the following research questions were posed to guide the study:

1. What is EFL learners' level of foreign language classroom anxiety?
2. Do males and females differ with respect to their level of foreign language classroom anxiety?
3. Is there any significant relationship between EFL learners' level of foreign language classroom anxiety and their self-esteem?

4. How well do the independent variables of self-esteem, gender, age and educational level predict learners' level of foreign language classroom anxiety? Which is the best predictor?

## 2. Review of the literature:

### 2.1. Foreign language anxiety:

Affective variables concern personality factors (Brown, 1994) such as anxiety, shyness, self-esteem, introversion, extroversion, risk-taking, motivation etc. which are regarded as the intrinsic side of affectivity (Brown, 2007). Among affective factors, anxiety is viewed as an important factor in the affective domain (Balemir, 2009, cited in Ozturk & Gurbuz, 2013). Blau (1955) viewed anxiety as an uncomfortable emotional state which makes an individual perceive danger, feel powerless and experience tension. According to Brown (2000, p. 151) anxiety "is associated with feelings of uneasiness, frustration, self-doubt, apprehension, or worry".

By the arrival of humanistic psychology, researchers' attention shifted from focusing solely on the cognitive aspect of learning to considering both the psychological and cognitive aspects of language learning. Accordingly, a growing body of research attempted to investigate the relationship between language learning and affective variables (Chastain, 1975; Horwitz *et al.*, 1986; Schumann, 1999; Samimy & Tabuse, 1992; Yamini & Tahriri, 2006; Chu, 2008; Bashosh, Abbas Nejad, Rastegar & Marzban, 2012). These studies have revealed that in the process of language learning affective variables play a key role.

In the domain of language learning, anxiety is regarded as "the apprehension experienced when a situation requires the use of a second language with which the individual is not fully proficient" (Gardner & MacIntyre (1993, p.5). Therefore, language learning anxiety is distinct from general anxiety (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1989). It is, further, believed that it is directly concerned with performing in the target language (Gardner & MacIntyre, 1993; Horwitz *et al.*, 1986). Thus, it cannot be viewed as general performance anxiety, either. Horwitz (2001, p.116) believed that in the process of language learning experiencing foreign language anxiety is natural since learners have to present "a less precise version of themselves" particularly during the initial period. Brown (2001) stated that language learners need to develop a new mode of thinking, feeling, and acting which may lead to the feeling of anxiety. Guiora (1983, cited in Horwitz *et al.*, 1986, p.25) asserted that language learning itself is "a profoundly un-settling psychological proposition" directly threatening language learners' self-concept and worldview.

In the 1970s, a growing body of research focused on language learners' self-reported anxiety. The results, however, were regarded as contradictory both because of inadequate conceptualization of L2 anxiety and because of the general measures of anxiety. (Horwitz *et al.*, 1986; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1989; Zhang, 2001). In 1980s, many researchers tried to address the problem by conceptualizing anxiety as unique form of anxiety which specifically associated with L2 learning situations (Gardner, 1985; Horwitz *et al.*, 1986; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991a). Adapting the situation-specific anxiety approach, Horwitz *et al.* (1986) developed the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS).

According to Horwitz *et al.* (1986, p.127), "because foreign language anxiety concerns performance evaluation within an academic and social context, it is useful to draw parallels between it and three related performance anxieties: 1) communication apprehension; 2) test anxiety; and 3) fear of negative evaluation".

Since communication apprehension emphasizes interpersonal interaction, it is relevant to the conceptualization of the foreign language anxiety (McCroskey, 1977). Communication apprehension is defined as a type of shyness characterized by fear of or anxiety about communicating with people" (Horwitz *et al.*, 1986, p.127). It can be manifested in the form of difficulty in speaking (oral communication anxiety) or in listening to or learning a spoken message (receiver anxiety). In fact, this type of anxiety in the context of foreign language class occurs because the learner knows that he is unable to understand the others or to make himself understood as well as he does in his native language.

Test-anxiety refers to a type of performance anxiety which is the result of fear of failure (Gordon & Sarason, 1955). Students with high test-anxiety are constantly under pressure because they feel that success means perfect test performance; this unrealistic demand causes them to experience the feeling of

failure and consequently anxiety in the classroom (Horwitz *et al.*, 1986). Anxious students are afraid to make mistakes in the foreign language. These students feel that they are constantly being tested, and they feel that every correction is a failure (Horwitz *et al.*, 1986).

Fear of negative evaluation is defined as "apprehension about others' evaluations, avoidance of evaluative situations, and the expectation that others would evaluate oneself negatively" (Watson & Friend, 1969, cited in Horwitz *et al.*, 1986, p.128). Students who experience fear of negative evaluation are very much sensitive to the evaluations of their teacher and their classmates. Therefore, "they may skip class, over study, or seek refuge in the last row in an effort to avoid the humiliation or embarrassment of being called on to speak" (Horwitz *et al.*, 1986, p.130).

## 2.2. Foreign language anxiety and language learning:

The effect of foreign language anxiety on language achievement/performance has been subjected to a great many research over the last two decades. With regard to second/foreign language learning anxiety, two approaches are generally adopted. In the first approach, a more general type of anxiety is of concern. State/trait anxiety, facilitating/debilitating anxiety, and test anxiety fall in this approach. In this area of research, the relationship between such general types of anxiety and language achievement/performance is investigated. The results of such research are scattered and inconclusive (Young, 1991). Some found foreign language anxiety as being debilitating while some others regard it as facilitative (Onwuegbuzie, Bailey, Christine & Daley 1999; Spielmann & Radnofsky 2001; Kleinmann, 1977). The second approach concerns anxiety which is particularly experienced in language classroom (Horwitz & Young, 1991). There is a growing body of research in both approaches.

Young (1991) conducted a study to find out the impact of anxiety on oral interview performance of foreign language learners. A significantly negative correlation between anxiety and oral proficiency interview was found. The findings revealed that as the level of learners' anxiety increased, their oral proficiency level decreased. In another study, MacIntyre, Noels & Clement (1997) found a negative relationship between students' self-ratings of their language proficiency and their anxiety level. In a study intended to investigate the reactions of anxious and non-anxious foreign language learners to their own errors, Gregerson (2003) video-taped the participants once while they were interviewed in English and again when they were watching themselves in the taped interview. Compared to non-anxious learners, anxious learners were found to make more errors, recognized fewer errors in the recall session, and participated less in language learning activities. The results suggested that they were not able to develop their linguistic abilities due to the lack of participation in the class. Abu-Rabia's (2004) study also showed a negative relationship between foreign language anxiety and achievement. Still in another study, Gregerson (2005) concluded that foreign language anxiety serve as a good predictor of foreign language achievement. El-Anzi (2005) found a negative relationship between academic anxiety and achievement concluding that "anxiety may be one of the obstacles blocking high academic achievement in adolescence, since anxiety plays a role in reducing some factors that help to increase academic achievement" (p. 100).

Negative correlation between foreign language classroom anxiety and language proficiency has also been reported by several studies. There was a negative correlation between foreign language classroom anxiety scores and the final grades of Japanese language learners' performance. Similar findings were found by Saito & Samimy (1996) and Coulombe (2000) with Japanese and Canadian language learners, respectively. Neisi & Yamini (2010) also revealed that foreign language classroom anxiety had a negative correlation with academic achievement. In contrast, Bashosh *et al.*, (2013) reported that no significant relationship existed between foreign language classroom anxiety and foreign language proficiency. Similarly, Pite (1996) found no correlation between oral English proficiency and Japanese EFL students' anxiety level.

## 2.3. Research on the relationship between anxiety and self-esteem:

Michie, Glachan & Bray (2001, P.458) regard self-esteem as "the evaluative dimension of the self which is a conscious experience accessible to introspection". In the literature, three major principles of self-esteem formation are acknowledged. Self-attribution is one of the principles of self-esteem formation.



Rosenberg (1986) stated that the principle of self-attribution is reflective of the fact that self-observation is the basis of people's attribution of intentions to themselves. In foreign language classes, students with inefficient performance may observe their own performance and make a judgment of it which may lead to anxiety. Reflective appraisal is another principle of self-esteem formation. This principle holds that "people's feelings about themselves are strongly influenced by their judgments of what others think of them" (Rosenberg, Schooler & Schoenbach, 1989, p. 1005). This may increase FLCA since learners are anxious about the negative evaluation of others. They are constantly worried about their teachers' and peers' attitude toward themselves. Festinger (1954, cited in Rosenberg, *et al.*, 1989) proposed social comparison, the third principle of self-esteem formation. According to this principle, in the absence of objective information, the comparisons that people make form their judgment about themselves. In foreign language classes, students may make comparisons between their own performance and that of their classmates. Such comparisons may result in FL learners' anxiety.

Horwitz *et al.* (1986) put forward that any performance in L2 classes probably challenges the learners' self-concept and may lead to self-consciousness and fear. In fact their inability to present themselves as well as their first language threatens their "self-perceptions of genuineness" (p.128).

They concluded that language learners' self-esteem is vulnerable to the awareness that their immature command of the second language limits authenticity and choices when communicating in the second language. Therefore, foreign language anxiety is likely to have a threatening effect on the learners' self-esteem.

Accordingly, many studies in the literature have focused on the relationship between self-esteem and FL anxiety. Cheng & Page (1989) found that there existed a negative correlation between the anxiety level of the learners and their self-esteem. Males were found to have a higher self-esteem compared to females. Similar findings were reported by Newbegin & Owens (1996) and Byrne (2000).

Yamini & Tahriri (2006) conducted a study to find out the relationship between EFL learners FLCA and their global self-esteem (GSE). The results revealed a significant relationship between the two variables for both genders. The relation was found to be much stronger for females than for males.

#### 2.4. Research on the relationship between anxiety and gender/age/educational level:

The results of investigating the relationship between Anxiety and gender are far from being conclusive. GhorbanDordinejad & Moradian Ahmadabad (2014) found that there was a significant difference between males and females with regard to FLCA; with males (M=94.48) showing less anxiety compared to females (M=95.40). Similar results were reported by Chu (2008) and Mesri (2012) with Taiwanese and Iranian EFL learners, respectively. In contrast, Mejías, Applebaum, Applebaum & Trotter (1991), Abu- Rabia (2004), Hossein, Shahid, & Zaman (2011) reported a higher level of anxiety for male participants compared to female ones. Other studies found no significant relationship between gender and anxiety (Cheng & Page, 1989; Pappamihel 2002; Yamini & Tahriri 2006; Farjami & Ameriam, 2012; Bashooshet *et al.*, 2013).

Still in another study, Ayash Ezzi (2012) explored Yemeni university students with regard to the relationship between FLCA and the EFL learners' gender, age, educational level and residence. Female students were found to be significantly more anxious (M=95.40) compared to male students (M=89.33). It was further found that there was no significant relationship between FLCA and age or educational level. Farjami & Ameriam's (2012) study also revealed that the age of Iranian university students was not significantly correlated with their level of FLCA. Similarly, Yamini & Tahriri (2006) reported no significant relationship between anxiety and educational level. The results of Casado and Dereshiwsky's (2001) study also revealed that anxiety of beginner students did not change as their level of education increased.

### 3. Method:

#### 3.1. Participants:

A total of 136 English translation university students from seven intact classes participated in the study. All the participants in each class received the two questionnaires. There were 22 males (16.4%) and 112 females (83.6%) whose age ranged from 19 to 48 (M=24.59, SD=4.47). They were divided into three age



groups: 19-23 (N=71, 53%), 24-28 (N=37, 27.6%) and 29- (N==26, 19.4%). They were also divided into four groups of educational level: Freshman (N=30, 22.4%), sophomore(N=22, 16.4%), junior(N=31, 23.1%), and senior(N=51, 38.1%). 2 participants were excluded from the study due to incomplete responses. A total of 134 participants comprised the subjects of the study.

### 3.2. Instruments:

The research instruments used for the present study were the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety(FLCAS) designed by Horwitz *et al.*(1986) and the Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965). The FLCAS concerns three related performance anxieties: 1) communication apprehension; 2) test anxiety; and 3) fear of negative evaluation. It consists of 33 items on a 5-point Likert scale with 1 referring to strongly agree and 5 referring to strongly disagree. After negatively worded items are reversely coded, the total score is obtained by summing the responses of the 33 items. The total possible score ranges from 33 to 165. Higher scores indicate higher intensity of the learners' anxiety in the language class. The validity of the scale has been confirmed by Onwuegbuzie *et al.*, (1999) who reported a significant correlation with communication apprehension and test anxiety. The internal validity, test-retest reliability, and construct validity of FLCA have been rigorously validated (Horwitz *et al.*, 1986; Horwitz& Young, 1991). Furthermore, FLCAS has achieved an alph coefficient of .93 and test-retest reliability of .83 over eight weeks (Horwitz *et al.*, 1986). Aida (1994), Yamini & Tahriri (2006) and Chu (2008) also reported reliability coefficient of .94, .93 and .92, respectively. The reliability coefficient of this study was .93. It is worth mentioning that minor modifications were made to the instrument in this study: the words 'foreign language' were changed to 'English' throughout the questionnaire.

The Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale is a widely used scale which is comprised of 10 items with a 4-point Likert scale with the lowest score of 10 and the highest possible total score of 40. It measures global self-esteem and aims at "a broad and stable sense of personal competence to affectively deal with a variety of stressful situation" (Rashidi, Yamini & Shafiei, 2011, p.155). In their studies, Rashidi *et al.*(2011) and Yamini & Tahriri, (2006) reported reliability coefficients of .85 and .77, respectively. This study found a reliability index of .85.

### 3.3. Data collection procedure:

The questionnaires were distributed by the researcher among undergraduate translation students at their classroom hour. After they were briefly informed about the aim of the study, they were asked to select a choice which best showed their characteristics. They were also requested to provide information regarding their gender, age and educational level. It took them about 20 minutes to complete both questionnaires.

### 3.4. Data analysis procedure:

Using IBM SPSS Statistics 21, the descriptive statistics of the learners' performance on the FLCA were obtained for the whole sample data. Also, an Independent- samples t-test was used to compare the mean scores of males and females on the FLCA scale. Pearson product-moment correlation was also used to investigate the relationship between the EFL learners' level of FLCA and their self-esteem. Finally, multiple regression analyses were conducted to find out how well the variables of self-esteem, gender, age and educational level predicted the EFL learners' level of FLCA and to reveal which was the best predictor.

## 4. Results:

The first research question aimed at identifying the level of FLCA among university EFL learners. Thus, the descriptive statistics of the EFL learners' performance on the FLCA were obtained for the whole sample. As table 1 presents, the mean total score for 134 participants on the FLCA was 86.49 (SD=23.91). The minimum score was 37 (N=1) and the maximum score was 149 (N=1).

**Table 1. Descriptive statistics on the FLCA for the whole sample**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Anxiety	134	37.00	149.00	86.4925	23.91047

Since the FLCA questionnaire has 33 items on a 5-graded Likert scale, the scores can range from 33 to 165. In this study the participants who had a total score of more than 132 were assumed to have high level of FLCA. The scores that ranged from 132-99 meant that the participants had a moderate level of FLCA. The participants who had a total score less than 99 showed a low level of FLCA. This is in line with what Chu (2008) reported from her personal communication with Horwitz who stated that if learners' total score divided by the number of items (33) exceeds 4 (above 132), that student is considered to be anxious in the FL classroom; if it is below 3 (below 99), he is not regarded as anxious.

**Table 2. The frequency of EFL learners who obtained above 4, between 4 and 3' and below 3 on FLCA**

	Above 4 ( 165-132)	Between 4 and 3 ( 131-99)	Below 3 ( 98- )
Number of participants	3 (2.2%)	42 (31.4%)	89 (66.4%)

This table reveals that only 2.2% of the learners showed a high level of FLCA while 66.4% of them showed a low level of anxiety. Even though, the mean total score for the whole group (86.49) indicated that the learners had a low level of FLCA, it was felt that it might be a very broad conclusion considering the fact that FLCA encompasses three constructs of communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation, and in order to obtain an in-depth understanding, the data has to be further studied focusing on the individual items which have the highest mean scores of FLCA level and on the items which were reported by the highest percentage of the learner as anxiety provoking situations.

Table 3 presents the responses to all FLCA items accompanied by the percentages (rounded) of the number of the students who agreed and strongly agreed or disagreed and strongly disagreed with the statements given in each item. Studying the mean score (out of 5) of each anxiety item revealed that item 10 (M=3.3), item 9 (M=3.27), item 15 (M=3.09), item 1 (M=3.05) and item 29 (M=3.05) were reported as the highest anxiety-provoking situations. Items 1, 9, 15, and 29 were related to communicative apprehension, and item 10 related to test-anxiety.

Table 3 also reveals that the three items with the highest percentage of anxious learners were items 8 in which 69% of the participants reported that they were not at ease during tests in their English class, item 18 in which 65% of the participants put forward that they did not feel confident when they spoke in their English class, and item 5 with 63% of the participants who indicated that it would bother them to take more English classes.

**Table 3: FLCA items with mean and standard deviation of each item along with the number and percentages of EFL learners selecting each item.**

	Anxiety items	Mean	Std.	SA	A	N	D	SD
1	I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my foreign language class.	3.0597	1.38608	22 16.4%	43 32.1%	13 9.7%	33 24.6%	23 17.2%
2*	I don't worry about making mistakes in my language class.	2.8060	1.38454	15 11.2%	41 30.6%	12 9.0%	35 26.1%	31 23.1%

3	I tremble1 when I know that I'm going to be called on in the language class.	2.5639	1.35038	14 10.4%	25 18.7%	20 14.9%	37 27.6%	37 27.6%
4	It frightens me when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in the foreign language.	2.7761	1.32439	17 12.7%	29 21.6%	20 14.9%	43 32.1%	25 18.7%
5*	It wouldn't bother me at all to take more foreign language classes.	2.2537	1.18059	7 5.2%	15 11.2%	27 20.1%	41 30.6%	44 32.8%
6	During the language class, I find myself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the course.	3.1119	1.14156	13 9.7%	45 33.6%	31 23.1%	34 25.4%	11 8.2%
7	I keep thinking that the other students are better at languages than I am.	2.9474	1.36135	25 18.7%	24 17.9%	23 17.2%	41 30.6%	20 14.9%
8*	I am usually at ease during tests in my language class.	2.3383	1.05807	5 3.7%	19 14.2%	17 12.7%	67 50.0%	25 18.7%
9	I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in the language class.	3.2707	1.34349	27 20. %1	44 32.8%	17 12.7%	28 20.9%	17 12.7%
10	I worry about the consequences of failing my foreign language class.	3.3106	1.54886	42 31.3%	31 23.1%	12 9.0%	20 14.9%	27 20.1%
11*	I don't understand why some people get too upset over foreign language classes.	2.5672	1.15978	10 7.5%	13 9.7%	50 37.3%	31 23.1%	30 22.4%
12	In the language class, I can get so nervous I forget things I know.	2.4254	1.32856	10 7.5	28 20.9	14 10.4%	39 29.1%	43 32.1%
13	It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my language class.	2.3433	1.31563	12 9.0%	22 16.4%	8 6.0%	50 37.3%	42 31.3%
14*	I would not be nervous speaking the foreign language with native speakers.	2.4254	1.11973	8 6.0%	14 10.4%	34 25.4%	49 36.6%	29 21.6%
15	I get upset when I don't understand what the teacher is correcting.	3.0985	1.20343	17 12. %7	37 27.6%	34 25.4%	30 22.4%	14 10.4%
16	Even if I am well prepared for the language class, I feel anxious about it.	2.2576	1.29957	10 7.5%	22 16.4%	6 4.5%	48 35.8%	46 34.3%
17	I often feel like not going to my language class.	2.2030	1.14653	4 3.0%	21 15.7%	16 11.9%	49 36.6%	43 32.1%
18*	I feel confident when I speak in my foreign language class.	2.3636	1.23110	7 5.2%	26 19.4%	12 9.0%	50 37.3%	37 27.6%
19	I am afraid that my language teacher is ready to correct	2.5075	1.16816	6 4.5%	28 20.9%	22 16.4%	50 37.3%	28 20.9%

	every mistake I make.							
20	I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called on in the language class.	2.9624	1.41103	22 16.4%	38 28.4%	11 8.2%	37 27.6%	25 18.7%
21	The more I study for a language test, the more confused I get.	2.1119	1.14813	6 4.5	14 10.4	18 13.4	47 35.1	49 36.6
22*	I <i>don't</i> feel pressure to prepare very well for language class.	2.6194	1.14901	7 5.2%	28 20.9%	29 21.6%	47 35.1%	23 17.2%
23	I always feel that the other students speak the foreign language better than I do.	2.8582	1.33294	17 12.7%	34 25.4%	21 15.7%	37 27.6%	25 18.7%
24	I feel very self-conscious about speaking the foreign language in front of other students.	2.2164	1.31138	10 7.5%	20 14.9%	12 9.0%	39 29.1%	53 39.6%
25	Language class moves so quickly I worry about getting left behind.	2.5448	1.26619	10 7.5%	27 20.1%	22 16.4%	42 31.3%	33 24.6%
26	I feel more tense and nervous in my language class than in my other classes	2.3582	1.29431	10 7.5%	24 17.9%	12 9.0%	46 34.3%	42 31.3%
27	I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my language class.	2.5379	1.27456	11 8.2%	26 19.4%	17 12.7%	47 35.1%	31 23.1%
28*	When I'm on my way to the language class, I feel very sure and relaxed.	2.4662	.98126	4 3.0%	14 10.4%	43 32.1%	51 38.1%	21 15.7%
29	I get nervous when I don't understand every word the language teacher says.	3.0597	1.30217	20 14.9%	39 29.1%	22 16.4%	35 26.1%	18 13.4%
30	I feel overwhelmed by the number of rules you have to learn to speak a foreign language.	2.6045	1.17632	6 4.5%	34 25.4%	19 14.2%	51 38.1%	24 17.9%
31	I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak the foreign language.	2.3806	1.34217	11 8.2%	25 18.7%	14 10.4%	38 28.4%	46 34.3%
32	I would probably feel comfortable around native speakers of the foreign language.	2.5263	1.07717	5 3.7%	20 14.9%	40 29.9%	43 32.1%	25 18.7%
33*	I get nervous when the language teacher asks questions which I haven't prepared in advance.	2.9776	1.31770	18 13.4	37 27.6	26 19.4	30 22.4	23 17.2

Items 2\*, 5\*, 8\*, 11\*, 14\*, 18\*, 22\*, 28\*, and 32\* are reversed when scoring.

The second research question aimed at investigating whether males and females differed with regard to their FLCA level. An independent-samples t-test was conducted to address this research question.

**Table 4. Descriptive statistics and t-test of FLCA for males and females**

gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	F	t	df	sig
Anxiety male	22	76.5909	16.87675	3.59814	8.318	-2.764	132	.005
female	112	88.4375	24.65538	2.32971				

According to Levene's test used in this study ( $F=8.318$ ,  $p<.01$ ), the obtained variance of the two genders were not equal; therefore, Bronz-Fisher's  $F$ -test of the equality of two variances was used to compare the mean scores of the two groups. As Table 4 shows, there existed a significant relationship between gender and FLCA ( $t=-2.15$ ,  $p<.01$ ). The mean score of 76.59 and 88.43 were obtained for the males and females, respectively.

The third research question attempted to investigate whether there existed a significant relationship between the participants' self-esteem and FLCA level.

**Table 5. The relationship between self-esteem and FLCA**

	Anxiety	Self-esteem
Anxiety Pearson correlation	1	-.411**
Sig.(2-tailed)		.000
N	134	134

Drawing on the data illustrated in Table 5, there was a significantly negative correlation between the learners' FLCA level and their level of self-esteem ( $r=-.411$ ,  $p<.01$ ). That is, an increase in their level of self-esteem would result in a decrease in their FLCA level and with the decrease in their self-esteem level, there would be an increase in the learners' FLCA level.

The forth research question attempted to show how well the independent variables of self-esteem, gender, age and educational level predicted the learners' FLCA level.

**Table 6. Model summary of the multiple regression analysis**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.452 <sup>a</sup>	.204	.179	21.65907

As the findings in Table 6 show, the obtained R Square is .20 indicating that 20% of the variation in the level of FLCA was accounted for by the independent variables.

To make sure that the independent variables could significantly predict the variance in the dependent variable, the results of ANOVA for the effect of independent variables on FLCA had to be taken into consideration.

The results presented in Table 7 were indicative of the fact that the relationship between FLCA and the independent variables of self-esteem, gender, age and educational level was significant ( $F=8.272$ ,  $p<.01$ ). To investigate whether all the independent variables predicted FLCA, the results of the coefficients had to be taken into consideration.

**Table 7. ANOVA for the effect of independent variables on FLCA**



	Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	15521.590	4	3880.398	8.272	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	60515.902	129	469.116		
	Total	76037.493	133			

As the results in Table 8 show, age and educational level did not reveal a significant relationship with FLCA. By contrast, the variables of self-esteem and gender made a unique statistically significant contribution (less than .05) to the prediction of the dependent variable. In order of their significance, on the basis of their beta value, self-esteem (beta=-.417) came first and gender (beta=.189) stood on the second place.

**Table 8. Coefficients for the degree of prediction of independent variables**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	120.414	16.014		7.519	.000
Self-esteem	-1.955	.372	-.417	-5.250	.000
gender	12.149	5.272	.189	2.304	.023
3 age groups	1.551	2.552	.051	.608	.545
educational level	.698	1.636	.034	.427	.670

## 5. Discussion and Conclusion:

Four main results were obtained from the present study. The results of the first research question revealed that foreign language learners had a low level of FLCA ( $M=86.49$ , the mean was between 4 and 3) with only 3 participants (2.2%) who had an average above 4 or higher on the FLCA, and 89 (66.4%) had an average below 3. This is in line with the study conducted by Yamini & Tahriri (2006) who reported a mean score of 93.36 (2.83) which was also below 3 and thus below average. In addition, Farjami & Ameriam (2012), Bashoshet *et al.*, (2013) and Ghorban & Moradian (2014) found the total score of 93.66, 84.00 and 98.90, respectively. However, Chu's study (2008) revealed an average level of FLCA (2.3) with sixteen students (4.4%) above 4 and 166 students (46.65%) below 3. She concluded that as a whole, the participants were not excessively anxious with regard to their English studies.

Table 9 compares the obtained FLCA level from nine studies. Compared to the results reported by the studies in Table 9, the mean for the present study is slightly lower. It seems that Iranian EFL learners in this study experienced less anxiety in their English classes.

**Table 9: Comparison of the FLCAS results from nine Studies**

Study	Language Class Enrolled	Number of Students	FLCAS Items Used	Mean	SD	Rescaled Mean



Horwitz (1986)	Various foreign languages	108	33	94.5	21.4	2.86
Aida (1994)	Japanese	96	33	96.7	22.1	2.93
Cheng (1998)	English	423	33	94.9	20.0	2.88
Yamini & Tahriri (2006)	English	123	33	93.36	20.33	2.82
Chuh (2008)	English	364	31	93.4	17.7	3.01
Farjami & Ameriam (2012)	English	151	33	93.66		2.83
Bashoshet <i>et al.</i> , (2013)	English	60	33	84.00	16.29	2.54
Ghorban Dordinejad & Moradian Ahmadabad (2014)	English	400	33	98.90	.67075	2.99
The present study	English	134	33	86.49	23.91	2.62

Of the three constructs of FLCA, communicative apprehension which encompasses both speech anxiety (items 1 and 9) and receptive anxiety (items 15 and 29) was found to be the most frequently reported anxiety-producing circumstances. Regarding speech anxiety, items 1 (49%), 9 (53%), 14 (58%), 18 (65%), and 32 (51%) indicated that speaking anxiety was experienced by about one half of the participants. According to Horwitz *et al.* (1986), learners feel deep self-consciousness when they are required to speak in the presence of their teachers and classmates because they have to risk revealing themselves in such situations. Farjami & Ameriam (2012) also found items 9 ( $M=3.05$ ), 14 ( $M=3.06$ ), 18 ( $M=3.53$ ) and 32 ( $M=3.12$ ) among the highest anxiety-producing circumstances indicating that language learners do share similar characteristics which are identifiable through investigation (Horwitz *et al.*, 1986).

With regard to test anxiety, the second construct of FLCA, 6 items revealed that more than one third of the participants experienced anxiety. Items 2 (49%), 8 (69%), and 10 (34%) which are indicative of fear of making mistakes, fear during tests, and fear of failing the class, respectively. Also they felt anxious when they were called on in the class (item 20, 45%), when they felt pressure to prepare very well for the language class (22, 45%) and when the teacher asked questions for which they had not prepared in advance (item 33, 41%). Likewise, Farjami & Ameriam (2012) reported items 8 ( $M=3.34$ ), 10 ( $M=3.25$ ), 20 ( $M=3.08$ ), 22 ( $M=3.38$ ), and 33 ( $M=3.35$ ) as anxious situations. Such similarities in two different studies confirm the fact that language learners do have similar identifiable problems with regard to their FLCA. These problems can be identified and the learners can be helped to overcome their problem.

The third construct of FLCA is fear of negative evaluation for which only 2 items (7, 37%; 23, 38%) were reported by more than one third of the participants. Interestingly, Farjami & Ameriam (2012) also found items 7 and 23 to be less anxiety provoking situation with the mean scores of 2.84 and 2.83, respectively. It seems that fear of negative evaluation is not as anxiety provoking as communication apprehension and test anxiety.

On the whole, the findings of the study revealed that FLCA is likely to be experienced by many EFL learners. Considering the fact that out of 33 items, 8 items were supported by more than half of the EFL learners, 20 out of 33 items were supported by one third or more of the learners, and on the whole, 29 out of 33 items were supported by one fourth or more of them. This is well supported by Horwitz *et al.*'s (1986 p. 130) study who found that 7 statements were supported by over half of the students and 19 out of 33 items were supported by a third or more of the students surveyed. They conclude that "significant foreign language anxiety is experienced by many students in response to at least some aspects of foreign language learning". They further state that, the obtained results "imply that anxious students are common in foreign language classrooms (at least in beginning classes on the university level)" (p.131). It seems quite fair to conclude the same thing with regard to the findings of the present study. If so, it is possible and quite essential to identify anxious learners so that they can be helped to overcome their anxiety.

The result of the second research question puts forward that there was a significant difference in males and females' scores ( $t=-2.15$ ,  $p<.01$ ). The male participants demonstrated a lower level of FLCA

( $M=76.59$ ,  $SD=16.87$ ) than the females ( $M=88.44$ ,  $SD=24.65$ ). Thus, gender did affect the participants FLCA level. This finding supports several studies (Chu, 2008; Ayash Ezzi, 2012; Mesri, 2012; GhorbanDordinejad & Moradian Ahmadabad, 2014) which showed that male language learners were less anxious than their female counterparts. Many other studies have reported a significant relationship between gender and FLCA although, contrary to the finding of this study, they found that females had a higher level of FLCA (Mejías *et al.*, 1991; Abu- Rabia, 2004; Hossein, Shahid & Zaman, 2011). In contrast, Cheng & Page (1989), Pappamihel (2002), Yamini & Tahriri (2006), Farjami & Ameriam, (2012), and Bashooshet al. (2013) found no significant relationship between gender and anxiety. It seems that further research is required to clarify the real nature of the relationship between gender and FLCA.

The result of the third research question revealed that self-esteem and FLCA correlated significantly. In fact, a moderate negative correlation was found between the two constructs ( $r=-.411$ ,  $p<.01$ ). This study shows parallelism with several other studies (Cheng, & Page, 1989; Newbegin & Owens, 1996; Byrne, 2000; Yamini & Tahriri, 2006).

The results of the forth research question put forward that self-esteem, gender, age and educational level predicted 20% of the variation in the in the level of FLCA. The obtained beta value showed the unique contribution of each variable when the overlapping effects of all other variables were statistically removed. As it is presented in Table 8, self-esteem was found to be the best predictor of FLCA; it recorded a higher beta value ( $-.417$ ) compared to gender ( $.189$ ). Gender was the second predictor of FLCA. This variable also showed a significant relationship with FLCA indicating that it was an influencing factor.

Never the less, age and educational level did not make a unique contribution to FLCA. No meaningful relationship was observed between EFL learners' age and FLCA or between their level of education and FLCA. These findings support Ayesh Ezzi (2012) and Farjami & Amerian (2012) whose study showed that age was not significantly correlated with FLCA among Yemeni and Iranian university students, respectively. Similarly, Yamini & Tahriri (2006) and Ayash Ezzi (2012) reported no significant relationship between anxiety and educational level. The results of Casado and Dereshiwsky's (2001) study also revealed that anxiety of beginner students did not change as their level of education increased.

## 6. Implications:

The results of this study have several implications for language teachers. First, as Horwitz *et al.* (1986) states, in a foreign language class, students with debilitating anxiety share a number of characteristics, so the first step in helping such students is to identify them according to their common characteristics. The in-depth analysis of the FLCAS in this study revealed the specific situations with which EFL showed the highest anxiety level and also those situations which were reported by the highest percentages of the learners as the most anxiety-provoking. These findings facilitate helping anxious learners by helping learners to acknowledge the situations with which they feel more anxious with.

Second, language teachers can encourage learners to talk about their feelings and help them learn strategies to reduce their anxiety in class or cope with it. They should also receive training to offer peer academic and personal support because as Huang, Eslami & Hu's (2010) discovered, all types of support correlated with language learning anxiety and were facilitative in lowering such anxiety. Meihua (2006) also found that the highest level of anxiety was felt when the students responded to their teacher while when doing pair work, they felt the least level of anxiety. Furthermore, as gender was found to have a significant relationship with FLCA, teachers should also be aware of gender differences as an important factor influencing learners' anxiety and consequently their learning.

Third, in the theory of self-efficacy, Bandura (1991) asserted that the anxiety which is experienced in threatening situations is dependent on the individual perception of his ability to deal positively with threat and that self-esteem may act as a mitigating factor in anxiety- provoking situations. Foss & Reitzel (1988) also stated that students with low self-esteem perceive themselves as less worthy, with less effective communication abilities, compared to others; consequently, they are apprehensive when communicating in a second or foreign language. As so, language teachers are recommended to utilize techniques to improve learners' self-esteem so that FLCA is reduced and leaning is enhanced.

## 7. Further research:

To investigate other noteworthy aspects of the issue at hand, further research is recommended with regard to the relationship between FLCA and such affective factors as self-efficacy, self-concept, students' expectations and motivation as well as the learners' cultural background. In addition, conducting a mixed method approach, with such powerful ways of gathering data as interviewing, can shed more light on this issue.

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# INVESTIGATION OF GOOGLE TRANSLATE TRANSLATION BASED ON LEXICO-GRAMMAR- ERROR MODEL OF HAR INSPIRED FROM SFG CONCERNING VERBAL PROCESS

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## ABSTRACT

DUE TO THE FACT THAT [WWW.TRANSLATE.GOOGLE.COM](http://WWW.TRANSLATE.GOOGLE.COM) IS AN ACTIVE TRANSLATION SITE, AND THERE MAY BE PROBABLE ERRORS IN THE TARGET TEXT, AND DUE TO THE LACK OF AN APPROPRIATE FRAMEWORK FOR ASSESSING THE PROCESS OF PERSIAN INTO ENGLISH TEXTS, IT SEEMS HALLIDAY'S SYSTEMATIC FUNCTIONAL GRAMMAR (SFG) PROVIDES A SUITABLE FRAMEWORK TO ASSESS AND PREDICT KINDS OF ERRORS TO BE EDITED. BECAUSE THE TWO LANGUAGES HAVE DIFFERENT CONSTITUENCY ORDERS AND MORPHOLOGICAL TYPOLOGY, SIGNIFICANT LEXICO-GRAMMAR ERRORS CAN BE EXPECTED; OUT OF 350 CLAUSES REGARDING PHD THESIS WHICH WERE TRANSLATED BY GOOGLE TRANSLATE, 26 BELONGED TO THE VERBAL PROCESS OF THE EXPERIENTIAL METAFUNCTIONS OUT OF WHICH 16 CLAUSES BELONGED TO TRANSITIVE (9 UNMARKED AND 7 MARKED) AND 10 TO INTRANSITIVE PERSIAN CLAUSES; HERE 3 UNMARKED TRANSITIVE PERSIAN CLAUSES (SOV), 3 MARKED TRANSITIVE PERSIAN CLAUSES (SVO), ONE PRO-DROP-MARKED TRANSITIVE PERSIAN CLAUSE (SOV), AND 4 INTRANSITIVE PERSIAN CLAUSES HAVE BEEN CHOSEN TO BE STUDIED AND EDITED. THESE CLAUSES WERE CLASSIFIED AND EDITED IN CONSTITUTION CLASSIFICATION AND EDITION BOX, THEN THEIR ERRORS WERE EVALUATED BY HAR TRANSLATION EVALUATION BOX DESIGNED BY THE AUTHORS IN WHICH ALL THE TERMS WERE DERIVED FROM SFG. GOOGLE TRANSLATE HAD FEWER AND LIGHTER ERRORS WHEN IT TRANSLATED PERSIAN MARKED TRANSITIVE CLAUSES OF VERBAL PROCESS WITH THE CONSTITUENCY ORDER OF SVO, THE SAME AS ENGLISH UNMARKED CONSTITUENCY ORDER SVO, AS WELL AS WHEN IT TRANSLATED INTRANSITIVE PERSIAN CLAUSES OF VERBAL PROCESS OV, THE SAME AS ENGLISH INTRANSITIVE CLAUSE CONSTITUENCY ORDER OF OV; BUT IT HAD MORE AND HEAVIER ERRORS WHEN IT TRANSLATED PERSIAN UNMARKED TRANSITIVE CLAUSES WITH THE CONSTITUENCY ORDER OF SOV, OPPOSITE TO ENGLISH SVO.



**KEY WORD:** HAR TRANSLATION EVALUATION BOX, VERBAL PROCESS, PARTICIPANTS, TRANSITIVITY SYSTEM.

### Introduction and Review of Literature

Due to lack of an appropriate framework for assessing the process of Persian into English translation, it seems Halliday's systematic functional grammar provides a suitable framework to assess developments occurring in the process of translation of Google Translate. Hence, in this article, through the same perspective, we want to evaluate the translation quality of Google translate for transitive and intransitive verbal clauses based on HAR<sup>1</sup> translation evaluation model derived from SFG by the authors.

Traditionally, in translation studies, the focus has been mainly on experiential meaning, while the textual meaning has been neglected. However, an increasing number of studies in this field are still found in the literature, which has infused new thoughts to the translation studies of textual choices. With the help of SFG, we see translation as centrally involving the recreation of meaning through choices made by the translator in the interpretation of the source text and through choices in the generation of the translated text, translation involves recreating ideational meanings of the logical kind, ideational meanings of the experiential kind, interpersonal meanings and textual meanings" (House, 1997).

SFG proves itself useful to the theory and practice of translation and this is why we want to explore the theoretical problems of translation through a systemic functional perspective and to adopt SFG as an instrument of text analysis and of the production of a new text in the target language text. The most evident problems that come up when translating may seem to be a matter of words and expressions, but grammar also plays a large and important role. However, SFG prefers to talk in terms of lexico-grammar including both grammar and lexis (Halliday 1978: 39). With reference to its important role in translation, Taylor also believes that functional grammar should be a part of the education of a translator, because in combination with lexicon, it carries out specific Functions and realizes specific types of meaning (Taylor 1993: 88).

As Taylor says, units of meanings are universal, whereas lexico-grammatical structures are various; they can be transferred from one language into another through functional chunks. Through an analysis of grammatical realization, a translator can identify different kinds of meanings. In order to understand the meaning of a text and turn it in another language, a translator needs to divide the text up into translatable units. If he employs SFG, he will be able to divide the flow of discourse into lexico-grammatical units and hence into meaningful chunks or constituents (Taylor 1990). He can start for example with breaking down the English clause into processes, participants, and circumstances, which are the concrete expression of certain ideational meanings.

Accordingly, text is a meaningful unit, and in order to be guided towards meanings, we should start from the bottom, meaning from the analysis of the lexico-grammatical realizations; the role of translator is to take a look at possible translations of source language texts from a micro to a macro level. As Taylor observes, the translator's problems can be said to start with the word and finish with the text (Taylor 1990: 71).

Regarding the unit of translation, Newmark indicated sentence as the best unit of translation in the 1980s. In the 1990s, while Bassnett argued that the text should be the unit of translation, especially when dealing with literary prose texts (1991: 118), Snell-Hornby went even further, contending that the notion of culture was to be taken as the unit of translation (Hatim & Munday 2004: 24); In an SFG perspective, we basically adopt the clause as a unit of translation. Halliday regards it as a sensible unit to deal with, because it is at clause level that language represents events and is perhaps the most fundamental category in the whole of linguistics (1994: 67). He with Matthiessen, assert that the clause is the primary channel of grammatical energy (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004: 31).

1. HAR is an abbreviation for Halliday, Aghagolzadeh and Rahmani; the authors made use of Halliday's SFG and designed a model by which every translated clause with every process can be evaluated regarding the probable lexico grammar error.

## 1. Defining Research Problem

Quality in translation is certainly one of the most debated subjects. The strong interest it continues to generate among different groups, from researchers and translation organizations to practitioners and translation teachers, has made it a field of inquiry on its own, called translation quality assessment (TQA). Since [WWW.Translate.Google.Com](http://WWW.Translate.Google.Com) is an active translation site, and there are probable errors in it while turning one language into another, and there is no appropriate framework for assessing the process of translation, it seems the theory of SFG can help us to find a solution to this problem.

## 2. Methodology and Theoretical Concepts

The research, which is derived from a PhD thesis, plans to investigate and edit grammatical and semantic errors of Persian into English text translated by Google Translate based on SFG by *constituent classification and edition box*, and *translation evaluation model of HAR* designed by authors. To reach the result, this research makes use of descriptive and exploratory method, meaning uses the *translation evaluation model of HAR* inspired from Halliday's SFG to codify and weight the errors. Considering Halliday's *Transitivity System*, *morphology typology* and *constituency orders*, At first clauses are categorized in regard with applying verbal process out of other five processes of material, mental and relational, existential, and behavioral processes, and then their errors are measured by *HAR model* to determine kinds and rates of errors applied in the verbal processes of English and Persian clauses.

In this study, out of 500 Persian clauses which were taken from different abstracts of human sciences and were given to Google translate to be translated, 26 clauses belonged to verbal process from which 3 *unmarked transitive* with the constituency order of SOV, 3 *marked transitive* (SVO), one *pro-drop-marked transitive* Persian clause (SOV), 4 *intransitive* Persian clauses of verbal process (OV) have been chosen randomly to be studied.

According to Halliday, three main functions of language that language construes are called semantic metafunctions such as *ideational, interpersonal and textual*. *Ideational meanings* (clause as representation) are the result of language being used to represent experience, *Interpersonal meanings* (clause as exchange) are used for human interaction, and *textual meanings* (clause as message) are for the need of a text to be coherent and cohesive. It is our firm conviction that a translator must attempt to translate all three different kinds of meanings, because, as Steiner and Yallop assert, "texts are configurations of multidimensional meanings, rather than containers of content" (Steiner & Yallop 2001: 3).

In each metafunctions, an analysis of a clause gives a different kind of structure composed from a different set of elements. In the ideational metafunctions, a clause is analyzed into *Process*, *Participants* and *Circumstances*, with different participant types and for different process types. In the textual metafunctions, a clause is analyzed into *Theme* and *Rheme* and in the interpersonal metafunctions, a clause is analyzed into *Mood* and *Residue*. "In order to identify these different strands of metafunctions, we need to work with lexico-grammar; in an SFG perspective, lexico-grammar is selected according to the purposes of a text which is serving; thus it is a matter of the choices that a speaker makes from within the total meaning potential of the language, meaning its systems. By systems and systemic, we mean *syntagmatic ordering* in language corresponding to the *paradigmatic ordering*" (Halliday 1978: 40-41).

Each process is associated with a specific set of participant roles, representing different phenomena in the semantic system of the clauses. A semantic process represented by a clause consists of three components: the process itself, typically expressed by a verbal group, the participants in the process, typically realized by nominal groups, and the circumstances associated with the process, normally expressed by adverbial and prepositional groups. The circumstantial elements provide extra information on the *how*, *when*, *where* and *why* of the process, and they can often be deleted. Circumstances can appear not only in material processes, but also in all other process types (Eggs, 1994, p.237).

Regarding the types of process, material and mental processes are the primary ones. The material processes describe events and actions happening in the world while the mental processes reflect our inner workings of the minds. There is a distinction between what is going on outside in the reality and what is going on inside in our mental worlds of reflection. The relational processes are concerned with classifying and identifying things and beings. They show how one fragment of experience is related to another. They are divided further into the sub-branches of attributive and identifying processes. Material, mental and

relational processes constitute the majority of clauses. The three other process types belong to the intermediate subsidiary types. The behavioural processes cross the borderline between material and mental processes. They manifest the acting out of the inner consciousness or physiological reactions. The verbal processes lie between mental and relational processes. They refer to the processes of saying. Finally, the existential processes fall between relational and material processes. They are concerned with existence, the phenomena recognized to *be*, or to *exist* (Halliday, 1994, pp.106-107; Caffarel, Martin & Matthiessen, 2004, p.170).

Regarding transitive and intransitive clauses, it is noteworthy that there is a distinction between processes involving only one participant and those involving two or even three. Processes containing only one participant are called intransitive or middle clauses, while those having two or more participants are called transitive or effective clauses. (Egins, 1994, pp.230-231). In other words, in a middle clause, the doing is limited to the actor, whereas in an effective clause, the doing is directed at the goal which undergoes the process (Halliday, 1994, p.110).

### 3. Data analysis

Persian Transitive clauses of verbal processes can be in the forms of either SOV (unmarked) or SVO (marked) which both are translated in accordance to one of these following English patterns of verbal processes considering the location of circumstantial adjuncts:

- 1) A: NC (Sayer) + VC (Verbal Process) + NC (Target) + *Circumstantial Adjunct*  
or  
B: NC (Sayer) + *Circumstantial Adjunct* + VC (Verbal Process) + NC (Target)
- 2) *Circumstantial Adjunct* + NC (Sayer) + VC (Verbal Process) + NC (Target)

### 3.1 Persian Transitive Clauses of Verbal Process

#### 3.1.1 Persian Unmarked Transitive Clauses

First, 3 Persian *unmarked transitive clauses* (SOV constituency order) of verbal process are studied and edited considering their constituency order, morphological typology and transitivity system of experiential and textual metafunctions.

**Table one. Constituency investigation and lexico-grammar edition of Persian unmarked transitive clauses of verbal process (SOV)**

NC (Sayer)	Circumstantial Adjunct	VC ( verbal Process)	NC (Target)	
استادان پس از مسائل حرفه‌ای و رفاهی خود به مسئله بهبود وضعیت گزینش دانشجو اشاره کرده‌اند.				SLT
استادان	پس از مسائل حرفه ای و رفاهی خود	اشاره کرده اند	به مسئله بهبود وضعیت گزینش دانشجو	SLT Constituent Analysis and editing
After <u>his</u> professional and welfare issues have pointed to the improvement of student selection.				TLT (Google.Translate)
وزن خطا		کد خطا		Description of constituent error(s)
4 3		8 9		
<u>Professors</u>	after <u>their</u> professional and welfare issues	have pointed to	the improvement of student selection	Editing TLT

In table one, the Persian clause consists of one verbal process of "اشاره کرده اند", with two participants and one circumstantial adjunct; this Persian clause is an unmarked clause based on the word constituency order of SOV, meaning the two participants of *sayer* and *target* have preceded their verbal process in

Persian. Google translate translated Persian unmarked transitive clause of verbal process with constituency order of SOV into English. English unmarked transitive clause of verbal process follows the constituency order of SVO, hence, in English, in contrast to Persian, one participant called *sayer* precede its verbal process and the other participant called *target* follows its verbal process; accordingly, in TLT done by Google translate, we see the participant of *sayer* "professors" has been deleted and this is why the error code of 8 was assigned to this clause, meaning the omission of a constituent, and also there is a grammatical error in the circumstantial adjunct because Google translate used "his" instead of "their".

Totally, we can say the Google translate put all constituents such as the circumstantial adjunct and the participant of *target* in their right places except the participant of *sayer* which was deleted.

**Table 2. Constituency investigation and lexico-grammar edition of Persian unmarked transitive clauses of verbal process (SOV)**

clauses of verbal process (SOV)				
NC (Sayer)	Circumstantial Adjunct	VC ( verbal Process)	NC (Target)	
این مقاله از منظر روانشناسی به بررسی این موضوع می پردازد .				SLT
این مقاله	از منظر روانشناسی	می پردازد	به این موضوع	SLT Constituent Analysis and editing
This article examines this issue from the perspective of psychology.				TLT (Google.Translate)
وزن خطا		کد خطا		Description of constituent error(s)
0		12		
No lexico-grammar error				Editing TLT considering textual and experiential metafunctions

In table 2, the Persian clause consists of one verbal process of "می پردازد", with two participants of "این" (the participant of *sayer*), and "به این موضوع" (the participant of *target*), and one circumstantial adjunct; this Persian clause is an unmarked clause based on the word constituency order of SOV, meaning the two participants of *sayer* and *target* have preceded their verbal process in Persian. The participant of *target* in Persian "به این موضوع", without considering its verbal process and by itself is a prepositional phrase, but by considering its role with its verbal process, we see it is a noun clause and a target participant for the process of "می پردازد".

Google translate translated this clause into TLT with no lexico-grammar error, meaning it successfully turned Persian unmarked transitive verbal clause with the constituency order of SOV into English unmarked transitive verbal clause with the constituency order of SVO. (Error code of 12)

**Table 3. Constituency investigation and lexico-grammar edition of Persian unmarked transitive clauses of verbal process (SOV)**

NC (Sayer)	VC ( verbal Process)	NC (Target)	Circumstantial Adjunct	
این تحقیق به بررسی عوامل انگیزش موثر و پیشرفت تحصیلی دانشجویان موفق دانشگاه در راستای اتخاذ تصمیماتی جهت افزایش موفقیت تحصیلی و سایر دانشجویان می پردازد.				SLT

این تحقیق	می پردازد	به عوامل انگیزش موثر و پیشرفت تحصیلی دانشجویان موفق دانشگاه	در راستای اتخاذ تصمیماتی جهت افزایش موفقیت تحصیلی این دانشجویان	SLT Constituent Analysis and editing
This study examines the factors affecting motivation and academic achievement of students in line with the <u>successful</u> adoption of measures to increase the academic achievement of the students <u>concerned</u> .				TLT (Google.Translate)
وزن خطا		کد خطا		Description of constituent error(s)
8		3		
This study	examines	the factors affecting motivation and academic achievement of <u>university successful students</u>	in line with the adoption of measures to increase the academic achievement of the students	Editing TLT considering textual and experiential metafunctions

In table 3, the Persian unmarked transitive clause consists of the verbal process of "می پردازد", with two participants of sayer and target and one circumstantial process; this unmarked transitive clause has the constituency order of SOV in which both participants of sayer and target have preceded their Persian verbal process. This Persian unmarked transitive clause (SOV) must be translated into (SVO) by Google translate in which the participant of sayer must precede its process and the participant of target must follow it.

Google translate has put the participants of sayer "this study" and target "the factors" in appropriate locations before and after their verbal process of "examines" respectively, but regarding the complement of the participant of target, we see some parts of its constituents have been substituted with those of the circumstantial adjunct, for example the constituent of "successful" belonged to the complement of the participant of target which by Google translate it was wrongly placed inside the constituent of circumstantial adjunct (Error code of 3).

#### 4.1.2 Persian Marked Transitive Clauses (SVO)

Here, 3 Persian *marked transitive clauses* with the constituency order of SVO are studied and edited considering their constituency order, morphological typology and transitivity system of experiential and textual metafunctions. When Persian transitive clause of verbal process gets marked, its constituency order will be the same as English, meaning both languages will follow the order of SVO; hence, in the following we want to investigate if this change in Persian with the marked order of SVO, the same as English and compared to its unmarked order of SOV has any effect in the translation of Persian into English by Google translate.

Persian transitive clauses of verbal processes in any order of either SOV (unmarked) or SVO must be translated in accordance to one of these following English orders of verbal processes considering the location of circumstantial adjuncts:

- 1) A: NC (Sayer) + VC (Verbal Process) + NC (Target) + *Circumstantial Adjunct*  
or  
B: NC (Sayer) + *Circumstantial Adjunct* + VC (Verbal Process) + NC (Target)
- 2) *Circumstantial Adjunct* + NC (Sayer) + VC (Verbal Process) + NC (Target)



Table 4. Constituency investigation and lexico-grammar edition of Persian marked transitive clauses of verbal process (SVO)

NC (Sayer)	Circumstantial Adjunct	VC ( verbal Process)	NC (Target)	
تجربیات موفق مؤسسات کوچک و متوسط در کشورهای در حال توسعه و توسعه یافته نشان می دهد که ...				SLT
تجربیات موفق مؤسسات کوچک و متوسط	در کشورهای در حال توسعه و توسعه یافته	نشان می دهد	که ...	SLT Constituent Analysis and editing
The successful experiences of small and medium enterprises in developed and developing countries show that ...				TLT (Google.Translate)
وزن خطا		کد خطا		Description of constituent error(s)
0		12		
No lexico-grammar error				Editing TLT considering textual and experiential metafunctions

In table 4, the Persian transitive clause is marked with the constituency order of SVO, the same as English constituency order SVO; While in Persian unmarked transitive clauses (SOV) as shown in table one to three, both the participants of sayer and target preceded their process, here in marked transitive clause (SVO), we see that one participant (sayer) has preceded its process and the other one (target) has followed its process which has become similar to English SVO.

By Google translate, the Persian marked transitive clause with the constituency order of SVO has been turned into English unmarked transitive clause with the same constituency order with no lexico-grammar error. (Error code of 12).

#### 1. Constituency Order of Persian Transitive Marked Clause (SVO)

← مشارک گوینده	+	فرایند بیانی گذرا	+	مشارک هدف
Sayer		verbal Process		Target

#### 2. Constituency Order of English Transitive Unmarked Clause (SVO)

**TLT Pattern:**NC (Sayer) + VC (Verbal Process) + NC (Target)

Table 5. Constituency investigation and lexico-grammar edition of Persian marked transitive clauses of verbal process (SVO)

NC (Sayer)	<i>Circumstantial Adjunct</i>	VC ( verbal Process)	NC (Target)	
نتایج حاصل از یافته های تحقیق در بین سازمانها به عنوان یک عامل مزیت رقابتی نشان داد که ...				SLT
نتایج حاصل	از یافته های تحقیق در بین سازمانها به عنوان یک عامل مزیت رقابتی	نشان داد	که ...	SLT Constituent Analysis and editing



The results from this study showed that <u>among organizations as a competitive advantage</u> that ...				TLT (Google.Translate)
وزن خطا		کد خطا		Description of constituent error(s)
8		3		
The results	from this study <u>among organizations as a competitive advantage</u>	showed	that ...	Editing TLT considering textual and experiential metafunctions

In table 5, the Persian clause is transitive and marked, so its constituency order is SVO into which the participant of sayer precedes its process and the participant of target follows it like in English transitive verbal clause SVO.

Google translate has placed the participant of sayer "the results" and the participant of target "that ..." in their right places, but substituted some constituents of circumstantial adjunct from the left part of English process to its right, making the error code of 3. Totally we can say Google translate correctly placed the two participants, one on the left and another on the right side of their process based on the English order of SVO and error was not due to the places of verbal process and its two participants, but due to the circumstantial adjuncts which changing its place changed the meaning of the clause.

**Table 6. Constituency investigation and lexico-grammar edition of Persian marked transitive clauses of verbal process (SVO)**

NC (Sayer)	VC ( verbal Process)	NC (Target)	Circumstantial Adjunct	
این پژوهش به این سوال پاسخ می دهد که...				SLT
این پژوهش	پاسخ می دهد	به این سوال که ...	-	SLT Constituent Analysis and editing
The study answers the question that ...				TLT (Google.Translate)
وزن خطا		کد خطا		Description of constituent error(s)
0		12		
No lexico-grammar error				Editing TLT considering textual and experiential metafunctions

In table 6, The Persian transitive clause is marked with the constituency order of SVO, this order means one participant in Persian marked transitive clause precedes its process and the other follows it. In this clause, the participant of sayer "این پژوهش", and the participant of "که ..." have respectively preceded and followed their verbal process of "پاسخ می دهد"; in English also the same order should be followed for the participants of sayer and target in relation to their verbal process as in below:

**TLT Pattern:**NC (Sayer) + VC (Verbal Process) + NC (Target)

Google translate not only has found appropriate equivalences for the participants of the Persian clause and its process, but also followed the appropriate constituency order of SVO, the same as Persian marked Transitive clause SVO with no lexico-grammar error (error code of 12).

#### 4.1.3 Persian *Pro-drop-Marked Transitive Clauses*

Persian contrary to English is a pro-drop language and hence, its subject can be deleted. In table 8 in below, a Persian *pro-drop* transitive clause was given to Google translate, because the subject (the participant of sayer) was not in the SLT, Google translate couldn't recognize it and left it (error code of 8); it also didn't regard the order of the participant of target with its verbal process of "deals with" (error code of 2), in other words, Google translate wrongly followed the constituency order of:

... the participant of target + verbal process ...

instead of:

... Verbal Process + the participant of target + ...

**Table 7. Constituency investigation and lexico-grammar edition of Persian *Pro-drop-marked transitive clauses of verbal process (SVO)***

NC (Sayer)	VC ( verbal Process)	NC (Target)	Circumstantial Adjunct		
به ارائه پیشنهادات و نتیجه‌گیری از موضوعات ارائه شده می‌پردازد.				SLT	بند 7
آن (این مقاله)	می‌پردازد	به پیشنهادات و نتیجه‌گیری از موضوعات ارائه شده	-	SLT Constituent Analysis and editing	
To provide suggestions and conclusion of deals with the issues raised.				TLT (Google.Translate)	
وزن خطا		کد خطا		Description of constituent error(s)	
8 4		2 8			
(It) this article	deals with	some suggestions and conclusion of the presented issues	-	Editing TLT considering textual and experiential metafunctions	

#### 4.2 Persian Intransitive Clauses of Verbal Process

While in both marked S +V +O and unmarked S +O +V Persian transitive clauses of verbal process, there are at least two participants of sayer and target in which the participant of sayer precedes its process in both orders, the participant of target may precede or follow the process depending on unmarked and marked transitive clauses respectively, but in Persian intransitive clause of verbal process, there is only one participant called target which precedes its process and the other participant called sayer if existing will be in the form of a circumstantial adjunct.

To translate the Persian intransitive clause of verbal process into English by considering the constituency order, textual such as the location of circumstantial adjunct and experimental metafunctions, one of the following constituency orders must be followed:

1A. NC (Target) + VC (Verbal Process) + *Circumstantial Adjunct*

or

1B. NC (Target) + *Circumstantial Adjunct* + VC (verbal Process)

2. *Circumstantial Adjunct* + NC (Target) + VC (verbal Process)

**Table 8. Constituency investigation and lexico-grammar edition of Persian intransitive clauses of verbal process (OV)**

NG (Target)	VC (verbal Process)	<i>Circumstantial Adjunct</i>		
روشهای مختلفی به منظور محاسبه این شاخص ارائه شده است.				SLT
روشهای مختلفی	ارائه شده است	به منظور محاسبه این شاخص		SLT Constituent Analysis and editing
Various methods have been proposed in order to calculate the index.				TLT (Google.Translate)
وزن خطا		کد خطا		Description of constituent error(s)
0		12		
No lexico-grammar error				Editing TLT considering textual and experiential metafunctions

In table 7, the Persian clause is intransitive with the verbal process of "ارائه شده است", this Persian intransitive clause has one participant on its right side. This participant which is target precede its process not only in Persian transitive (S+O+V), but also in Persian intransitive (O+V) clauses which are unmarked. In English transitive clauses, the participant of target follows its process, and in intransitive ones, it precedes the process; hence, in both English and Persian intransitive clauses, the participant of target precedes its process based on the constituency order of OV.

The Persian clause consists of a participant (sayer), a circumstantial adjunct and a process; considering the constituency order of OV for both English and Persian intransitive clauses, and textual metafunctions such as the location of circumstantial adjunct in SLT, Google translated turned Persian clause to English clause with no lexico grammar error based on the order of NC (Target) + VC (Verbal Process) + *Circumstantial Adjunct*. (Error code of 12)

**Table 9. Constituency investigation and lexico-grammar edition of Persian intransitive clauses of verbal process (OV)**

NG (Target)	<i>Circumstantial Adjunct</i>	VC (verbal Process)	-	
راهبردها و برنامه‌هایی جهت توسعه صنعت توریسم با توجه به ساختار منطقه به عنوان عاملی برای توسعه اقتصادی، اجتماعی و فرهنگی ارائه شده اند.				SLT
راهبردها و برنامه‌هایی	جهت توسعه صنعت توریسم با توجه به ساختار منطقه به عنوان عاملی برای توسعه اقتصادی، اجتماعی و فرهنگی	ارائه شده اند	-	SLT Constituent Analysis and editing
Strategies and plans for tourism development <u>with regard to the region</u> as a factor for economic, social and <u>cultural</u> offered				TLT (Google.Translate)

وزن خطا	کد خطا	Description of constituent error(s)
4 6	8 5	
Some strategies and plans	for tourism development <u>with regard to the region structure</u> as a factor for economic, social and <u>cultural development</u>	<u>were offered</u>
		Editing TLT considering textual and experiential metafunctions

In table 8, the Persian clause is intransitive with the constituency order of OV; considering the textual and experiential metafunctions, this Persian clause must be translated into English constituency order of OV according to one of the following orders:

A. NC (Target) + VC (Verbal Process) + *Circumstantial Adjunct*

or

B. NC (Target) + *Circumstantial Adjunct* + VC (Verbal Process)

Google translate followed the above pattern (part B) appropriately, and placed all constituents of target, circumstantial adjunct and the process in their right places, but there are some errors with the codes of 8 and 5 relating to omission of some parts of a constituent and *grammatical error of process* respectively. The error code of 8 is due to the omission of some part of the circumstantial adjunct of "با توجه به ساختار منطقه"، and some part of the noun group of "توسعه فرهنگی"، which by Google translate, was translated as "with regard to the region" instead of "with regard to the region structure", and as "cultural" instead of "cultural development". Meanwhile, the error code of 5 is due to grammatical error of the process which by Google translate was translated as "offered" instead of "were offered".

**Table 10. Constituency investigation and lexico-grammar edition of Persian intransitive clauses of verbal process (OV)**

NG (Target)	<i>Circumstantial Adjunct</i>	VC ( verbal Process)	
ارزشیابی و بازنگری این برنامه ها و تشخیص نقاط قوت و ضعف آنها مورد تاکید قرار گرفته است.			SLT
ارزشیابی و بازنگری	این برنامه ها و تشخیص نقاط قوت و ضعف آنها	مورد تاکید قرار گرفته است	SLT Constituent Analysis and editing
Evaluation and review of these programs and <u>identify strengths</u> and weaknesses are emphasized.			TLT (Google.Translate)
وزن خطا	کد خطا	Description of constituent error(s)	
3	9		
Evaluation and review	of these programs and <u>identification of their strengths</u> and weaknesses	are emphasized	Editing TLT considering textual and experiential metafunctions

In table 9, the Persian intransitive clause with the constituency order of OV has one participant of target which preceded its process, such an intransitive Persian clause must be translated into English somehow that the participant in English also precedes its process.

Google translate put all constituents of *the participant of target, circumstantial adjunct* and *process* in their appropriate locations, such as putting the participant of target before its process, but there has been a grammatical error relating to the circumstantial adjunct. Regarding to some part of the circumstantial adjunct, Google translate used "identify strength" instead of using "identification of their strength". (Error code of 9).

Table 11. Constituency investigation and lexico-grammar edition of Persian intransitive clauses of verbal process (OV)

<i>Circumstantial Adjunct</i>	NG (Target)	VC ( verbal Process)	-	
در ارتباط با موضوع پنج فرضیه ارائه شده است.				SLT
در ارتباط با موضوع	پنج فرضیه	ارائه شده است	-	SLT Constituent Analysis and editing
In relation to the subject five hypotheses presented.				TLT (Google.Translate)
وزن خطا	کد خطا			Description of constituent error(s)
6	5			
In relation to the subject	five hypotheses	were presented	-	Editing TLT considering textual and experiential metafunctions

In table ten, the Persian clause is intransitive consisting of a circumstantial adjunct, the participant of target and process respectively; the circumstantial adjunct in this clause unlike other intransitive clauses studied in table seven to nine is the first constituent of the clause, and has preceded the participant of target. This Persian intransitive clause is marked because of the location of the circumstantial adjunct as the first constituent of the clause. While for the clauses from table seven to nine, regarding the location of Persian circumstantial adjunct, one of the two following English patterns was used for their translation:

- A. NC (Target) + VC (Verbal Process) + *Circumstantial Adjunct*  
or  
B. NC (Target) + *Circumstantial Adjunct* + VC (Verbal Process)

For the clause in table ten, the constituency order of *Circumstantial Adjunct* + NC (Target) + VC (Verbal Process) is followed not to disregard the textual metafunctions.

Google translate not only regarded the textual metafunctions and placed the equivalence of Persian circumstantial adjunct as the first constituent of the clause, but also it placed the participant of target before it process and in its right place; the assigned error doesn't refer to the constituency order, textual and experimental metafunctions but to the grammatical error of the process because Google translate used "presented" instead of "were presented".

#### 4. Conclusion

Three *unmarked transitive* Persian clauses (SOV), 3 *marked transitive* Persian clauses (SVO), one *pro-drop-marked transitive* Persian clause (SOV), and 4 *intransitive* Persian clauses were studied to figure out what kind of errors they have when translated by Google translate. These clauses were first classified and edited in *constitution classification and edition box*, then their probable errors were evaluated by *HAR translation evaluation box*.

Google translate had fewer and lighter errors when it translated Persian *marked transitive* clauses of verbal process with the constituency order of SVO which is the same as English unmarked constituency order SVO, out of three marked transitive Persian clauses of verbal process which were translated by Google translate, two of them had no lexico-grammar error (error code of 12), and one had error code of 3 regarding joining the heads of process and/or participants with inappropriate dependents.

When it also translated *intransitive* Persian clauses of verbal process OV which is the same as English intransitive clause constituency order of OV, it had fewer and lighter errors, out of 4 intransitive Persian clauses given to Google, one clause had no lexico grammar error, the second clause had the error codes of 8 and 5 related to omission of constituent in TLT, and grammatical error of the verbal process



respectively, in the third and 4<sup>th</sup> clause the error codes of 9 and 5 were assigned which respectively were due to grammatical error in participant and in verbal process.

But it had more and heavier errors when it translated Persian *unmarked* transitive clauses with the constituency order of SOV, opposite to English SVO; out of three translated clauses, one had no lexico-grammar error and the other two had the error codes of 8, 9 and 3. Pro-drop marked transitive clauses which are used with the constituency order of OV, contrary to English SVO, also had heavy error of 2 along with error code of 8.

Totally, when the constituency order and morphological typology of SLT and TLT are considerably different, there will be heavier errors done by Google translate, and as far as the constituency order of one of them gets the same as the other one due to getting marked or intransitivity, there will be lighter errors based on the introduced translation evaluation box

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## Appendixes

Box one: translation evaluation model of HAR designed by the authors.

Error code	Error description	Error weight
1	Misinterpretation of SLT	8
2	No consideration of the orders of VC and its participants	8
3	Heads of VC and/or participants with inappropriate dependents	8
4	No consideration of Halliday's textual metafunction OR circumstantial adjuncts constituency orders	7
5	Grammatical error of VC process in TLT	6
6	Errors due to morphological typology	5
7	Translation intrusive, retain SLT	5
8	Omission of SLT from TLT	4
9	Local errors of participants	3
10	Inappropriate technical vocabulary	2
11	miscellaneous	2
12	No error	0

Box Two: Constitution Classification and Edition Box

There + to be process	existent	Circumstantial Adjunct <sup>2</sup>		
				SLT <sup>3</sup>
				SLT Constituent Analysis and editing <sup>4</sup>
				TLT <sup>5</sup> (Google.Translate)
Error Weight		Error Code		Description of constituent error(s) <sup>6</sup>
				Editing TLT considering textual and experiential metafunctions <sup>7</sup>

<sup>2</sup>According to textual metafunctions of Halliday's systematic functional grammar, circumstantial adjuncts may be placed as a first constituent before existential process and existent as below:

→ Circumstantial adjunct + *there* + *be* (existential process) + existent

<sup>3</sup>Source Language Text is placed here.

<sup>4</sup>The source language text, if needed, is edited and divided into chunks or constituents

<sup>5</sup>Target Language Text is placed here.

<sup>6</sup>The probable errors in TLT done by Google translate are evaluated by the translation evaluation model of HAR to codify and weight the errors.

<sup>7</sup>In this part, TLT is edited by human translator considering the textual and experiential metafunctions.

# DYNAMIC ASSESSMENT OF EFL LEARNERS' READING SKILLS AND STRATEGIES: INTRODUCING SAUCE FORMAT MEDIATION

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## ABSTRACT

THIS PAPER REPORTS THE RESULTS OF A RESEARCH (AS PART OF A DOCTORAL DISSERTATION PROJECT) AIMED AT INVESTIGATING THE EFFECT OF SAUCE FORMAT MEDIATION ON IRANIAN EFL LEARNERS' READING SKILLS AND STRATEGIES, AND PROPOSING A NEW MEDIATION FORMAT TO ADD TO INTERVENTIONIST FORMATS OF DYNAMIC ASSESSMENT SUFFERING FROM IMPRACTICALITY. FOR THIS, THE PARTICIPANTS' SCORES ON NON-MEDIATED AND SAUCE-FORMAT MEDIATED VERSIONS OF A READING TEST WERE COMPARED. RESULTS OF PAIRED SAMPLES T-TEST ANALYSIS SHOWED THAT THEY HAD SIGNIFICANTLY PERFORMED BETTER ON THE MEDIATED VERSION:  $T(29)=9.43, P=.00<.05$ . THE FINDINGS SUGGEST THAT SAUCE-FORMAT MEDIATION CAN PROMOTE LEARNERS' DEVELOPING POTENTIAL READING ABILITY AS EFFICIENTLY AS SANDWICH AND CAKE FORMATS. THUS, IT CAN BE CLAIMED THAT SAUCE FORMAT MEDIATION IS A GOOD REPLACEMENT FOR OTHER FORMATS OF INTERVENTION-ORIENTED DYNAMIC ASSESSMENT WHEN PRACTICALITY DOES MATTER.

**KEY WORDS:** DYNAMIC ASSESSMENT, SAUCE FORMAT MEDIATION, SAUCE-FORMAT MEDIATED READING TEST, TRANSCENDENCE, READING SKILLS AND STRATEGIES

## 1. Introduction

Principles of Dynamic Assessment (DA) have recently been used to instruct and assess learners' language ability, especially in classroom contexts. DA is an approach to assessment and instruction that has derived its principles and procedures from Vygotsky's theory of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). Dynamic assessment of second language learning (L2 DA) envisions that since learners' language ability is always approaching the potential zone (that is why it is called dynamic), the conventional Non-Dynamic Assessment (N-DA) tools are not able to tap the learners' real abilities. In other words, the advocates of DA claim that Static Assessment (SA) can only measure the learners' actual level of performance (what they can perform independently) but cannot assess their potential level of ability (what they can perform with assistance). As Poehner and Lantolf (2005) express "the principle underlying DA is that a full picture of what an individual or group is capable of does not emerge unless and until the ability is not only observed in independent performance but is also pushed forward through specific forms of intervention and/or social interaction between learners and assessors" (p. 261).

In the last two decades, we have fortunately witnessed a growing interest among language pedagogy specialists to add DA assumptions and principles to their profession. Lantolf and Poehner are two people who have pioneered the application of DA principles in L2 education in the last ten years (Poehner & Lantolf, 2010; Lantolf & Poehner, 2010; Poehner, 2008; Poehner, 2007; Poehner, 2005; Lantolf & Thorne, 2006; Poehner and Lantolf, 2005; Lantolf and Poehner, 2004; Lantolf, 2000). A few other people have also contributed to the expansion of the field. Poehner (2005), for example, made a comprehensive research on the dynamic assessment of advanced L2 learners of French; Ableeva (2008) investigated the effects of dynamic assessment on L2 listening; and Kozulin & Garb (2002) studied the effect of dynamic assessment on the EFL learners' text comprehension.

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

Mainstream non-dynamic approaches to assessment suffer from some major problems. A pragmatic problem is that the decisions test givers make about test takers are merely based on how the testees perform on test items (their actual not potential performance). Secondly, due to intercultural and interethnic differences of learners and examiners, conventional standardized tests are not able to measure testees' real abilities. Some cultures impose limits on the testees in responding to specific kinds of test formats; therefore, their incorrect responses to test items may be due to some non-ability factors like their unfamiliarity with the test format rather than to their lack of knowledge. The third problem with conventional tests is that instruction and assessment are kept as two different activities. Usually the testers wait for the instruction to be completed, and then they start to measure what learners have gained from instruction. Testees receive no feedback on their performance after the test is administered. The only feedback they receive is the scores reported by the testers to the school administrators.

The problems with N-DA approaches listed above are convincing enough to modify the structure of mainstream psychometric assessment procedures being used presently and to design new dynamic assessment procedures. However, from the practicality point of view, existing DA models cannot be used in every context as easily as N-DA procedures and this is one, and probably the main, reason DA is not warmly welcomed by conventional testers.

A common practical problem with both interactionist and interventionist approaches of DA is that they are time consuming. A specific problem with the interactionist approach is that especially trained mediators (teachers) are needed to help learners within DA framework. Both sandwich and cake formats of interventionist approach may be suitable for classroom settings where learners are at hand for a long period of time, but not for non-classroom settings. Thus, we need a new format within the interventionist approach of DA that does not possess the stated problems of sandwich and cake formats. We name it *sauceformat* to follow the tradition of using terms from nutritional science.

In view of the theoretical problems with N-DA and practical problems with current approaches of DA, this study pursued the following two purposes:

- 1) to explore whether sauce format mediation could help EFL testers and teachers to observe the testees and learners' potential level of reading development, and
- 2) to propose a new format of mediation by which EFL learners' both actual and potential proficiency of reading comprehension skills and strategies could be assessed easily.

### Significance and justification of the study

The significance of this study lies in the fact that it attempts to explore the feasibility of developing a new dynamic reading test that will help teachers and testers to understand and develop their learners reading strategies. By introducing sauce format mediation, dynamic tests can be used in non-classroom settings as well as in classroom contexts where subjects are not at full access of testers.

### Research questions

The specific goal of this research was to propose *sauce-format mediated reading test* that would assess Iranian EFL learners' both actual and potential proficiency of reading comprehension skills and strategies. For this purpose, it was hypothesized that if reading comprehension tests were accompanied by *mediation boxes*, testees' potential, as well as actual, level of performance would be assessed. To test the stated hypothesis the following questions were intended to be answered:

1. Does sauce-format mediation affect Iranian EFL learners' performance on reading comprehension tests?
2. Can Iranian EFL learners transcend their assisted performance on a sauce-format mediated reading test to independent non-mediated reading tests?

## 2. Literature Review

### Definition of Dynamic Assessment

According to Lidz (1987), DA "is an interaction between an examiner-as-intervener and a learner-as-active participant, which seeks to estimate the degree of modifiability of the learner and the means by which positive changes in cognitive functioning can be induced and maintained" (p. 4). In this dialogic pair, the teacher is the expert (knower) and the learner is the novice. The teacher through interaction attempts to help the learner to develop in his ZPD. Haywood (1992) suggested that dynamic assessment is a subset of the more generic concept of interactive assessment. He further suggested that "it might be useful to characterize as interactive any approach to psychological or psychoeducational assessment in which the examiner is inserted into an active relationship with a subject and does more than give instructions, pose questions, and record responses" (p. 46). Sternberg & Grigorenko (2002) define DA "as a procedure whose outcome takes into account the results of an intervention. In this intervention, the examiner teaches the examinee how to perform better on individual items or on the test as whole. The final score may be a learning score representing the difference between pretest (before learning) and posttest (after learning) scores, or it may be the score on the posttest considered alone" (p. 234). Perhaps Lussier Swanson's (2005, p.66) definition of DA is a simple and at the meantime a comprehensive one: DA is a "procedure that attempts to *modify* performance, via examiner's *assistance*, in an effort to understand *learning potential*" (emphasis is mine).

Poehner (2008) defines DA as "a *monistic* approach to assessment and instruction [that is] based upon the fundamental principles of Vygotskian theory that understanding individual's abilities necessitates *intervention*" (p. 113; emphasis is mine). What Poehner emphasizes in his definition of DA is that it is a dialectically integrated approach to assessment and instruction which aims at understanding and promoting learner development (Poehner, 2008; Poehner & Lantolf, 2005). In DA, instruction and assessment are seen as a unified activity that attempts to assess the learners' *ability to learn* as well as their *ability to do*. The former is what Vygotsky calls 'potential level of development' and the latter 'actual level of development'. In Poehner & Lantolf's words, "DA represents a perspective on assessment and instruction in which these are seen as two sides of the same coin. In other words, true assessment is not possible unless it entails instruction and vice versa" (2005, p. 261). The unity of assessment and instruction in DA is achieved through dialogic interaction between the teacher and the learner.

### Mediation Theory

The unique characteristic of DA is the mediation or intervention which the mediator makes during treatment process in order to support the subjects to move forward (develop) in their ZPD. The philosophy of this process lies in Vygotsky's idea that cultural artifacts mediate the relationship between man and the world. Of course, in low-level mental processes – such as involuntary attention, involuntary reflex, and involuntary memory – the human/world relationship is direct. However, in the developmental processes (that is, high-level mental processes) the relation is indirect. Lantolf & Thorne (2006) depict the mediate nature of human/world relationship in the following figure:





Figure 1: The mediate nature of human/world relationship (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006, p. 62)

According to Lantolf & Thorne (2006), "the relationship between people and the world is indirect or mediated (indicated by solid arrows), as well as direct (indicated by dotted arrows). The direct relationship is one that entails such things as involuntary attention, ... , involuntary reflex, ... , and involuntary memory. The indirect relationship, ... , entails the historically cumulative cultural generation of auxiliary means that are inserted between ourselves and objects" (p. 62).

In DA, the teacher/assessor (artifact) mediates between the learner/assessee (subject) and instructional/assessment objectives (object). The Lantolf & Thorne's model can be adopted to apply for DA approach in the following way:

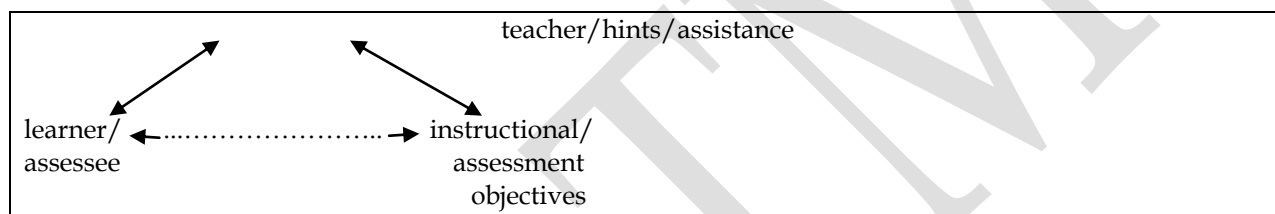


Figure 2: The mediator nature of learner/ assessee and instructional/assessment objectives relationship

In a DA context, the teacher attempts to assist the learner to move from his actual level of development to his potential level, to move within his ZPD, by giving him the needed support through appropriate intervention. Therefore, the teacher's major responsibility in a DA context is first, to diagnose the learner's actual and potential levels of development, and then to provide them with the appropriate assistance to be effective in developing the learner.

### Approaches to DA

There are two general approaches to DA: interventionist and interactionist. The first, which focuses on the psychometric properties of assessment, is rooted in Vygotsky's quantitative interpretation of the ZPD as a 'difference score'. The second, rooted in Vygotsky's qualitative interpretation of the ZPD, focuses on the integration of instruction and assessment and provides the assistance through interaction during assessment.

### Interventionist approach

The major and determining characteristic of interventionist DA is that its proponents, like Budoff, are concerned with the quantitative properties and psychometrics of assessment. They believe that assessment should end with a quantitative measure; a score, and this score must possess the psychometric and statistic features of mainstream testing, like reliability and validity.

Interventionist approaches are implemented in two formats: sandwich and (layer) cake formats (Sternberg & Grigorenko, 2002). In sandwich format which is reminiscent of the traditional experimental approach to social science research (pretest - intervention - posttest) mediation is sandwiched between pretest and posttest phases. The learners are, first, pretested on the intended ability without any assistance in order to diagnose their past development. Subsequently, the mediator (teacher/tester) provides the learners with the needed support through instruction. Finally, the subjects are given another test parallel to the pretest, similarly without any help, to observe their degree of benefit from the intervention phase: "The product is a quantitative measure of the child's [learner's] ability to be modified

by instruction" (Minick, 1987, p. 117). In the layer cake format, the intervention is provided within the test. The items are presented to the learner one by one and immediate intervention is provided after the incorrectly answered items. In this format, "a prefabricated and fixed set of clues and hints is determined in advance and offered to learners as they move through a test item by item. The hints are arranged on a scale from implicit to explicit based on the assumption that if learners are able to respond appropriately to an implicit form of mediation they have already attained a greater degree of control over the educational object than if they require more explicit assistance" (Poehner & Lantolf, 2010, p. 318).

### Interactionist approach

Interactionist approach, pioneered by Reuven Feuerstein, focuses on the integration of instruction and assessment. Its advocates do not believe in pretest – intervention – posttest format, but they think that teachers should give mediation/assistance for the learners through interaction while assessment. In interactionist DA, according to Poehner & Lantolf, "mediation is not prefabricated but is instead negotiated with the individual, which means it is continually adjusted in accordance with the learner's responsiveness" (2010, p. 318).

### Transcendence (TR)

Very simply, TR is applying mediated learning in novel contexts. The question is whether learners can transcend or generalize those cognitive abilities which they accomplish under assistance to non-assessment contexts where there is no help. According to Feuerstein et al. (1988, p. 61), "true development *transcends* any specific task and manifests itself in a variety of ways under a multitude of differing conditions".

The significance of TR lies in the fact that the ability of learners to transcend their appropriated functions to new contexts shows the extent of their benefit from mediation. Transcendence also justifies the validity of DA. In DA "the evidential basis for interpreting learner abilities is ... expanded beyond a single observation of independent performance, as in most conventional assessments, to include learner responsiveness to mediation as well as their success in recontextualizing their abilities as they encounter new problems" (Poehner & Lantolf, 2010, p. 316).

### Dynamic Assessment of EFL text comprehension: Kozulin & Garb (2002)

Kozulin & Garb (2002), using an Interventionist approach (pretest – mediation – posttest design), sandwiched the mediation phase between a non-dynamic pretest and posttest. In their study, which attempted to measure their participants ESL reading comprehension skills, the pretest consisted of a short text in English followed by a set of comprehension questions. After the non-dynamic pretest, teachers (mediators) reviewed the test with their students. In this mediation phase, the teachers mediated for the students "the strategies required in each item, building together with the students process models for each item, and indicating how strategies can be transferred from one task to another" (p. 119). At the end, the students were given a non-dynamic posttest of reading parallel to the pretest. In order to observe the degree of the students' benefit from mediation, they devised a formula to calculate what they called a Learning Potential Score (LPS). According to Kozulin & Garb, the LPS is the difference between the students' pretest and posttest scores.

Kozulin & Garb (2002) found that "many of the students indeed benefitted from mediation and were able to apply the acquired strategies to the new text" (p. 120). They also interpreted the observed negative correlation between gain and pretest scores as showing that the pretest scores reflected the students' actual performance level but not their learning potential.

Kozulin & Garb (2002), in discussing their research results, concluded that DA procedure is "both feasible and effective in obtaining information on the students' learning potential" (p. 122). They also confirmed that "students with similar performance levels demonstrated different abilities to learn and use new text comprehension strategies" (p. 22). Kozulin & Garb affirm that "the paradigm of dynamic assessment is

useful not only in the field of cognitive performance but also in such curricular domains as EFL learning" (2002, p. 122).

### 3. Method

#### Subjects

Thirty university students whose English language proficiency was at intermediate level participated in this study. These were chosen from a pool of 164 students who had taken the Solutions Placement Test (a general English proficiency Test). Thirty students whose scores on the test were above 38, indicating that \_ according to the instructions of the test \_ their general English proficiency was at intermediate level, were chosen. All the participants (Male=12, Female= 18; age range: 18-25) were majoring in TEFL or studying at MA level at the universities in the north-west of Iran.

#### Materials

Three types of tests were used to collect information about Ss' general English proficiency and their actual and potential levels of reading comprehension ability. They included: Solutions Placement Test (SPT), Reading Test A (RT A) in mediated and non-mediated versions, and Reading Test B (RT B).

##### *Solutions Placement Test (SPT)*

Solutions Placement Test, developed by Lynda Edwards (2007) and published by Oxford University Press, is a placement test by which teachers can decide at which level of proficiency their students are. The test contains 50 multiple-choice questions of grammar and vocabulary, a reading text with 10 comprehension questions, and an optional writing task. For practical reasons, the optional section of Writing was excluded in this study and students were interpreted on their scores on Grammar and Vocabulary and Reading sections. According to the test instructions, those who got above 31 in Grammar and Vocabulary section and above 8 in Reading section were considered to be at intermediate level and were selected to participate in the study.

##### Reading Tests

Two researcher-constructed reading tests (Reading Test A, in non-mediated and sauce-format mediated versions, and Reading Test B) were used in this project. The texts for these tests were taken from *Concepts & Comments* (Third Ed.) (Ackert & Lee, 2005). Each test contains two passages of about 850 words and each is followed by 15 items, 5 True/False and 10 multiple-choice questions. Reading Tests were paralleled in terms of topic, passage difficulty, and question difficulty with a pilot group. The values of coefficient alpha, after piloting with 40 students, were .84 for RT A and .81 for RT B.

##### *Reading Test A (RT A)*

Reading Test A includes two passages. The first passage entitled 'Navajo Sand Painting' is about Art and the second one entitled 'The United Nations' is about Organization. It was developed in two versions: non-mediated and sauce-format mediated. Non-mediated version was given to the group as the pretest and the sauce-format mediated as the posttest. Each question in the mediated version is followed by a written mediation box which includes prompts and instructions to lead the assessees to use their reading strategies to answer the item. Most of the prompts are in the form of questions. The assessees were instructed, before starting to answer the questions through a sample item, to answer the mediating questions or follow the mediating instructions by themselves. They were also instructed that their responses to the prompts in the mediation boxes would help them use their reading strategies that might not have been used otherwise. Ultimate care was taken to avoid giving the correct answers for the students but to help them arrive at the answers themselves.

An important point about mediation boxes is that they were developed in collaboration with a pilot group of learners. The researcher had interviewed them about the strategies they used in answering the

questions and their descriptions were used as a source in developing prompts. Another source was the researcher's own experience from reading classes. In reading classes, teachers usually ask students questions about the information hidden in the text and by posing questions they try to convey the meaning of the passage and direct the learners' consciousness towards some properties of the text which are important in the comprehension of the selection.

Since mediation boxes are the most important part of a sauce-format Mediated Reading Test, outmost care should be taken in designing and preparing it. In this study some limited but more frequently used Reading strategies were selected to be mediated.

#### Reading Test B (RT B)

This Test also includes two passages entitled 'Cave Paintings' and 'Amnesty International' respectively. The subject of the first passage is about Art and the second one about Organization. It was given independently without any mediation to the group two weeks after taking the sauce-format mediated Reading Test A in order to observe the testees' ability of transcending their learning from mediated to independent non-mediated tests. .

#### Procedures

In order to answer the first question, the sample group was given non-mediated version of Reading Test A traditionally, i.e., without any mediation on the part of the assessor (researcher). After two weeks, they took the same test along with sauce-format mediation presented within mediation boxes. Each question was followed by a mediation box that included hints and prompts helpful for the testees in directing their attention to using the needed strategies necessary for comprehending the pertinent part of the text. An example of a sauce-format mediated reading question is given in Figure 3.

#### Question:

*Before the discovery of Chauvet Cave, archeologists thought that .....*

- a) *people painted for religious reasons.*
- b) *exposing cave paintings to light and air wouldn't damage them.*
- c) *people learned to draw and paint gradually over thousands of years.*

Mediation Box
1. <i>What forced the archeologists to change their ideas about art? (line 38)</i>
2. <i>Does the phrase "for many years" refer to the years before or after the discovery of Chauvet Cave? (line 39)</i>
3. <i>Does the phrase "for many years, archeologists believed ..." imply that they still believe so? (line 39)</i>

Figure 3. An example of a sauce-format mediated reading question

To answer the mediated version of RT A, learners were asked to first read the passages in the test and then answer the succeeding questions. They were told if they had any difficulty in answering any question, they could read the assisting hints in the box following it. The participants were told before treatment that prompts within mediation boxes would not give the answer to the question, but help them understand the text correctly. Finally, their performance on both versions was compared using paired t-test analysis. The assumption was that if the difference between the means were significant enough, it would be claimed that sauce-format mediation was efficient.

To see whether learners could transcend their learning from sauce-format mediated tests to non-mediated independent tests, the group was given Reading Test B without any mediation two weeks after they had taken the mediated version of Test A. Since the Reading Tests A and B were parallel, any difference in the means could be interpreted as the impact of mediation they received on mediated Test A. Therefore, Ss' scores on Reading Tests A and B were compared through paired t-test analysis.

#### 4. Results and Discussion

Table 1 displays descriptive statistics of the group's performance on non-mediated and mediated versions of RT A. Students performed significantly better on the mediated version of the test ( $M=26$ ) than on the non-mediated version ( $M= 23.13$ ).

Table 1

*Descriptive Statistics of the group's performance on non-mediated and mediated versions of RT A*

	N	Mean	SD
Non-mediated version	30	23.13	1.81
Mediated version	30	26	1.30
Valid N (listwise)	30		

Results of paired samples t-test analysis (see Table 2) showed that there was a significant difference between mediated and non-mediated scores,  $t(29)=15.38$ ,  $p=.00<.05$  (two-tailed). Clearly, the findings indicate that mediation boxes have positive effect on the student performance on reading tests. It appears that written intervention within mediation boxes results in learners' developing reading strategies.

Table 2

*Paired Samples t-test for mediated and non-mediated versions of RT A*

	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
non-mediated – mediated RT A	-15.383	29	.000

Table 3 summarizes paired samples t-test results on mediated version of RT A and RT B. T-value was found to be significant at .005 level  $t(29)=58.86$ ,  $p=.00<.05$ , meaning that Ss performed meaningfully better on RT A.

Table 3

*Paired Samples t-test for RT B and non-mediated RT A*

	t	df	Sig.(2-tailed)
RT B – Non-mediated RT A	58.865	29	.000

These results suggest that Ss can transcend their mediated learning from a mediated reading test to a novel non-mediated one.

A close look at the performance of learners on test items makes it clear that in some items the performance of learners would be otherwise if mediation were not presented to them. For example, only 30% of the subjects had answered the following item correctly before mediation, while after mediation 80% of them answered it correctly:

*The paintings on the walls of Chauvet Cave are about 31000 years old. T/F*

Answering this item involved understanding the following section of the passage:



Archeologists who inspected the cave paintings soon after they were discovered estimated that the paintings were about 17000 years old. A few months later, however, tests showed that three of the animals in the paintings were at least 31000 years old.

Learners were supported on this item by the following mediation box:

Mediation Box
<p>1. What are the subjects in the following clauses?</p> <p>"... that the paintings were about 1700 years old." (line 11)</p> <p>"... that three of the animals in the paintings were at least 31000 years old." (line 12)</p>

Figures 17000 and 31000 were used in the text but the question in the mediation box directed the learners' attention to the subject which referred to any of these figures. This, in fact, helped the learners to use strategy of *understanding relations within the sentence*. As the comparison of the proportion of correct responses in non-mediated and sauce-format mediated versions to this item show, mediation has helped learners develop the use of *attending to the relations between and among sentence elements* strategy, in the case of this item subject-verb relation.

As another example, before receiving mediation, 75% of learners had answered the following item incorrectly:

Before the discovery of Chauvet Cave, archeologists thought that .....

- people painted for religious reasons.
- exposing cave paintings to light and air wouldn't damage them.
- people learned to draw and paint gradually over thousands of years.
- people did not need a long time to learn to draw and paint.

Answering this item involved understanding the following paragraph of the text:

Perhaps the most interesting thing about Chauvet cave is that it has forced archeologists to change their ideas about art. For many years, archeologists believed that it took thousands of years for humans to gradually learn how to draw and paint. Chauvet Cave showed that there were great artists 30000 years ago. Jean Clottes summed it up, saying, "Our ancestors did not need millennia of trial and error to achieve great art. Artistic capacity was one of the components of our species probably right from the start."

However, after receiving the following mediation, they changed their responses; 80% chose the correct response:

Mediation Box
<p>1. What forced the archeologists to change their ideas about art? (line 38)</p> <p>2. Does the phrase "for many years" refer to the years before or after the discovery of Chauvet Cave? (line 39)</p> <p>3. Does the phrase "for many years, archeologists believed ..." imply that they still believe so? (line 39)</p>

This mediation box helped learners use strategies of *understanding relations between parts of a text through grammatical cohesion devices* and *identifying and interpreting discourse markers*. The considerable increase in

learners' correct responses after being mediated shows that they would be interpreted as unable to answer the item correctly if mediation were not provided.

The results show that sauce format mediation promoted learners' use of reading strategies. This can be explained by assuming that mediation reveals learners' potential level of development. This is in substantial agreement with findings of Kozulin & Garb (2002) who assumed DA procedure as "both feasible and effective in obtaining information on the students' learning potential" (p. 122). Results of this study also indicate that learners are able to transfer their learning from sauce format mediation to other new reading tests. This is consistent with Poehner & Lantolf's conclusion that "learners' success in transcending their new abilities represents ... an important indicator of the extent to which they have benefitted from and internalized previously offered mediation" (2010, p. 319).

## 5. Conclusion

This research attempted to investigate the effect of sauce format mediation on learners' performance on reading tests. It was anticipated that learners would have better performance on reading tests if provided with sauce format mediation. Results of the present study show that students can benefit well from sauce-format mediation in applying their reading strategies to answer reading tests. Implication of such a finding for English teachers and testers is that using practical sauce-format mediated reading tests is preferable to time-consuming and high expert demanding reading tests mediated by sandwich and cake formats of interventionist DA. Teachers are suggested to mediate for the students the reading strategies by providing guiding hints and prompts in mediation boxes along the reading selections.

As a suggestion for further research, computer-based test developers can design mediation boxes for any question of a test and learners can be instructed to refer to the boxes whenever they cannot answer the question by their actual (present) language ability. This research was limited to mediation of learners' reading ability; nonetheless, it needs further replications on other areas of language ability as well. This study was a step forward to understanding learners' potential ability; however, "a coherent framework for implementing DA in the L2 classroom has yet to be articulated" (Poehner, 2008, p. 92).

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# CRITICAL THINKING ASSESSMENT: SPECIFYING THE CONTENTS TIPPING THE BALANCE IN FAVOR OF A DISCIPLINE-SPECIFIC APPROACH IN EFL LEARNING CONTEXT

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## ABSTRACT

DATING BACK TO THE EARLY DAYS OF CRITICAL THINKING (CT) PRACTICE, AN ONGOING SIDE-TAKING IN THE SETTING OF TEACHING AND ASSESSING CT HAS BEEN WHETHER TO ADOPT A *DISCIPLINE-NEUTRAL* OR A *DISCIPLINE-SPECIFIC* APPROACH. THAT IS, FOR CT ASSESSMENT IN DIFFERENT DISCIPLINES, WHETHER A ONE-FIT-FOR-ALL INSTRUMENT SUFFICES OR DIFFERENT DISCIPLINES CALL FOR DIFFERENT TESTS. IN THE WAKE OF AN AS-THOROUGH-AS-POSSIBLE INQUIRY INTO THE FOR-AND-AGAINST CLAIMS OF THE INHABITANTS OF EACH OF THE ABOVE CAMPS, THE PRESENT ARTICLE INITIALLY JUSTIFIES ADOPTING A DISCIPLINE-SPECIFIC APPROACH. ACCORDINGLY, THE ARTICLE PROCEEDS OVER TO DEMARCATION OF THE SPECIFIC FEATURES THAT MUST BE DELIBERATED IN ASSESSING AND TEACHING CT IN THE FIELD OF FL LEARNING. THIS IS FOLLOWED BY RENDERING OF JUSTIFICATIONS FOR INCLUSION OR EXCLUSION OF SOME ITEMS IN SUCH DISCIPLINE-SPECIFIC TESTS. THE REFERRED TEST FEATURES AND FRAMEWORK CAN BE USED IN DEVELOPMENT OF A CT MODEL AND TEST IN THE FIELD OF FL/SL TEACHING AND TESTING.

**KEY WORDS:** CRITICAL THINKING ASSESSMENT; CT TESTS; HIGHER THINKING; DISCIPLINE-SPECIFIC APPROACH; DISCIPLINE-NEUTRAL APPROACH

## 1. Introduction

Bloom's traditional Taxonomy of Educational Objectives – especially the three higher skills of analysis, synthesis, and evaluation – can be considered as a classic landmark for application of Critical Thinking (CT) as a cognitive objective, used by educational practitioners "to examine the degree of thinking in classrooms" (Stobaugh, 2013: 13). In the course of education, besides accumulation of most significant information, in order for 'learning' to materialize, persons must internalize a series of concepts and rules enabling them to "operate in and on the world" (Chadwick, 2014: 144). Both sets of the learned information play a very important practical role in not just having the correct routine answers but also "strengthening the underlying mental structure" (p. 144) and building confidence in one's own abilities. Validation and verification of a flow of information, Paul and Elder (2005, as cited in Stobaugh, 2013: 34) underline, shall be based on "clarity, accuracy, precision, relevance, depth, breadth, logic, and significance" of the information. Therefore, in case a

given educational system seeks after training the type of students who would be capable of solving their life problems, including educational ones, this is hardly feasible without Critical Thinking. Upon acknowledgement of the significant role of CT in educational arena, there would be the dilemma of adopting a general fit-for-all-disciplines approach towards CT, or admitting interdisciplinary differences. Evidently, admittance of the latter alternative necessitates taking specific discipline-oriented measures in the areas of teaching and testing: In the area of CT instruction, this means devising CT instruction courses – whether independently or embedded within other subject matters – with the contents fine-tuned in accordance with the specific interpretation of CT in that particular discipline; similarly, in testing and evaluation, it entails development of discipline-specific instruments for measuring CT.

Although the weight attributed to adopting a discipline-specific approach well justifies the necessity for having a CT model and instrument that would specifically represent the situation in a given discipline; in reality, such discipline-specific considerations are rarely observed when CT assessment is attempted. In FL learning settings, for instance, one of the widely-used instruments is Watson-Glaser Critical Thinking Appraisal (WGCTA) (1980), which assumes a general – and not a discipline-specific – stance towards CT. In Iran, too, either the original or Farsi-translated version of WGCTA (developed by Faravani, 2006, as cited in Birjandi & Bagherkazemi, 2010, among others) is used for tapping the CT level of Iranian EFL learners (see, for instance, Fahim, Bagherkazemi, & Alemi, 2010; Birjandi & Bagherkazemi, 2010; and Fahim & Ahmadi, 2012).

Through scrutinizing the related literature and available CT instruments, the present study aimed at enumerating a list of the features that must be considered in development of a discipline-specific CT assessment instrument for the FL/SL learners. Meanwhile, justifications for inclusion of particular items and non-inclusion of others are presented for some items.

## 2. Background

### 2.1. Different benchmarks defining CT

The ardently-debated concept of CT eludes a unanimously-agreed-upon definition. The reason originally lies in different windows from different fields opened to CT, mainly from the three academic fields of Philosophy, Psychology, and Education (see, e.g., Lewis & Smith, 1993 and Sternberg, 1986, all cited in Lai, 2011). Hunter (2014), for instance, is such a believer in superiority of Robert Ennis's time-honored definition of CT over others' that he included it in the lengthy title of his book (*A Practical Guide to Critical Thinking: Deciding what to do and believe*). To Ennis, CT is "reasonable, reflective thinking that is aimed at deciding what to believe or what to do" (as quoted in Hunter, 2014: 2).

CT is defined by Saiz & Rivas (2008, as cited in Saiz & Rivas, 2011: 35) as "a process involving a search for knowledge through reasoning skills, problem-solving and decision-making that will allow us to achieve the desired results more efficiently". What makes this definition different from others is that besides relying on reasoning, CT is linked to more outward aspects of *problem solving* and *decision making* as other components of thought processes.

Instead of being visualized as an ever-opposing antisocialist loners, critical thinkers send a message that "combines the curiosity and excitement of the child with the skeptical nature of our best scientists, all moderated by the humility of a monk" (Browne & Keeley, 2007: 205). Through displaying a sense of openness, critical thinker assures others that she aspires for achieving better conclusions. For the same constructive attitude, instead of fault-finding with others' thinking, CT aspires for "improving the *beliefs* and *decisions* each of us must make" (Browne & Keeley's, 2007: ix, italics added).

### 2.2. Education & higher thinking, including CT

When the concern of the educational systems revolves around raising children equipped with 'higher thinking', or 'good thinking', which is of use in solving a problem and/or making a decision, the terms Creativity, Critical Thinking, Divergent Thinking, and Strategic Thinking are among the overlapping concepts frequently echoed in the literature. It is the CT output that culminates in the



thinker's adopting a proper method in problem solving and decision making, which – in turn – pave the way for creativity and strategic thinking. It is through DT processes that a person can conceive and generate numerous responses to a given question or think of a variety of different solutions to a problem (Kaufman et al, 2008).

What makes CT of interest in pedagogy is the positive correlation demonstrated to be between students' CT level and their academic achievement (Bowles, 2000; Gadzella, Ginther, & Bryant, 1997; Williams, Wise & West, 2001; Wilson & Wagner, 1981; all cited in Akdere, 2012); also shown in their grade point average (Facione, 1990a, 1990b; Mines, King, Hood, & Wood, 1990; King, Wood, & Mines, 1990; Facione, Facione, & Giancarlo, 1992; Frisby, 1992; Torres, 1993; Swartz & Parks, 1994; Jacobs, 1995; Wenglinsky, 2000, 2002, 2003; Rath, 2002; Sternberg, 2008; & MetLife, 2011; all cited in Stobaugh, 2013).

Likewise, in the particular EFL/ESL educational context the concern of the present research, recent studies have underlined a correlation between the learners' CT level and their mastery over L2 skills. This is accompanied by the fact that in real communicational settings, besides exploiting conversational/transactional competence, learners are expected to "express opinions, present different points of view or provide solutions for a controversial issue" (Cheng, 2015: 1); i.e. the same skills representing CT.

In spite of the discipline-wise variations in the prismatic perspectives towards CT, however, a series of *general* demarcations can be observed in critical thinkers: Through checking sufficiency of the evidence they hold, critical thinkers should train themselves on "how to distance" themselves from their own beliefs and opinions, so as to bring forth '*the* reasons' (that must be both "sufficient" and "acceptable"), not insisting on '*my* reasons'; or to inquire about '*the* evidence', not '*your* evidence'. In other words, a belief denuded of "good epistemic reasons" is but a prejudice – i.e. a prejudgment. Rudinow & Barry (2008) consider 'reason' as the tool exploited by critical thinkers "to make up" their mind; in this sense, reason is taken as "the capacity to use disciplined intelligence to solve problems" (p. 12). To duly serve the learners' pursuit after detecting truth and taking the most appropriate decisions, educational systems must enable learners – among other instructions – to employ such objective reasoning, free from unwarranted biases and subjectivity.

In general, there appears to be a unanimous agreement on the role direct instruction can play in development of the learners' CT abilities: In other words, learners can be tutored to adopt a more critical attitude towards thinking.

### 2.3. CT: A generic and/or discipline-specific approach?

Basing on a series of justifications rendered by supporters of each of generic and discipline-specific approaches towards CT, this section is concerned with reasons that promote adopting a discipline-specific approach towards assessment of CT of EFL learners. In what follows, generic versus discipline-specific approaches to CT are contrasted.

While *Generic* (or, *Discipline-Neutral*) approach considers CT skills to enjoy a general nature that could be transferred from one discipline to another, the *Discipline-Specific* approach postulates that CT "is not simply a matter of applying a set of skills, but requires a thorough knowledge and familiarity with the subject matter" (Davies 2006; Moore 2004; as cited in Tilbury, et al, 2010: 8). Discipline-specific CT, in addition to general CT, was justified based on the learners' background knowledge. To some researchers, background domain-specific knowledge is a crucial factor in the learners' CT skill (Case, 2005; Kennedy et al., 1991; Kuncel, 2011; McPeck, 1990; Willingham, 2007; all cited in Lai & Viering, 2012).

Similarly, opposing those (such as Halpern) who believe that CT skills can be generally applied to all disciplines, 'specificists' such as McPeck (1981) and Bailin et al. (1999; as cited in Lai & Viering, 2012) consider domain-specific knowledge as an integral part of CT since "the kinds of explanations, evaluations, and evidence that are most highly valued vary from one domain to another" (p. 14) – in the same way that the rules of a given game might not be applicable in other games (See McPeck, 1981; as quoted in Moore, 2011). An instance of incorporating discipline into the process of CT evaluation can be seen in a survey by White et al (2011) who used a set of "complex and partially

conflicting” data, extracted from the early-20th-century medical literature, in compiling open-response questions. The test-takers were required to “synthesize the data to a single conclusion, propose studies to increase confidence in the conclusion, and ask if other conclusions are possible” (p. 107).

Accordingly, many researchers including Willingham, Bailin, and McPeck (for more names, see, e.g., Ennis, 1989; as cited in Lai, 2011) assert that specific domains of use shall be primarily determined if CT is to be developed in learners. In their view, one cannot imagine a given CT process – for instance, interpreting – without taking into account the subject concerned; rather, the different contexts involved and the different types of knowledge summoned delineate what is meant by “interpreting”.

Moore (2011) assigns different interpretations of CT to different disciplines: *Philosophy*, for instance, relies heavily on argumentation and evaluation, which are the cornerstones to generic CT programs; *History*, on the other hand, is mainly interested in developing the skill of judging the arguments already presented by others, hoping that such scrutiny will result in developing one’s own arguments. Yet, with a different point of emphasis, *Literary Studies* encourages the learners to develop their own interpretation of the judgments already included in the text arguments.

Modes of inquiry and also validation processes are believed to be used differently by practitioners of different disciplines. Donald (2002; as quoted in Peirce, 2005), for instance, distinguishes between and among *modes of inquiry* in a number of disciplines. In line with the referred diversity in inquiry modes, practitioners of different disciplines have their own *validation processes*, ranging from relying on objective empiricism and test results, over to peers and/or authorities: In more structured disciplines (such as physics or engineering), validation of a given piece of evidence is accomplished through matching evidence to theory. In the middle of the referred range lie disciplines such as psychology where proof is expected as a combination of empirical testing and inter-rater reliability. “Further into the human sciences, proof rests in evidence that will convince an authority in law, or test results in education, or in internal consistency rendering work plausible in English literature” (Donald, 2002: 282; as quoted in Peirce, 2005).

On the other side of the line, however, “domain-neutral” was shown by a few studies to be a better setting as concerns studies on CT dispositions or the generalized CT measure of performance on syllogistic reasoning tasks (e.g. Toplak & Stanovich, 2002; and West, Toplak and Stanovich, 2008; both cited in Lai & Viering, 2012).

Avoiding the two extremes of general *versus* domain-specific approaches to CT, a number of researchers conceive CT as embracing *both* general and domain-specific elements. Facione, for instance, is an eminent figure in the field, best known for designing of the California Critical Thinking Skills Test (CCTST), which is a *general* CT test; by the same token, however, Facione also believes that a person’s *domain-specific* background knowledge cannot be ignored when it comes to CT skills adopted by those persons. Richard W. Paul (1993, as cited in Reed, 1998) is another in-between supporter, believing that teaching CT must encompass a combination of both general CT courses as well as “infusing critical thinking instruction into discipline-specific courses” (p. 13). Similarly, through ways including asking the students and teachers in different disciplines, Howarth (2012) endorsed the combined approach originally advocated by Bailin et al. in 1999, whereby a combination of a discipline-specific and a generic-model of CT was recognized as the best method to be incorporated in the curricula.

A review of the related literature, a sample of which was included above, implies “there may be a fundamental difference” between discipline-neutral and -specific CT skills tests, as concluded in a concurrent validity study conducted by Reid (2000: 123). Reid’s study tapped the correlation between CCTST, as a discipline-neutral CT skills test, and the Arnett Critical Thinking Outcome Evaluation (CTOE), as a nursing discipline-specific CT test. The literature review generally reveals a heavily-supported inclination towards considering features of CT in the specific discipline and context wherein it is being applied. Justifications of such endorsement mainly lie in not only the necessity of domain-specific background knowledge but also the variations witnessed in the types of

explanations, evidence, evaluations, validation processes, and modes of inquiry that are most highly valued in different disciplines.

#### 2.4. CT assessment: Limitations & solutions

Evidently, if learners are to be encouraged to become generative, divergent, critical, and creative thinkers, considering the interactive nature of teaching-testing relations, this tendency shall be reflected in assessments as well. On the way of identifying what account as CT test components, one can concentrate on the factors claimed to have the potential of facilitating development of CT. For instance, owing to its strong reliance upon reasoning skills, philosophy is shown by research (e.g. by Erfani et al, 2014; Wang, 2013) to be one of the disciplines the mastery over which affirmatively affects the learners' CT level. Moreover, whereas children's familiarity with the world around them goes through the channel of language as a means of communication (Vacca, Vacca, & Gove, 1995; as cited in Liaw, 2007), development of the children's cognition and development of their language skills is considered as interrelated.

Considering the complex nature of CT, a more accurate assessment is considered to be the one revolving around open-ended rather than multiple-choice items (For a snapshot of the main differences between the referred item types, see McCurry, 2014, especially page 2). The rationale behind the referred partiality in favor of open-ended items can be sought in the fact that the "available empirical evidence suggests that open-ended measures better capture the construct of critical thinking because they are more sensitive to the dispositional aspects of critical thinking than are multiple-choice measures" (Ku, 2009; as cited in Lai, 2011: 38-39). Therefore, it is believed that a mixed combination of open-ended and multiple-choice items in a single CT test can be a solution to the problem. In case multiple-choice items are used in a given CT test, follow-up questions will clarify the reasoning technique adopted by the testee in having answered the multiple-choice item. Moreover, CT assessment should include realistic scenarios, representative of the problems encountered in real-life circumstances (Bonk & Smith, 1998; Halpern, 1998; Moss & Koziol, 1991; all cited in Lai, 2011).

Before elaboration of the type of assessment model and tool the concern of the present study, mention is made in what follows of the available instruments and models – both of general and discipline-specific nature.

#### 2.5. Some of the generic and specific CT tests

The volatile and hard-to-pin-down nature of CT makes development of a CT assessment tool a mindboggling task. However, there are currently a considerable number of popular critical thinking instruments being used in research (See Akdere 2012; Behar-Horenstein & Niu, 2011; among others):

- Cornell Critical Thinking Test (CCTT): A story-based multiple-choice test.
- Watson-Glaser Critical Thinking Appraisal-FS (WGCTA-FS): A 40-item (originally, 80-item) inventory and measures only cognitive dimension.
- California Critical Thinking Skills Test (CCTST): Includes 34 items; mainly used as an index of success level "in authentic problem situations" and "on professional licensure examinations" (Behar-Horenstein & Niu, 2011).
- The Ennis-Weir Critical Thinking Essay Test (EWCTET): Open-ended; both cognitive and affective aspects; challenging the test-takers to (a) identify the reasoning flaws and (b) present their own arguments.
- The Halpern CT Assessment Using Everyday Situations (HCTAES): 25 scenario-based multiple-choice and open-ended items set in authentic and believable contexts.

While enjoying some advantages, each of the commonly-used 'standard' CT instruments suffers from a number of drawbacks, including reliability and/or validity issues. The referred validity and reliability concerns towards CT instruments (especially the recognition types) rise from the fact that, in many cases, the abstract concept of CT is not duly realized in the developed instrument. Nevertheless, in spite of being proposed as compensation for multiple-choice recognition types, open-ended CT instruments are not flawless either: Raters' subjectivity and better performance of more proficient testees on open-ended tests make such test results questionable, too.

Addressing the referred comprehensiveness concerns, some scholars (such as Facione, 1990; as cited in Akdere, 2012) propose employing a combination of more than one instrument. Moreover, as a compromise, a combination of multiple-choice and open-ended formats is suggested, as realized in HCTAES by Haplern in 2003.

Finally, as in case of other tests, for standardization of CT instruments, the test-takers' local environment (including the respondents' language, culture, and lifestyles; as enumerated by Cheung et al, 2002; as cited in Akdere, 2012) shall be taken into account.

## 2.6. CT assessment formats tailored discipline-wise

Attempt was made to consolidate the varying multitude of definitions given in the related literature for what accounts as CT. Number of dimensions (cognition, meta-cognition, dispositional, behavioral, etc.) and number of sub-divisions of each that were called for as constituting elements of CT differed, especially from one discipline to another.

In Saiz & Rivas' (2011: 35) definition, CT is linked to more outward aspects of problem solving and decision making as other components of thought processes: A set of Skills (influenced by motivation and attitudes) and Meta-knowledge results in Reasoning, Problem Solving, and Decision Making, the whole of which makes up one's Knowledge (See the figure on page 36 of Saiz & Rivas, 2011). Moreover, a person skillful in CT is presumably capable in a number of skills required "to communicate ideas, make decisions, analyze, and solve problems", based on self-evaluation and transformation (Lai, 2011: 2):

The theoretical CT framework perceived by Akdere (2012) is a more comprehensive one: Reminding the "almost complete consensus" on necessity of the critical thinker's having a "critical spirit" besides mastering the respective cognitive skills, Akdere (2012) proposes a CT framework that covers four dimensions of Metacognition, Cognitive skills, Dispositions, and Ideological and ontological beliefs. Kallet (2014) suggested a framework for CT aimed at handling what he termed as 'headscratchers' – i.e. the initiatives, problem-solving, and decision-making instances that make a person scratch their head. Kallet's framework, providing the required tools and techniques, includes the three components of clarity, conclusions, and decisions.

In evaluating others' and their own arguments, a critical thinker is expected to seek answers to the following questions, as referred to by Chaffee (2013: 24), in order to judge a given argument whether it passes through tests of Truth, Validity, and Soundness, respectively:

1. How true are the reasons being offered to support the conclusion?
2. To what extent do the reasons support the conclusion, or to what extent does the conclusion follow from the reasons offered?
3. Does the argument pass the tests of both truth and validity?

In administering such acceptability tests on the rendered arguments, critical thinkers must be vigilant not to be trapped in Fallacies, i.e. those unsound yet appealing arguments the face plausibility of which is embedded in the fact that "they usually appeal to our emotions and prejudices and ... support conclusions that we want to believe are accurate" (Chaffee, 2013: 27).

## 3. Research Methodology

Initially, the researcher collected and studied a body of references on the subject of higher thinking, specifically critical thinking. The sources were scrutinized for detection of probable similarities and differences in different disciplines as concern the following areas:

- a) The definitions assigned to critical thinking in different disciplines;
- b) The factors and elements believed to be encapsulated in CT as well as the factors facilitating/ stifling development of CT;
- c) The justifications presented by supporters of each group: discipline-neutral and discipline-specific approaches to measuring CT in different disciplines;
- d) The way people approach thinking in different disciplines and the way they use thinking tools such as inference, induction, deduction, interpretation, analogy, etc.;
- e) A detailed description of different CT assessment tools used as discipline-neutral or discipline-specific as well as the strengths and weaknesses of those tools;



Subsequently, based on an overwhelming acknowledgement voiced in the literature in favor of adopting a discipline-specific approach towards CT, those contents and formats of the available CT tests that can be incorporated into a CT test for the context of L2 learning were identified.

This was followed by development of a pool of test items for the prospective L2 learning CT test. The pool was sent to the panel of experts active in the field of teaching English as L2 in Iran. The experts were asked to rate the items on four scales, specifying whether or not a given item is relevant to L2 learning field and could be incorporated into a discipline-specific CT test for the learners.

It is to be noted, however, that the scope of the present article does not include reporting of the data collection and data analysis procedures followed in the stages of obtaining the panels' viewpoints and rating. Nor does it include the results of the measures taken to make the developed test a valid and reliable test, trustworthy for measuring L2 learners' CT level.

#### 4. Results: Proposed contents of an L2 CT test & justifications thereof

For determination of the contents of Critical Thinking Test for L2 learning context (L2 CT Test), initially, decision was made to detect most-frequently used notions in different CT instruments of Humanities in general and FL/SL education, in particular. The task turned out to be a complicated one, owing to the variety of the instruments used – especially since in many cases, a given instrument was generally used in different disciplines.

Subsequently, in development of a CT Test for L2 learners as target context of application, the following considerations were incorporated, mainly in the wake of reviewing the viewpoints of the experts and test developers found in the Literature as well as the available test samples:

- (A) A decision had to be made concerning the test format, in multiple-choice and/or essay type. On the one hand, considering the complex nature of CT, reliance on multiple-choice items only was regarded as too simplistic an attitude (see, e.g. Ku, 2009; as cited in Lai, 2011). On the other hand, essay-type tests suffered from a number of issues including validity concerns (NPEC, 2001; Eisner, 1997; both quoted in Hofreiter, 2005), rating problems, not much practical owing to being time-consuming, biased in favor of those more skilful in writing, etc. (Lai, 2011). As a compromise version maximally devoid of drawbacks of each form, a combination of multiple-choice and open-ended formats, as realized in HCTAES by Hapler in 2003, is suggested to be used. More specifically, in this "hybrid" test form, after multiple-choice items, follow-up items will clarify whether the thinking adopted by the test-taker in having answered the preceding multiple-choice item was right or not.

For instance, in a CT test item, based on the statement "Chilean students were right in 2012 to stage protests demanding that university education in Chile should be made free", test-takers were asked to decide whether the assumption "Chilean students cannot afford to pay fees for university education" could be made or not. It would not suffice if the test-taker correctly chose "Assumption Not Made". A space can be provided at the end of the same item to act as an open-ended item. It is through the test-taker's open-ended answer that the rater can check whether the earlier recognition-type choice had been selected for correct reasons or right answer was chosen for wrong reasons!

- (B) Among the recommended CT assessment practices, Lai & Viering's (2012) was found to be worthy to follow:

incorporating multiple measures to permit triangulation of inferences; designing complex and/or challenging tasks; including open-ended and/or ill-structured tasks; using tasks that employ meaningful or authentic, real-world problem contexts; making student thinking and reasoning visible; and exploring innovative approaches that utilize new technology and psychometric models. (Lai & Viering, 2012: 1)

In the proposed L2 CT test, too, the problem contexts set forth are not only "meaningful



or authentic real-world” but also geared to the educational context the participants are more directly involved in.

For the specific case of L2 learning environment, the items more of educational and academic nature are proposed to be given priority over others. The following test item from CAAP (Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency) is exemplified as appropriate: A university professor is writing a letter to the university officials criticizing the fact that students' evaluation of the faculty members' efficiency is considered by officials in salary and promotion decisions. The test-takers are asked to judge acceptability of the rendered reasons and results.

- (C) Some researchers may mistakenly think that CT test can be developed for FL/SL learners in the language they are being taught; this, however, can result in problems – since test takers may have recognition/production language problems while answering the items. Thereupon, to avoid such problems, L2 CT Test must be developed in test-takers' native language, to eliminate "the possibility of confounding language factors with thinking skills" (Liaw, 2007: 60).
- (D) The overlaps admitted to exist between CT and Problem Solving encourages inclusion of items of problem-solving nature into the test. Nevertheless, it is worthy to remind that the items representing intelligence puzzles – including mathematical ones, If-Then analogies, etc. – were considered as not directly of the specialty and concern of FL/SL learners. Thereupon, items similar to the following case from CCTST (used as basis for two test items) must NOT be included in EFL learning context:

A college has exactly seven student clubs – 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7. The college dean must pick exactly five club members, each from a different club, to serve on an important committee. Any combination of five people will do, except that if someone from 1 is selected, no one from 5 can be selected. Also, if someone from 3 is picked, someone from 5 must be picked. And, if someone from 2 is put on the committee, a member of 6 must also be put on the committee.

- (E) Among other areas enjoying overlaps with CT, one can refer to Critical Reading. In the same area, Close Reading, as termed by Paul & Elder (2006), can be considered as a prerequisite to CT. To Paul & Elder, close reading occurs when the reader 'constructs accurately' the meaning embedded in a given text; or more exactly, constructs in their mind a writer's thinking. In this definition, reading closely is contrasted against reading superficially (through which the reader can express only "a vague, and often erroneous, facsimile" of the text). Although it is not yet CT, close reading requires thinking from multiple perspectives and reasoning well. In the context of FL/SL learning, too, CT test items revolving around Critical (or Close) Reading must be included since the learners encounter considerable amounts of reading, in both extensive and intensive forms. For instance, in a CT test text, test-takers read that based on 'dumb-blonde hypothesis', "beautiful women *are thought* to be unintelligent" (italics added). Then, the test-takers are asked to label the following inference as True or False: "The 'dumb-blonde hypothesis' says that more attractive women *are* less capable of being intelligent" (italics added). This should be followed by a space provided for an open-ended answer – to make sure that in their correctly labeling the inference as False, the test-takers have identified the subtle difference between women 'being thought' to be dumb and 'being' dumb.
- (F) Cultural considerations, too, must be observed in test development. For standardization of CT instruments, as enumerated by Cheung et al (2002; as cited in Akdere, 2012), test-takers' local environment (including the respondents' language, culture, and lifestyles) shall be taken into account. This is in line with the beliefs voiced by researchers such as Zireva (2011), that any instrument used for measuring a phenomenon in a cultural group for which the instrument was not originally designed requires to be "translated in the new culture" (p. 46). In the same veins, items including drinks and drugs or voicing

religious inclinations must be either excluded or used with modifications in some communities. Item 26 of CCTST, for instance, asked the testees to evaluate the reasoning of a speaker (as weak or strong) in claiming that “there is no such thing as life after death”. Considering the resulting religious sensitivity, such items must not be included in the test.

- (G) Based on consideration of a lengthy list including Interpretation, Analysis, Evaluation, and Inference Skills provided by U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics in 2000, some of the CT test components included therein were found to be more relevant to L2 learning contexts than others. What follows are the selected subdivisions of only “Interpretation” part, indicated as examples of the elements appropriate for inclusion into FL CT test:
- Categorization: It was found relevant since in L2 learning environment, comprehension is enhanced through information organization, transformation (e.g. chart to descriptions), comparisons, etc.
  - Detecting Indirect Persuasion: Although the form of much use in L2-related fields is not similar to detective-type scrutiny in law fields, it is very helpful here in identifying emotional and misleading tones and biased language that in some cases might be realized even in punctuations. For instance, projection of italicized parts of a text might be intended to make the reader adopt a given stance, for or against the issue.
  - Clarifying Meaning: In a text, ambiguous tone must be clarified, supported with resources.
- (H) Scenarios, real-world examples, and authentic tasks (as underlined, among others, by Ku, 2009; Bonk & Smith, 1998; Halpern, 1998; Moss & Koziol, 1991; all cited in Lai, 2011; and Stobaugh, 2013) are the main interpretive exercise types that must be incorporated into development as well as assessment of CT. Some of the example sentences and scenarios were identified as more graspable and understandable to EFL learners. For instance, as an answer to the question “Should university-level education be free to all students?”, test-takers should decide whether the argument embedded in the following answer is weak or strong “No. Too much education can lead to over-qualification, and therefore unemployment” – which is of course a weak one.

## 5. Conclusion

As indicated earlier, the significance of the contribution rendered by CT in one’s life, in general, and educational arena, in particular, is unanimously acknowledged. It is CT, as one of the higher thinking realizations, that helps the person arrive at objective conclusions and decisions. Having acknowledged such role for CT, the researchers have afterwards been concerned with a discussion on whether to consider CT as a general concept or consider it as a concept gaining a portion of its meaning based on the context- i.e. discipline – of its use. The literature demonstrated a much heavier tendency towards adopting a discipline-specific stance towards CT.

In academic contexts, such discipline-specific CT approach is used in deciding on the contents of both the courses held on promoting CT in learners as well as the tests measuring such CT skill in learners.

Discipline-specific tests were shown to be a more exact criterion for assessment of critical thinking owing to the test-takers’ background knowledge – as developed in the respective discipline – and the variations witnessed in the types of evidence, evaluations, validation processes, and inquiry modes most highly valued in different disciplines. In what preceded, a series of recommendations were given on the points to be observed in development of a CT test, some of which pivoted more specifically around CT test for FL learners. The delineated features must be deliberated in development of a CT framework and assessment tool in the field of FL/SL learning.

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# THE IMPACT OF ORAL STORY REPETITION ON IRANIAN INTERMEDIATE EFL LEARNERS' WORD CONTEXTUAL MEANING

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## ABSTRACT

THIS STUDY WAS CONDUCTED TO INVESTIGATE THE IMPACT OF ORAL STORY REPETITION ON IRANIAN INTERMEDIATE EFL LEARNERS' WORD CONTEXTUAL MEANING. FOR THIS PURPOSE 80 MALE AND FEMALE STUDENTS PARTICIPATED IN THIS STUDY. HAVING BEING HOMOGENIZED BY AN OPT TEST, 44 LEARNERS WERE SELECTED AND THEY WERE RANDOMLY ASSIGNED INTO TWO GROUPS, CONTROL AND EXPERIMENTAL (N=22). THEN BOTH GROUPS SAT FOR A PRE-TEST, WHICH WAS A WORD CONTEXTUAL MEANING TEST. THE PURPOSE OF THIS TEST WAS TO MEASURE THE LEARNERS' INITIAL SUBJECT KNOWLEDGE OF VOCABULARY. AFTERWARDS, THE EXPERIMENTAL GROUP RECEIVED TREATMENT BASED ON ORAL STORY REPETITION. HOWEVER, THE CONTROL GROUP RECEIVED NO TREATMENT. THE TREATMENT PROCEDURE TOOK ONCE A WEEK FOR 45 MINUTES FOR 10 SESSIONS. FINALLY AT THE END OF THE COURSE BOTH GROUPS SAT FOR THE POST TEST OF WORD CONTEXTUAL MEANING. THEN THE STATISTICAL ANALYSIS WAS RUN THROUGH T-TEST AND A ONE WAY ANALYSIS OF COVARIANCE (ANCOVA). IT WAS EXPLORED FROM THE STUDY THAT LEARNERS' WORD CONTEXTUAL MEANING IMPROVE MORE WHEN THEY ARE PROVIDED WITH ORAL STORY REPETITION.

**KEY WORDS:** ORAL STORY REPETITION, READ-ALOUD, EFL LEARNERS, IMPROVING, WORD CONTEXTUAL MEANING

## Introduction

Only few published studies examined how teachers' story read-aloud might affect students' vocabulary learning in a primary foreign language classroom (Kirsch, 2012). A recent study by Kirsch (2012) analyzed a German teacher's teaching strategies during the storytelling events in a modern foreign language classroom in England and examined how Year 6 children learned new German words from the teacher's storytelling. The findings showed that this experienced German-speaking teachers employed a range of teaching strategies (e.g., mime, gesture, voice modulation, paraphrase) and provided multiple and meaningful interactions with and among students for language use. During the storytelling events, both explicit and incidental learning was observed, and the students were found engaging in activities, which allowed them to focus on the meaning, form, and usage of the new words. The analysis of the lesson observation, the interviews, and post-test further suggested that the children were able to recall considerable number of words and sentences over a period of time. The study identified a number of factors associated with the effectiveness of repeated story read-aloud technique on improving word meanings, such as a repetitive story text, the frequency of encounters, the children's sustained engagement and



participation, and effective teaching strategies that allowed for both explicit and incidental learning etc.

This study assess the effectiveness of teachers' repeated story read-aloud technique on improving word meanings among intermediate students and offer a clearer picture of different factors associated with learners' improving word meanings in a foreign language classroom.

### Definition of key terms

Terms defined in this study are as follows:

**Oral story repetition:** The repeated reading of a picture book or story book by an adult to a child is a frequently recommended practice to enhance young children's early language and literacy development (Justice, Meier, & Walpole, 2005; Miller, 1998; Penno, Wilkinson, & Moore, 2002; Thielke, 1997).

**Read-aloud:** Reading aloud is the foundation for literacy development. It is the single most important activity for reading success (Bredekamp, Copple, & Neuman, 2000). It provides children with a demonstration of phrased, fluent reading (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996). It reveals the rewards of reading, and develops the listener's interest in books and desire to be a reader (Mooney, 1990).

**EFL learners:** Those who learn English as a foreign language out of its social context are EFL learners. As Brown (2005) stated, one of the main characteristics of EFL (as opposed to ESL) is the lack of social context. In other words, EFL learners do not have access to social and natural situation for language acquisition. Lack of exposure to community in which the language is spoken makes them develop learning consciously.

**Improving:** To raise to a more desirable or more excellent quality or condition; make better.

**Word contextual meaning:** The accepted meaning of a word. what is intended to be or actually is expressed or indicated signification of original meaning. The meaning of a word or expression; the way in which a word or expression or situation can be interpreted. A single distinct meaningful element of speech or writing, used with others (or sometimes alone) to form a sentence and typically shown with a space on either side when written or printed (Oxford Advanced learners' Dictionary 2010)

### Traditional approaches to word contextual meaning

As many researchers have noted, vocabulary—knowledge of word meanings—is a powerful predictor of reading comprehension.

Current reading instruction is apparently premised on the view that children can build the vocabulary they need after learning to read (decode) fluently, as little or no vocabulary instruction occurs during the primary grades (National Reading Panel, 2000).

However, as Biemiller (2005) showed, by the end of Grade 2 (i.e., by the end of the primary years), whereas average children have acquired around 6,000 root word meanings, children in the lowest quartile acquired around 4,000 root words, and those in the highest quartile acquired around 8,000 root words. After Grade 2, average children add 1,000 word meanings per year. A gap of 2,000 root word meanings is roughly equal to two grade levels. This gap persists throughout the elementary years. As outlined in a recent issue of *American Educator* (2003), by Grade 4, many children experience a "slump" in reading comprehension caused by belowgrade vocabulary levels (Becker, 1977; Chall & Jacobs, 2003; Chall, Jacobs, & Baldwin, 1990). Until schools are prepared to emphasize vocabulary acquisition, especially in the primary grades, less advantaged children will continue to be handicapped even if they master reading written words.

Recent research has also shown that vocabulary and language skills are to a considerable degree quite separate from skills leading to word identification skills. Both Storch and Whitehurst (2002) and Dickinson, McCabe, Anastasopoulos, Peisner-Feinberg, and Poe (2003) have shown that two quite

different groups of variables affect reading acquisition during the preprimary and primary years: decoding skills and vocabulary.

Thus, there is clearly a need to address individual differences in vocabulary in the primary grades. During this period, differences in vocabulary size grow larger (Biemiller & Slonim, 2001). Although it is true that large language and vocabulary differences develop before kindergarten (Hart & Risley, 1995, 1999, 2003), current school practices allow further widening of vocabulary gaps during the primary years. The recent American No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 specifies attention to vocabulary in the primary grades, using “scientifically established” teaching methods. Unfortunately, unlike work on decoding and spelling, there is no established method of teaching vocabulary in the primary grades (National Reading Panel, 2000).

Becker (1977) suggested that the school emphasis on reading skills (word identification) in the early grades usually involves little challenging vocabulary. This is appropriate for reading instruction but provides little opportunity to build vocabulary. Low vocabulary results in problems for many middle elementary children’s reading comprehension. Those with restricted oral vocabularies comprehend at lower levels. Other studies have shown that (a) developed vocabulary size in kindergarten is an effective predictor of reading comprehension in the middle elementary years (Scarborough, 1998, 2001), (b) orally tested vocabulary at the end of Grade 1 is a significant predictor of reading comprehension 10 years later (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1997), and (c) children with restricted vocabulary by Grade 3 have declining comprehension scores in the later elementary years (Chall et al., 1990). In each of these studies, observed differences in vocabulary were related to later comprehension. None of these studies had any evidence that schooling was responsible for vocabulary size.

Concurrent correlations between vocabulary and reading comprehension are high. When a reading vocabulary–language test is correlated with a reading comprehension test, correlations are usually over .80 (Bloom, 1976). Teaching vocabulary can also affect reading comprehension. Studies summarized in the National Reading Panel (2000) showed that teaching text-specific vocabulary improved comprehension of texts (Carney, Anderson, Blackburn, & Blessing, 1984; Medo & Ryder, 1993; Wixson, 1986). In two studies (the second being a replication), general vocabulary instruction resulted in significantly increased reading comprehension (Beck, Perfetti, & McKeown, 1982; McKeown, Beck, Omanson, & Perfetti, 1983).

Unfortunately, several studies suggested that at present, primary school attendance is not a major source of vocabulary acquisition.

Age, not school experience, apparently affects vocabulary development. Cantalini (1987), Christian, Morrison, Frazier, and Massetti (2000), and Morrison, Smith, and Dow-Ehrensberger (1995) reported that, unlike early academic skills, vocabulary is affected by age but not by school experience in the primary years. Thus, the average vocabulary of relatively “old” kindergarten children and “young” Grade 1 children is similar. (They differ in school experience by a year but in age by 1 or 2 months.) Similarly, the average vocabulary of old Grade 1 children and young Grade 2 children is also about the same.

Although most primary language programs make reference to word meaning instruction, in fact few word meanings are actually identified for instruction—far fewer than would be needed to significantly impact vocabulary development. In Andrew Biemiller’s direct experience with both public and Catholic schools (as a teacher educator), word meaning instruction was uncommon, and, when implemented, far too few word meanings were discussed to have an impact on vocabulary development. During the current research, teachers objected to devoting as much as half an hour a day to vocabulary instruction.

In short, vocabulary levels diverge greatly during the primary years, and virtually nothing effective is done about this in schools.

It is true that some children arrive in kindergarten with less vocabulary than other children. Schools cannot change what happens before children start school. However, when children continue to acquire less vocabulary while in primary school, it becomes less likely that they can later catch up.

Educators' chances of successfully addressing vocabulary differences in school are greatest in the preschool and early primary years.

During the primary years, average children add an average of at least 840 root word meanings per year. Children in the lowest quartile add an average of 570 meanings per year during the same period (Biemiller, 2005). To have a useful impact on vocabulary growth, an intervention would need to add several hundred root word meanings per year. This is considerably more meanings than are presently addressed in classroom programs.

### Research Question

In order to tackle the problem of the research in a very consolidated way, the following research question has been formulated as follows:

RQ: Does oral story repetition have any effect on Iranian Intermediate EFL learners' word contextual meaning?

### Research Hypothesis

In order to answer the research question, the following null hypothesis has been formulated:

H0: oral story repetition does not have any effect on Iranian Intermediate EFL learners' word contextual meaning.

### Method

#### Participants

In the present research, the participants were chosen from a language institute. They are studying English at language institute. The participants of the current study were 80 students learning English. The participants with the age range of 14 to 18 years old. The level of their overall language proficiency was intermediate. In order to make sure that all learners are at the intermediate level and homogeneous, the researcher took Oxford Placement Test. Those students whose scores were 1 standard deviation above and below the mean took part in the current study.

#### Materials

To conduct the present investigation and to implement the process of data collection, the researcher used various tools including the OPT test of English language proficiency in order to measure the subjects' current status of proficiency level. A pre-test of word contextual meaning was given to the subjects to measure the subjects' initial differences in word-meanings test. And finally a post test of word contextual meaning was administered to both groups to find out the effectiveness of the treatment.

#### Procedure

A 60-item language proficiency test of *oxford placement test* were prepared and administered to 80 EFL subjects out of which, 44 were selected. For the purpose of selecting the homogenous participants those who scored 1 standard deviation above and below the mean took part in the current study. After that, they were randomly divided in two experimental and control groups (N=22).

Both groups sat for a pre-test of word contextual meaning. The purpose of this test was to assess the initial subject knowledge of the learners in word contextual meaning.

Then the control group received no treatment and approached the traditional method for teaching word contextual meaning and experimental group received treatment based on oral story repetition. The English teacher guided by scripted procedures read the stimulus story to the whole class four times.

Their classes held once a week for 45 minutes for 10 sessions. And the last step was the posttest of word contextual meaning in which the subjects' ability in both groups on the specific treatment program was assessed.

### Results

#### -Introduction

The previous chapter provided the explanation of the research design, instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis methodology. The main aim of this study was to explore whether an

experimental application of the oral story repetition could positively affect students' word contextual meaning. In this chapter, I will discuss the research question and hypothesis related to this problem. The mean scores of both the experimental and control group will be used to verify or reject the research hypothesis. In addition, a *t*-test and a one way analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) will be applied to see whether the differences were significant or not. The computer program called SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) will be used since it has been admitted by many researchers in the field as being the best program used for the analysis of results.

#### - Data analysis and findings

To answer the research question of the present research, the gathered data were analyzed in the following way:

The data obtained from testing the hypothesis of the study were analyzed via calculating a *t*-test between the posttest scores of the experimental and the control groups of the study and the one-way ANCOVA (Analysis of Covariance) between the pretest and the posttests of the experimental and the control group of the study. Such analysis was done using the SPSS software. Table (4.5) shows the descriptive analysis for the pretest and the posttest of word meanings in the experimental group of the study:

This study was experimental in nature and focused on impact of oral story repetition on Iranian Intermediate EFL learners' word contextual meaning. The resulting data that was in hand for analysis consisted of an OPT test, word contextual meaning scores (pre-and post test), and T-TEST. After scoring the test, the results were statistically analyzed to provide answer to the research question. The researcher used SPSS.

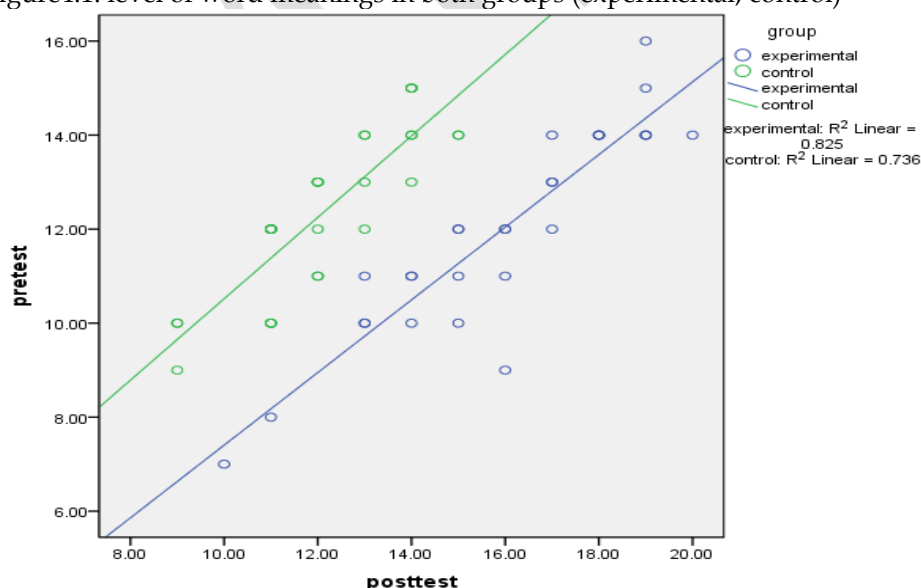
#### - Descriptive Analysis of the Data

To answer the research question of the research the following were employed: descriptive analysis (mean and standard deviation), inferential analysis, T-test and one way covariance (ANCOVA). Before conducting ANCOVA its hypotheses were defined to prove its effectiveness.

- 1: Existence of linear relationship between pre and posttest, which is calculated by analyzing the distribution between each couple of variables.
- 2: Equality of variance
- 3: Equality of regression

Table 4.1 indicates the existence of linear relationship between pre and post test.

Figure4.1. level of word meanings in both groups (experimental, control)



As the table indicates there is linear relationship between pre and posttest. Because regression lines are parallel. It means the relation between both groups is alike. The degree of correlation between depended variables is indicated in table 4.1.

Table 4.1. Correlation coefficient between word contextual meaning in pre and post test

Sig.	variables
0/009337	word contextual meaning (PRETEST)
P*<0/5	word contextual meaning (POSTTEST)

As the table indicates here, there are meaningful correlations between pre and post test. So, conducting ANCOVA is reasonable. The descriptive analysis of pre and post test and results of T-TEST in experimental group and control group is indicated in table 4.2 and 4.3.

Table4. 2. Descriptive analysis of pre and posttest in both groups

Group	Mean	Std. Deviation
Exp	16.87	1.885
Cont	8.73	1.335

As table indicates there is difference between mean of control group and mean of experimental group in pre-test and post test, which is meaningful( $F(1,28)=15/287$ ,  $p=0/001$ ).

Table4.3.The results of T-TEST to examine the differences between pre and post test in control and experimental group

Group	Mean	Std. Deviat ion	Std. Error Mean	T	Sig. (2-tailed)
Experimenta l	Posttest	8.60	1.724	.445	-69.945 .000
	Pretest	16.87	1.88478	.487	
Control	Posttest	8.33	1.234	.319	-1.468 .164
	Pretest	8.73	1.335	.345	

As table indicates there is difference between mean of control group and mean of experimental group in pre-test and post test, which is meaningful. It means there is a difference between results of pre and posttests in control and experimental group.

Table 4.4. Mean and adjusted means of word contextual meaning test in post test

Source	posttest	adjusted mean
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	M	SD	M	SE
Experimental	16.87	1.885	16.741 <sup>a</sup>	.213
control	8.73	1.335	8.859 <sup>a</sup>	.213

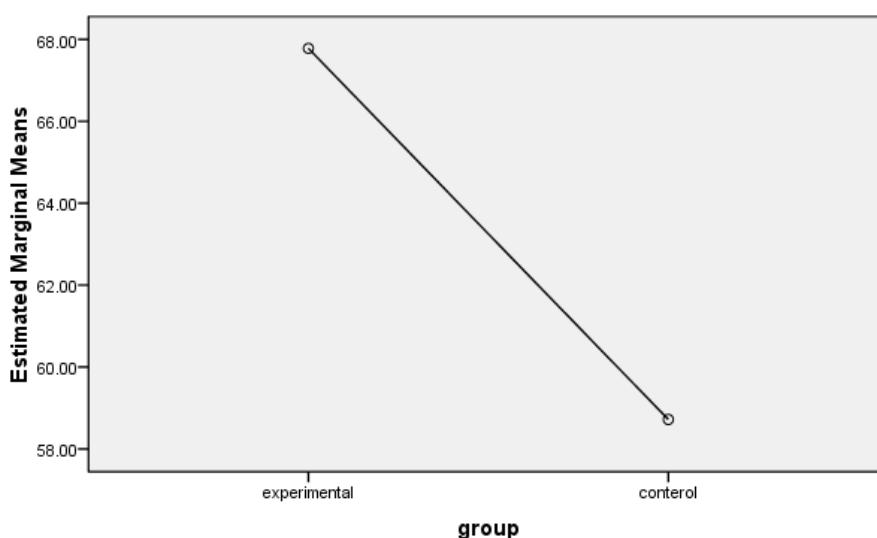
This table indicates adjusted means of word contextual meaning test in posttest. It means the effect of pre test is eliminated. These means indicate that mean in experimental group is higher than mean in control group. Summary of word contextual meaning covariance with elimination of mutual effect in both control and experimental group is indicated in table 4.5.

Table4.5. summary of word contextual meaning covariance with elimination of mutual effect in both groups

Eta	p	F	Mean	Sum	of	df	source	Variable
			Squar	Squares				
			e					
.962	.000	.679	6	461.920	461.920	1	Contrast	word
			7					me
			8	.680	18.350	27	Error	ani
								ngs

As the table indicates the degree of "F" is statistically meaningful ( $F(1,77)=679/678, P=/.000, \text{Eta}=.962$ ) that indicates in terms of word contextual meaning there are meaningful difference between experimental and control group. So, we can claim that oral story repetition affect students' word contextual meaning. Additional information can be obtained from graph 4.2. in this graph twofold levels of control and experimental variables are in horizontal axis and depended variables of post test are in vertical axis.

Figure4.2. means of word contextual meaning in post test in both groups



This graph indicates that there is a significant difference between word contextual meaning in experimental group and word contextual meaning in control group. Graph perfectly indicates that participants in experimental group, those who received oral story repetition, have higher word contextual meaning improving after posttest comparing to control group with lower ability.

### - Results of Hypothesis Testing

As mentioned earlier in chapter one, the research question of this study is:

Q1: Does oral story repetition have any effect on Iranian Intermediate EFL learners' word contextual meaning?

To answer the research question, the following assumption was formulated:

HO1: oral story repetition does not have any effect on Iranian Intermediate EFL learners' word contextual meaning.

According to the findings of the research based on the data in table 4.2, the study concluded that the null hypotheses as "oral story repetition does not have any effect on Iranian Intermediate EFL learners' word contextual meaning" was rejected, because there is a significant difference between students' mean scores in their pre-test and post-test in experimental group.

### Summary

This chapter explained the results of the study and defined the ways used to analyze the data and answered the research question of the research. The data analyses consisted of One-way ANCOVA, pre-test, posttest and T-tests and the relationship between pre and posttest of each group was calculated by Paired- Sample Test. regarding the hypothesis, it was made clear that oral story repetition affect Iranian EFL learners' word contextual meaning. The next chapter includes a discussion of the research in more details. It also presents an overview of the study, general discussion, implication of the study, limitations of the study, suggestions for further research and summary.

### Conclusion

The present study provided empirical evidence showing that oral story repetition can be a valuable classroom activity for EFL learners who often have relatively limited exposure to rich spoken English. One main finding is that multiple exposures combined with teachers' explanations of novel words did help EFL learners' vocabulary learning and might be crucial for less-able language learners. However, repeated exposure alone did not close the achievement gap between the high and low-proficiency groups. Given the less satisfactory word-learning gains for the low-proficiency children, this study corroborated previous research studies (Sonbul & Schmitt, 2010) suggesting that an ideal vocabulary instruction for EFL children should incorporate both the direct teaching of words (Laufer, 2003) and vocabulary learning through multiple opportunities to encounter novel words in authentic and interesting texts (Maynard, Pullen, & Coyne, 2010). Less-able children, in particular, are not likely to learn new words from just listening to stories. Literacy interventions studies have shown that at-risk children's word meanings is enhanced when a story read-aloud session incorporates both explicit vocabulary instruction and follow-up curricular activities that engaged learners in using the book-related words (Wasik, Bond, & Hindman, 2006); and these findings may also be applicable to the Intermediate EFL learners.

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# THE INVESTIGATION OF THE LEXICAL VARIATIONS IN SABZEVARI DIALECT AMONG THREE GENERATIONS

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## ABSTRACT

THIS STUDY AIMS AT INVESTIGATING THE LEXICAL VARIATIONS IN SABZEVARI DIALECT AMONG THREE GENERATIONS IN SABZEVAR DISTRICT, KHORASAN RAZAVI, IRAN. DATA COMES FROM A LIST OF 85 SEMANTIC UNITS (WORDS) IN SABZEVARI DIALECT, 43 OF WHICH DIFFER MORPHOLOGICALLY, AND 42 OF WHICH DIFFER PHONOLOGICALLY FROM THE STANDARD DIALECT, AMONG THREE GENERATIONS OF INFORMANTS: OLD GENERATION (4 INFORMANTS IN THE AGE RANGE OF 60-80), MIDDLE GENERATION (4 INFORMANTS IN THE AGE RANGE OF 35-45), AND YOUNG GENERATION (4 INFORMANTS IN THE AGE RANGE OF 10-18). THE FREQUENCIES OF THE USE OF WORDS IN SABZEVARI DIALECT BY EACH GENERATION ARE TABULATED. FINALLY, CHI-SQUARE TEST OF GOODNESS OF FIT IS CONDUCTED TO INVESTIGATE THE DIFFERENCE IN THE OBSERVED FREQUENCY OF WORDS IN SABZEVARI DIALECT UTTERED BY THREE GENERATIONS IN EACH CATEGORY. THE RESULTS SHOW THAT THE FIRST GENERATION GENERALLY USED SEMANTIC UNITS IN SABZEVARI DIALECT THE MOST, WHEREAS THE THIRD GENERATION USED IT THE LEAST. THE YOUNG GENERATION USED WORDS IN STANDARD PERSIAN MORE THAN THE OTHER GROUPS. THE RESULT IS RELATED TO DIALECT LEVELING PHENOMENON.

**KEY WORDS:** SABZEVARI DIALECT, SEMANTIC UNITS, THREE GENERATIONS

## 1. Introduction

Sabzevar is a city in Khorasan Razavi province in northeastern Iran. It is surrounded by Nishabur from east, Esfaryen from north, Shahrood from west and Bardaskan from south in Khorasan Razavi province. It is approximately 220 kilometres west of Mashhad, the capital of the province. After Mongols' attack to Iran, Sabzevar was called Sarbedaran for a while in honor of Sarbedaran, the defendants of the city. It was also called Beihagh. Sabzevari dialect- which is a variety of modern western Iranian dialects- is the dialect spoken by most people in Sabzevar.

Several researchers investigated the phenomena of dialect leveling, the loss of localized features in urban and rural varieties. Some studies demonstrated regional dialect leveling in Britain. Kreswill (2003) mentioned that leveling can only apply in cases where there is high mobility within a relatively compact area (e.g. a new town), with a consequent high probability that individuals will have contact with others throughout the area.

The present study focuses on the comparison of the use of semantic units in Sabzevari dialect among three generations differing in the age range. The semantic units in this dialect are compared to the standard Persian, a variety used in print broadcasts, news and taught in the educational systems, e.g. schools and universities. It is the variety which elite and educated people use. It is also considered the prestigious dialect which speakers of other dialects try to use. In the present study, the age factor is the independent variable and the semantic units used by the groups are the dependent variable. So, the following question is to be answered in this study:

Is there any difference in the use of semantic units in Sabzevari dialect among there generations differing in age range?

The findings of this study are useful in illuminating the significance of age in dialect leveling phenomena.

## 2. Review of Literature

Dialect is a combination of pronunciations of words, forms of words and grammatical features shared by people of the same region and of the same social background. Each region has different combinations (dialect) differing from those of other regions and backgrounds (Trudgill, 1994; Wardhaugh, 1993).

People who live in different regions differing in land structures\_ mountains, hills, deserts, green lands\_ have different dialects. So, when there are several geographical environments and surfaces in a community, they will be divided into several parts evolving several different dialects. That is, the way of speaking of people is affected by the region in which they accommodate (Naja, 1961).

Trudgill (2000:155) used the term dialect leveling to refer to "the leveling out of differences between one dialect and another". Kerswill (2006) defined it as a situation in which the differences between accents or dialects are decreased, and distinctive feature in a dialect disappear, and new features, instead, are used by speakers of the dialect. Dialects are often affected by the contact with each other. The contact with another dialect can be due to some factors such as the exchange of services and goods, the immigration for finding better economic opportunities, and religious and political reasons (Vendryes, 1950). When there is contact with another dialect, most often it is the prestigious and more powerful dialect which is maintained.

Language standardization is another phenomenon which tries to eliminate diversities and differences among dialects. Coulmas (2005:79) defines it as "a process which involves the readjustment of speakers' choice over time". It can be related to the Bell's audience design theory (1984) which explains why linguistic forms are diffused from one variety to another. Speakers of dialects may design their speech to accommodate those of their interlocutor speaking in the standard dialect. So, they may take on new linguistic features into their repertoire. As Trudgill (1986) mentioned, this diffusion of linguistic forms between two speakers can lead to increased variability within a dialect.

Ghafar Samar, Navidinia and Mehrani (2010) conducted a study on globalization, standardization, and dialect leveling in Iran. They mentioned some factors affecting the process of dialect leveling and standardization in Iran. The first factor was the fact that Iran is moving toward modernization, which one of its feature is urbanization. As urbanization increases, some people emigrate from their regions to urban areas. Therefore, they should modify their own dialect to facilitate communication with others. Since, in communication, speakers attempt to accommodate their speech to that of their addressee. Thus, dialect contact lead to dialect leveling. The second factor was the fact that Iran's educational system is monolingual and monodialectal. All of the books are written in standard Persian. Furthermore, standard Persian is used for communication and teaching in the classes. The reason for using just standard variety in education system, rather than other existing varieties, is that policy makers try to unify the country. The third factor was the role of mass media. The medium of communication in most of the channels of TV and radio in Iran is the standard variety of language. Therefore, it affects peoples' speech patterns and results in the modification of Persian dialects toward the standard one.



Some of the changes of dialects among generations are related to age factor. Coulmas (2005) talked about two reasons concerning this change. He first mentioned that during the time, the communication needs of interlocutors change. Therefore, generations should adjust their dialects to cope with their surrounding changing world. Second, during the time, the communication abilities and needs of each generation differ from those of others. Thus, the generations should adjust their dialects to fulfill their needs and facilitate communication with each other.

Modarresi (1989) investigated the occurrence of the final /e/ sound in the speech of a number of Persian speakers in both Tehran and Qazvin. Occurrence of /e/ at the end of Persian words is one of the features of Tehrani Persian. Therefore, it is more prestigious. He found that the final /e/ is found more in the speech of those Qazvini informants who are younger and more educated.

Some studies investigated the process of dialect leveling in other countries. Kerswill (2003) considered English. He mentioned that non-linguistic factors, especially contact among speakers of different dialects, and social-psychological factors arising from that contact, facilitate the rate and social patterning of the change. He considered non-linguistic factors more effective than linguistic one. Chejne (1969:34) studied the speakers of the various dialects of Arabic. He found that people speaking different varieties face little difficulties in understanding each other, since there are a lot of features shared in these dialects. The existence of these common features is due to the fact that Standard Arabic is being used in teaching, the mass media, broadcast, books, etc. His finding showed a decrease in the effects of geographical barriers which usually have made communication difficult for Arabs.

Maryprasith (1991) studied the aged-based variation of the Linguistic transition area between central Thai and southern Thai. According to him, age is an important factor in determining language variation, leading the linguistic transition area between central Thai and southern. Liamprawat (2011) studied the lexical variations among three generations of Tai Dam speakers. The results of his study showed that the first generation used Tai Dam the most, whereas the third generation used Tai Dam the least. The young generation used lexical in central Thai more than the other groups. The young generation used only lexical in standard Thai or lexical in central Thai together with lexical in Tai Dam.

There is a gap in the literature concerning the dialect leveling and lexical variation in dialects spoken in Iran, focusing on age factor.

### 3. Research Method

In this section, the design of the study, the participants, the data collection procedures and the data analysis procedures are explained, respectively.

#### 3.1. Design

The design of the study is mixed method. First, there was a qualitative investigation of the semantic units (differed from the standard units) in the speech of individuals in the old generation. Then, chi-square test of goodness of fit was conducted to see the differences in the observed frequencies.

#### 3.2. Participants

The participants consisted of 12 individuals belonging to different generations. The first generation consisted of 4 elderly in the age range of 60 to 80, the second generation consisted of 4 adults in the age range of 35 to 45, and the third generation consisted of 4 adolescences in the age range of 10 to 18.

#### 3.3. Data collection procedure

The researcher participated as an observer participant. She listened attentively to the utterances spoken by four elderly who were native- born and raised up in Sabzevar-and presented clear articulation. She juttet down 85 words in Sabzevari dialect which those individuals used in their speech. Then, the researcher observed four adults in the second generation and four adolescences in the third generations longitudinally. She investigated those specific 85 recorded vocabulary and concepts produced by the first generation in the speech of the second and the third generations.

### 3.4. Data analysis procedures

The semantic units (words) used in Sabzevari dialect by three generations were investigated. The frequencies of their occurrence by each generation were tabulated. Then, a chi-square test of goodness of fit was conducted to investigate the differences in the observed frequency of words in Sabzevari dialect uttered by three generations in each category.

### 4. Results

The semantic units used in Sabzevari dialect were categorized into two different classes: those differed morphologically from the standard dialect (Persian), and those differed phonologically from the standard dialect. They were presented in table 1 and table 2, respectively. The frequencies of the use of each word in Sabzevari dialect by each generation (FG1, FG2 and FG3) were also mentioned in these tables.

Table1. Words from Sabzevari dialect differed morphologically from the standard dialect

Semantic unit	Standard dialect	Sabzevari dialect	FG1	FG2	FG3	Semantic unit	Standard dialect	Sabzevari dialect	FG1	FG2	FG3
steam	bəkhar a:b	khəvis	4	1	0	gloves	dæstkəʃ	Æljæk	4	0	0
clamsy	dæstə pa tʃələfti	dæstə paməraɲ	4	2	1	walnuts	gərdu	jə:z	4	3	2
leek	tærə	gəndənai	4	3	0	bee	Zənbur	dənd	4	3	1
dresser	kəməd	əʃkæf	4	4	3	sticky	nutʃ	ələftʃ	4	3	2
tomato	gojə færaɲi	Bamanur	4	3	0	pigeon	ya kəri:m	musat təghi	4	3	3
lethargic	bi ha:l	kələr	4	4	2	bucket	Sətl	du:l	4	0	0
lizard	ma:rmulæk	kəlpəsə	4	2	0	hanging	Avizan	dələn gou:	4	3	1
shavings	khəʃa:k	khələʃə	4	2	0	sieve	Ælək	ʃəhri:	4	3	0
dizzy	gij	kələvəɲ	4	3	2	tray	si:ni	dəuri	4	0	0
nose	bini:	nəs	4	3	3	pants	ʃəlvær	təmbun	4	3	1
jar	kuzə	təngəli	4	3	0	mouth	dəhæn	Lək	4	0	0
carpet	færʃ	pələ:s	4	3	0	pool	hə:z	dəritʃə	4	3	0
bread box	Səndugh na:n	təkhtə mək	4	0	0	story	dəstæn	əusənə	4	0	0
beetle	Susk	əudəzdu	4	3	1	sparrow	gənjəʃk	tʃəghək	4	3	3
slippers	dəmpai:	naʃlein	4	0	0	bag	ki:sə	khəltə	4	0	0
bath tubs	təʃt həmum	məʃrəbə	4	0	0	mattress	tətʃæk	nəli:	4	3	0
apron	pifbənd	lərbənd	4	3	1	bunch	khufə	tələzg	4	0	0
strainer	a:b kəʃ	tʃələ safi	4	0	0	necklace	Gərdənbənd	khəfti:	4	0	0
cricket	jir jiræk	sik sikunæk	4	0	0	too much	tʃəghædr ziad	yu:k	4	4	4
insects	həʃərə	Jəmændə jumur	4	3	3	centipede	həzær pa:	guʃ khəzinu	4	0	0
flower bed	baghtʃə	khəvər	4	3	2	beak	nək	tʃi:ɲ	4	3	2
curd	kəʃk	ghəri:t	4	2	0						

Table2. Words from Sabzevari dialect differed phonologically from the standard dialect

Semantic	Standar	Sabzevari	FG1	FG2	FG3	Semantic	Standard	Sabzevari	FG1	FG2	FG3
----------	---------	-----------	-----	-----	-----	----------	----------	-----------	-----	-----	-----

unit	d dialect	dialect				unit	dialect	dielect			
home	khanə	khænə	4	4	3	go	bərə	Bara	4	3	2
pot	di:g	dæg	4	4	2	bowl	kasə	kæsə	4	3	0
pants	ʃælvar	ʃəlvar	4	3	1	chick	jujə	Ji:jə	4	3	1
hello	Salam	Sulam	4	4	0	broth	a:b gu:ʃt	əu gu:ʃt	4	4	1
gloves	dæstkəʃ	distkəʃ	4	3	1	bicycle	dotʃærkhə	ditʃærkhə	4	3	3
book	kətab	kətab	4	4	1	pillow	baləʃt	bələʃt	4	4	1
water	a:b	əu:	4	3	1	dress	pirhæn	pærhæn	4	4	2
lice	ʃepəʃ	ʃi:piʃ	4	4	3	cage	ghæfæs	ghəfæs	4	4	0
damaged	khærab	khərab	4	4	2	rope	tənab	tənab	4	4	1
shoulder	ʃanə	ʃənə	4	4	3	squash	kædu	kudi:	4	3	0
class	kəlas	kəlas	4	4	1	thyme	aviʃæn	aviʃu:	4	3	1
train	ghætar	ghətar	4	4	1	finger	ængəʃt	əngu:ʃt	4	3	1
sound	səda	səda	4	4	2	say	bəgu	baga	4	4	2
box	jaʃbə	jaʃbə	4	4	0	tooth	dændun	dændun	4	4	4
blanket	pətu:	pətu:	4	3	1	shoe	kæʃ	kəʃ	4	3	1
salt	nəmæk	nəmæk	4	3	3	scream	ji:gh	Jegh	4	3	3
refrigerator	yækhtʃal	yəkhtʃal	4	3	2	mad	diva:nə	divænə	4	4	3
fork	tʃæŋgal	tʃiŋgal	4	3	1	cool	khənæk	khənək	4	4	3
light	tʃəragh	tʃəragh	4	3	0	cabbage	kælæm	kælæm	4	3	3
television	təlviziun	tili:viziun	4	3	4	potato	sib	sib	4	3	3
green	səbz	Sauz	4	3	3	mildew	pi:s	Pəs	4	4	3

Table 3 shows the observed frequencies of the occurrence of semantic units of Sabzevari dialect in the speech of the mentioned three generations. To see if there was a difference among the frequencies of the use of Sabzevari dialect's semantic units among three generations, chi-square test for goodness of fit was conducted. As it is evident in table 4, this test shows that there is a significant difference in the identified frequencies of the occurrence of semantic units in Sabzevari dialect which are different morphologically from the standard dialect in the speech of the three generations (Chi-square (2) =86.80,  $p < .000$ ).

Table3. Total frequency of occurrence of semantic units in Sabzevari dialect in the speech of each generation

	First generation	Second generation	Third generation
Semantic units differed morphologically from the standard dialect	164	84	37
Semantic units differed phonologically from the standard dialect	168	147	73

As it is evident in table 3, the first generation more frequently used semantic units of sabzevari dialect which differed morphologically from the standard dialect, and the third generation used the least.

Table4. Chi-square test regarding the occurrence of semantic units different morphologically from the standard dialect in the speech of the three generations

chi-square	86.80
df	2
sig.	.000

Table 5 shows the result of chi-square regarding the occurrence of semantic units which were different phonologically from the standard dialect in the speech of the three generations. As it is evident, there was a significant difference in the identified frequencies (Chi-square (2) =38.51,  $p < .000$ ).

Table5. Chi-square test regarding the occurrence of semantic units different phonologically from the standard dialect in the speech of the three generations

chi-square	38.51
df	2
sig.	.000

As it is evident in table 3, the first generation more frequently used semantic units of Sabzevari dialect, which differed phonologically from the standard dialect, and the third generation used them the least.

## 5. Discussion

The results of the study showed dialect leveling phenomenon. It is consistent with the results of studies conducted by Liamprawat (2011), Kerswill (2003), Chejne (1969) and Maryprasith (1991). The younger group used semantic units in Sabzevari dialect less than the older group. This phenomenon could be related to Ghafarsamar's (2010) claim regarding Iran's educational system which is monolingual and monodialectal. That is, all of the books are written in standard Persian. Furthermore, standard Persian is used for communication and teaching in the classes. The reason for using just standard variety in education system, rather than other existing varieties, is that policy makers try to unify the country. He also mentioned the effect of mass media. The medium of communication in most of the channels of TV and radio in Iran is the standard variety of language. Therefore, it affects peoples' speech patterns and results in the modification of Persian dialects toward the standard one. Coulmas (2005) mentioned two reasons concerning the age related change in a dialect. According to him, during the time, the communication needs of interlocutors change. Therefore, generations should adjust their dialects to cope with their surrounding changing world. During the time, the communication abilities and needs of each generation differ from those of others. Thus, the generations should adjust their dialects to fulfill their needs and facilitate communicating with each other. Furthermore, when young people are communicating with others speaking in standard dialect, they accommodate their speech to the standard and prestigious dialect (Bell, 1984; Kerswill, 2006).

## 6. Conclusion

In this study, the use of semantic units in Sabzevari dialect which were different morphologically and phonologically from the standard dialect among three generation (differing in age range) was investigated. As it is shown, Sabzevari speakers belonging to the first generation (older informants in the age range of 60-80 years old) used more semantic units in Sabzevari dialect which were different both morphologically and phonologically from the standard dialect in their speech. The second generation (in the age range of 35-45 years old) used less semantic units in Sabzevari dialect than the first generation, but more semantic units in Sabzevari dialect than the third generation. Finally, the third generation (in the age range of 10-18 years old) used the least semantic units in Sabzevari dialect which differed both morphologically and phonologically from the standard dialect among the generations.

The implication of this study concerns consciousness raising. Curriculum developers, teachers, parents and students may be made cautious concerning the gap in the use of semantic units among different generations in a dialect. Curriculum developers and teachers may present and explain dialect leveling through providing some examples on the semantic units of older generations which are forgotten. Therefore, students will be caution concerning the phenomenon. And, this phenomenon might be prevented if it is explicitly emphasized and explained.

Some recommendations are provided for further studies. First, this study can be replicated in investigating the use of semantic units among different generations in other dialects. Second, a comparative study can be conducted to investigate the use of units among different generations in different dialects. Third, a questionnaire can be developed and distributed among the generations speaking a specific dialect. Their views regarding the change and the gap among the generations concerning the use of dialect can be investigated. Fourth, this study investigated the effect of age in lexical variation in a dialect. Some other studies can investigate the effect of other factors such as the level of education and sex on lexical variation in a dialect.

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# WHICH TYPE OF FEEDBACK IS MORE CONDUCTIVE TO BETTER WRITING ACHIEVEMENT? COMPUTER- ASSISTED, PEER OR TEACHER FEEDBACK?

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## ABSTRACT

THIS STUDY AIMED AT INVESTIGATING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF TEACHER, PEER, AND COMPUTER-ASSISTED FEEDBACK ON IRANIAN EFL LEARNERS' WRITING ACHIEVEMENT. TO THIS END, A TYPE OF QUASI- EXPERIMENTAL DESIGN, I.E. THE NON-RANDOMIZED CONTROL GROUP PRE-TEST POST-TEST DESIGN, WAS APPLIED, WHERE THREE EXPERIMENTAL GROUPS, FOR THE THREE TYPES OF FEEDBACK AS TREATMENTS, AND A CONTROL GROUP WERE POSTULATED IN THE INVESTIGATION INTO THE EFFECTS OF THREE TYPES OF FEEDBACK. EACH GROUP INCLUDED ABOUT 30 STUDENTS, WHOSE WRITINGS WERE INITIALLY INTER-RATED PRIOR TO THE TREATMENTS, THEN WERE COLLECTED AND RESPONDED THROUGHOUT THE 8-SESSION TREATMENTS, AND FINALLY WERE INTER-RATED AGAIN AT THE END OF THE SEMESTER. THE RESULTS OF THE ONE-WAY BETWEEN GROUPS ANOVA INDICATED A STATISTICALLY SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE WRITING SCORES OF THE FOUR GROUPS WITH RESPECT TO THE TYPE OF FEEDBACK THEY RECEIVED. MOREOVER, THE RESULTS OF PAIRED SAMPLES T-TEST SHOWED A STATISTICALLY SIGNIFICANT INCREASE IN ALL THE FOUR WITHIN-GROUP WRITING SCORES FROM PRETEST TO POSTTEST. FURTHERMORE, THE TEA SQUARED STATISTICS YIELDED AN EFFECT SIZE FOR EACH GROUP, ATTRIBUTING 40% OF THE WHOLE WRITING-SCORE VARIANCE TO TEACHER FEEDBACK, 23% TO COMPUTER- ASSISTED FEEDBACK, 21% TO PEER FEEDBACK, AND 16% TO WRITING INSTRUCTION WITH NO FEEDBACK.

**KEYWORDS:** COMPUTER, FEEDBACK, PEER, TEACHER, WRITING

## Introduction & Background

The term feedback has been used under the titles of "negative evidence" in Second Language Acquisition studies; "repair" in discourse studies; or "negative feedback" in psychology; and finally "corrective feedback" (CF) in teaching methodology practice (Ghafarsamar & Shayestehfar, 2010). There has been a bulk of research on the effects and role of written feedback on second or foreign language writing proficiency (Ferris, 1999, 1997, 1995; Ferris et al., 1997; Bitchener & Knoch, 2009a; 2009b; Bitchener et al., 2005; Caffarella & Barnett, 2000; Chandler, 2003; Guenette,

2007; Truscott, 1996, 2007; Truscott & Hsu, 2008; Montgomery & Baker, 2007). Yet, there exists an ongoing debate among scholars and researchers regarding the best way to provide feedback and its various domains. Truscott (1996, 2008), for instance, vacillated over the effectiveness of grammatical corrective feedback on writing achievement and even considered it harmful to the process of writing proficiency development over time. Others, however, like Ferris (1997, 1999) and Chandler (2003) acknowledged the importance of corrective feedback in the process of language learning. Guenette (2007) suggested that the conflicting results of the studies in the field are brought about out of deploying different designs and methodologies. Similarly, Ferris (2004) underscored the inconsistencies inherent in the designs as the reason behind such divergent conclusions.

In the past decades, a great bulk of research has been conducted on the teacher written feedback and its impact on L2 student writings. The studies are largely concerned with the main types, and the characteristics of the feedback along with student reactions to the feedback, or the impact of teacher written feedback, signifying that feedback is still an essential element of a process approach to writing. Studies on feedback in relation to writing performance and accuracy have ranged from feedback source, function, focus, strategy, to feedback media. Examples of studies on feedback source, including teacher, peer, and self, were conducted by Jacobs et al. (1998); Keh (1990); Min (2006); Tsui and Ng (2000); and Zhang (1995). Studies on feedback function, including informative and corrective feedback, were conducted by, Fazio, (2001); Ferris and Roberts (2001); Frantzen, (1995); and Hyland and Hyland (2001) among others.

Despite the fact that the previous studies have confirmed the impact of peer feedback on L2 writing revisions and development (de Guerrero & Villamil, 2000; Hosseiny, 2015; Hu, 2005; Khorasani & Sadzadeh, 2015; Marzban & Sarjami, 2014; Soleimani & Jamzivar, 2014; Tsui & Ng, 2000; Zarei & SayarMahdavi, 2014), and these studies also have shown that students' attitudes towards peer feedback play a central role in its application and effectiveness (Connor & Asenavage, 1994; Nelson & Carson, 1998; Yang et al., 2006; Zhao, 2010; Zhu & Mitchell, 2012), whether to use peer feedback as a learning activity and how to use it depends on the teachers rather than students in writing classes. During the past two decades, the use of multimedia technology for foreign language classes has expanded quickly. There are many studies on the influence of technology-based instruction on language learning (Abrams, 2002; Al-Jarf, 2004; Blasszauer, 2001; Brandl, 2002; Chikamatsu, 2003; Jogan, Heredia, & Aguilera, 2001; Meskill & Anthony, 2005; Muehleisen, 1997; Osuna & Meskill, 1998; Salaberry, 2001; Schwienhorst, 2004; Warschauer, 1995, 2000; Weininger & Shield, 2003; Yang, 2001). Previous studies have revealed that computer-mediated language learning can facilitate interaction, reduce anxiety, encourage oral discussion, foster cooperative learning, increase student motivation, facilitate cross-cultural awareness, and improve writing skills. However, the literature indicates that there is a problem that teachers as well as students see feedback in isolation from other parts of the teaching and learning process, and consider feedback to be largely a teacher-owned endeavor (Taras, 2003). Also, the literature shows that the feedback process is most effective when all the participants are actively involved in the process.

The effectiveness of feedback on writing errors has received much attention from researchers as they have tried to determine how the correction of L2 writing influences learners' grammatical development (e.g., Storch, 2010; Truscott, 1996, 2001, 2004, 2007a, 2007b), particularly in short-term cross-sectional studies (e.g., Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Suh, 2010). The underlying assumption in these studies is that when learners incorporate feedback on grammar into their L2 writings, their future grammar usage is enhanced and maintained in their subsequent writings (Bitchener & Ferris, 2012; Bitchener & Knoch, 2010a, 2010b; Ferris, 1999, 2012; Ferris, Hsiang, Sinha, & Senna, 2013; Lee, 2011; Sheen, 2010; van Beuningen, de Jong, & Kuiken, 2012). Unfortunately, developmental changes in L2 grammar are unlikely to occur unless learners are ready to process (Ellis, 1990; O'Grady, 2005; Oshita, 2000; Pienemann & Kessler, 2011; Schmidt, 1990; Taerner, 2014; Towell & Hawkins, 1994), use, and maintain a grammatical feature with minimal instructional intervention of feedback (Andringa, de Gloppe, & Hacquebord, 2011).

### Theoretical Framework

According to Dinnen and Collopy (2009), "One way to help student achievement improve is by giving effective feedback as it serves as a way in which a teacher communicates to students the difference between his or her actual level of performance with the standard or goal" (p. 240). It is evident from this quotation that providing learners with feedback is deemed to be one of the most significant tasks which teachers should attempt to undertake in their writing classes (Hyland, 2003). Hyland (1990) highlighted this notion, and stated that L2 "students are often anxious about writing, and need to be encouraged to see it as a means of learning, rather than demonstrating learning" (p. 285). Having this in mind, it can be concluded that learners' writing should be improved through pedagogical strategies followed by the classroom teacher, among which feedback can be one of the most influencing contributions in writing classes.

### Objectives of the Study

The present research was mainly after investigating the effectiveness of teacher, peer, and computer-assisted feedback on Iranian EFL learners' writing achievement. In other words, this study intended to specify among the three types of feedback the one which is more conducive to Iranian EFL learners' better proficiency in academic writing. In particular, this investigation was an endeavor to answer the following research questions.

- Is there any significant difference among the effects of the three types of feedback approaches, i.e. teacher, peer, and computer-assisted, on Iranian EFL students' writing proficiency? Which type of feedback has the largest effect? Which approach has the least significant effect?

### Method

This study was a quantitative research, with a quasi-experimental study design. The type of the quasi-experimental design applied in this study was the nonrandomized control group, pretest-posttest design (Ary, Jacobs, Soresen, and Razavieh, 2010), where three experimental groups, for the three types of feedback as treatments, and a control group were postulated in its investigation into the effects of three types of feedback approaches, i.e. teacher, peer, and computer-assisted feedback.

### Participants

The participants of the study were four groups of Iranian EFL students (both male and female) from Bahar Language Institute in Shiraz, Iran. Their age range was 19 to 25. Each class contained from 25 to 30 students. Since randomization was not possible, the classes which were used as the research site were intact. Four classes randomly assigned to the three experimental groups and the control group. They were all at intermediate level of proficiency based on their scores on OPT test which they took before attending the writing classes.

### Instruments

The 100-grammar-item Oxford Placement Test (OPT) was the first instrument used in this study to determine the proficiency level of the participants prior to the treatment.). Also, American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) (2012) was utilized as writing proficiency assessment guidelines to evaluate students' writings in the pre- and post-tests as well as during the treatment period. The ACTFL proficiency guidelines are descriptions of what individuals can do with language in terms of speaking, writing, listening, and reading. Moreover, Automated Essay Scoring (AES) software was applied for scoring purposes in the third experimental group, i.e. computer-assisted feedback. Furthermore, Writing Planet™ Software was used as the source of feedback to students' writing assignments in the third experimental group. Writing Planet gave this opportunity to students to practice writing while getting constructive feedback. As soon as students submitted their essays, they received six separate scores, one for each of the major writing traits, in addition to the written comments.

### Data Collection Procedures

Each of the three experimental groups received a pre-test and a post-test on writing proficiency. Also, each of them received a type of feedback as its treatment, i.e. teacher feedback in the first group, peer feedback in the second group, and computer-assisted feedback in the third group. The syllabus in the three treatment groups/classes was based on the book "Paragraph Development." The data was collected through a period of 8 sessions throughout one month period. Classes were held regularly two sessions a week for about 90 minutes. Learners in the teacher-feedback group followed the customary procedure in ordinary classes; i.e. students received instruction in the classroom and developed their own paragraphs and teacher gave comments or written corrective feedback which was sometimes accompanied by short oral debriefing when students' writings were handed back to them. This was done with regard to the organizational and grammatical aspects of students' writings. In the peer-feedback group, students were provided with guidelines by their instructor on how to provide feedback to their learners based on a pre-designed peer feedback form. This was done prior to the treatment to make sure that students know what they were supposed to do. In brief, the class time was divided to two phases in this group: in phase 1 (40 to 45 minutes) students received the instruction and did the writing tasks; in phase 2 (30 to 45 minutes) students swapped their papers and commented on their peers' writings based on peer feedback form. During this phase peers had the opportunity to communicate and discuss the points on the completion of the feedback forms. It must also be mentioned that students received feedback on their writings from a different peer in the classroom on a random basis.

In the computer-assisted-feedback group students worked on the same syllabus as the two previous groups, however, the environment of the classroom was a technology-enhanced learning environment and students worked with Writing Planet software. They fed in their final writings into the software and the feedback was automatically given to them on the computer screen. The class time was divided into two phases: in phase 1, students received instruction from the teacher and related tutorials; in phase 2 students were asked to write their paragraphs and submit their writings to Writing Planet. They could immediately see their errors and read the software feedback on their writing. This phase was done with the teacher's supervision and monitoring and students' possible questions related to the feedback provided by the software were answered during the process. It is also worth mentioning that the instruction and feedback students received were in English in the three experimental groups. In sum, the students' writing proficiency was assessed prior to and after the treatments. The writings were rated by two raters to account for the reliability of ratings. The students' writings throughout the study were collected and responded to by peers, teacher, and computer, and at the end of the academic term, students' writings were assessed and scored again by the same two raters, based on ACTFL proficiency guidelines, to check for the effects of the three types of feedback types on students writing proficiency.

### Data Analysis Procedures

Using histogram, the normality of distributions for students' scores on pretest and posttest was presented. To do so, the data were fed into SPSS® software to check for the significance and relationships which surfaced after data analysis. In order to answer the research question regarding feedback types and students' achievements in writing, one-way between-groups ANOVA procedure was utilized to analyze the data. In order to conduct the one-way between-groups ANOVA, feedback methods were considered as the independent variable and students' writing score was the dependent variable. Each group's performance from pretest to posttest was compared separately using paired samples t-test to see to what extent each group performance have been improved. Furthermore, the eta squared statistic was used to yield an effect size for each group, attributing an extent of the whole writing-score variance to each type of feedback for comparison.

### Results

Since the underlying assumption of the statistical procedure used to answer the research question of the study is normality of distribution, the relevant information was presented first. The following histograms present the information regarding the normality distribution of the pretest data in all groups, i.e. control group (Group 1), teacher-feedback group (Group 2), peer-feedback group (Group 3), and computer-assisted-feedback group (Group 4).

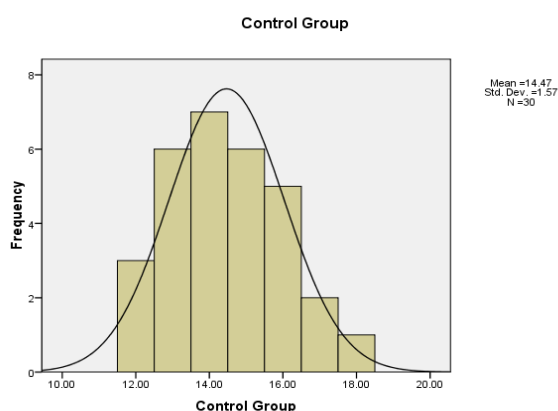


Figure 1. Control Group Pretest (Group 1)

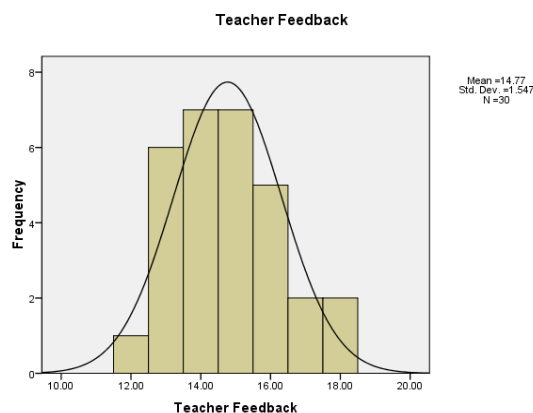


Figure 2. Teacher-Feedback Pretest (Group 2)

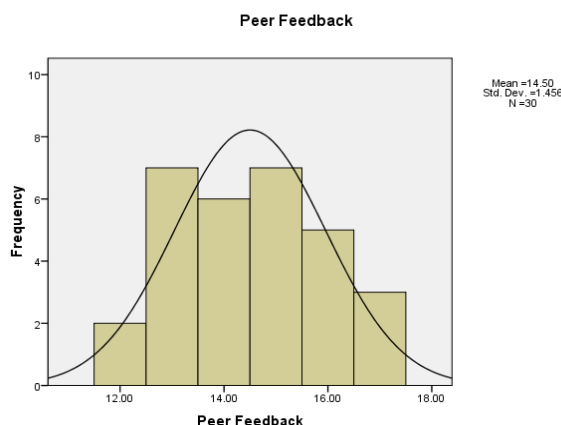


Figure 3. Peer-Feedback Pretest (Group 3)

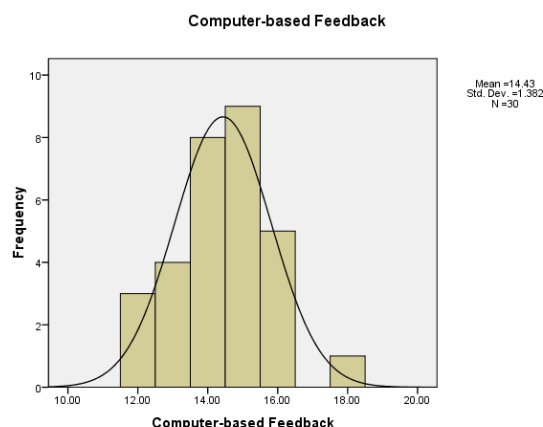


Figure 4. Computer-Feedback Pretest (Group 4)

As it can be seen from the figures above, the distribution of the students' writing score on pretest for the four groups is fairly symmetrical. In other words, the scores are reasonably normally distributed, with most scores occurring in the center, tapering out towards the extremes. In order to answer the first research question of the study, one-way between-groups analysis of variance was carried out. Feedback methods were the independent variable and students' writing score was the dependent variable.

Table 1. One-way Between-Groups Analysis of Variance for the Four Groups

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	21.425	3	7.142	5.96	.001
Within Groups	138.900	116	1.197		
Total	160.325	119			



As Table 1 indicates, there is a statistically significant difference at the  $p < .05$  level in writing scores for the four groups:  $F(3,116) = 5.96$ ,  $p = .001$ . Using eta squared, the effect size was 0.13. This would be considered a rather moderate effect size using Cohen (1988, as cited in Pallant, 2001, p.175) criteria of .01=small effect, .06=moderate effect, .14=large effect. However, it is not clear which two groups are different from each other. Therefore, Scheffe test was conducted to elucidate the difference between groups.

**Table 2. Scheffe Test of the Four Groups**

(I) feedback	(J) feedback	Mean	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
		Difference (I-J)			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Group1	Group 2	-1.10000*	.28254	.003	-1.9016	-.2984
	Group 3	-.16667	.28254	.951	-.9682	.6349
	Group 4	-.30000	.28254	.771	-1.1016	.5016
Group 2	Group 1	1.10000*	.28254	.003	.2984	1.9016
	Group 3	.93333*	.28254	.015	.1318	1.7349
	Group 4	.80000	.28254	.051	-.0016	1.6016
Group 3	Group 1	.16667	.28254	.951	-.6349	.9682
	Group 2	-.93333*	.28254	.015	-1.7349	-.1318
	Group 4	-.13333	.28254	.974	-.9349	.6682
Group 4	Group 1	.30000	.28254	.771	-.5016	1.1016
	Group 2	-.80000	.28254	.051	-1.6016	.0016
	Group 3	.13333	.28254	.974	-.6682	.9349

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

Table 2 presents the results of post hoc comparisons using Scheffe Test. As the table indicates, the mean score for Group 2 which received teacher feedback was significantly different from Group 1 and 3. Table 3 clearly represents the difference that exists between the writing score of participants with respect to the type feedback they received.

**Table 3. Significant Differences between the Four Feedback Types**

Groups (Types of Feedback)	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4
Group 1 (Control Group)	----	.003	---	---
Group 2 (Teacher Feedback)	.003	----	.015	---
Group 3 (Peer Feedback)	---	.015	----	---
Group 4 (Computer-Assisted Feedback)	----	---	---	---

The second section of the research question was about the feedback type which has the least and most effect on students' writing proficiency. Therefore, paired samples t-test was carried out for each group. The scores of students in pretest and posttest were compared to reveal the impact of the feedback type on the writing score of the participants. Table 4 presents this issue regarding the control group (Group 1).

**Table 4. Descriptive Statistics for Group 1 (Control Group)**

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Group 1	pretest	14.46	30	1.56	.28661
	posttest	14.93	30	1.08	.19730

Table 4 presents the descriptive statistics for the first group writing scores from pretest to post test. Accordingly, the mean and standard deviation for the pretest are 14.46 and 1.56, respectively. For the post test, the mean is 14.93 and the standard deviation is 1.08. Table 5 shows the pretest-posttest difference within the control group (Group 1).

**Table 5. Paired Samples t-Test for Group 1 (Control Group)**

	Mean	SD	<i>t</i>	df	Sig (two-tailed)
pretest-posttest	-.46	1.07	-2.37	29	.024

As Table 5 indicates, there is a statistically significant increase in writing scores from pretest ( $M = 14.46$ ,  $SD = 1.56$ ) to posttest ( $M = 14.93$ ,  $SD = 1.08$ ),  $t(29) = -2.37$ ,  $p < .05$ . The mean increase in writing scores was .46 with a 95% interval ranging from 14.46 to 14.93. The eta squared statistic (.16) indicated a large effect size. In other words, 16 percent of the variance in students' writing score is explained by the variance in the control group. Moreover, Table 6 shows the descriptive statistics for Group 2 (teacher feedback).

**Table 6. Descriptive Statistics for Group 2 (Teacher Feedback)**

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Group 2 pretest	14.76	30	1.54	.28237
posttest	16.03	30	1.37	.25136

As Table 6 indicates, the mean and standard deviation of the scores on pretest are 14.76 and 1.54, respectively. For the posttest, the values are 16.03 and 1.37 respectively. Table 7 illustrates the pretest-posttest difference within Group 2 (teacher feedback).

**Table 7. Paired Samples t-Test for Group 2 (Teacher Feedback)**

	Mean	SD	<i>t</i>	df	Sig (two-tailed)
pretest-posttest	-1.26	1.57	-4.40	29	.000

Table 7 shows that there is a statistically significant increase in writing scores from pretest ( $M = 14.76$ ,  $SD = 1.54$ ) to posttest ( $M = 16.03$ ,  $SD = 1.37$ ),  $t(29) = -4.40$ ,  $p < .05$ . The mean increase in writing scores was 1.26 with a 95% interval ranging from 14.76 to 16.03. The eta squared statistic (.4) indicated a large effect size. In other words, 40 percent of the variance in writing scores is attributed to teacher feedback type. Furthermore, Table 8 shows the descriptive statistics for Group 3 (peer feedback).

**Table 8. Descriptive Statistics for Group 3 (Peer Feedback)**

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Group 3 pretest	14.50	30	1.45	.26588
posttest	15.10	30	.84	.15425

Table 8 presents the descriptive statistics for the third group from pretest to post test. Accordingly, the mean and standard deviation for the pretest are 14.50 and 1.45, respectively. For the post test, the mean is 15.10 and the standard deviation is .84. Table 9 illustrates the pretest-posttest difference within Group 3 (peer feedback).

**Table 9. Paired Samples t-Test for Group 3 (Peer Feedback)**

	Mean	SD	<i>t</i>	df	Sig (two-tailed)
pretest-posttest	-.60	1.16	-2.827	29	.008

According to Table 9, there is a statistically significant increase in writing scores from pretest ( $M = 14.5$ ,  $SD = 1.45$ ) to posttest ( $M = 15.1$ ,  $SD = .84$ ),  $t(29) = -2.82$ ,  $p < .05$ . The mean increase in writing scores was .6 with a 95% interval ranging from 14.5 to 15.1. The eta squared statistic (.21) indicated a large effect size. In other words, 21 percent of the variance in writing scores is attributed to the peer feedback type. Finally, Table 10 shows the descriptive statistics for Group 4 (computer-assisted feedback).

**Table 10. Descriptive Statistics for Group 4 (Computer-Assisted Feedback)**

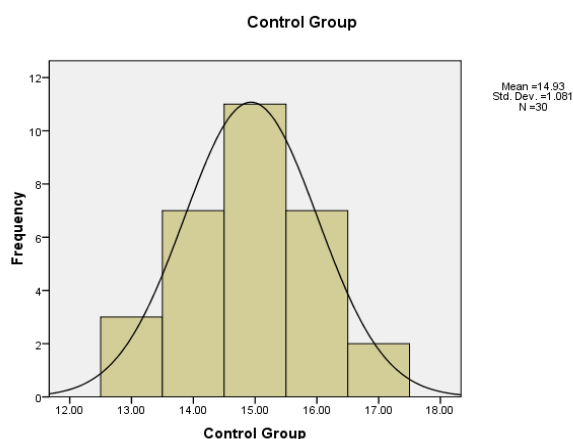
		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Group 4	pretest	14.43	30	1.38	.25227
	posttest	15.23	30	1.00	.18372

As Table 10 indicates, the mean and standard deviation of the scores on pretest are 14.43 and 1.38, respectively. For the posttest, the values are 15.23 and 1.00, respectively. Table 11 illuminates the pretest-posttest within Group 4 (computer-assisted feedback).

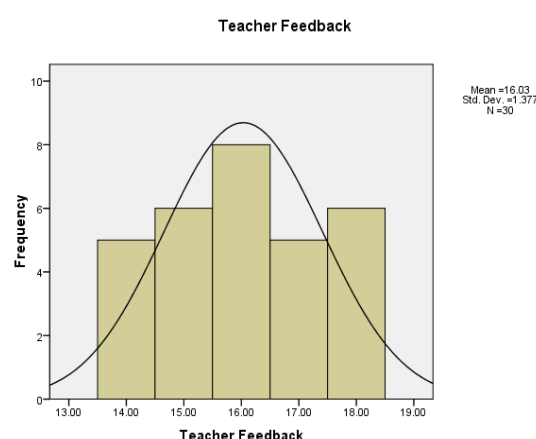
**Table 11. Paired Samples t-Test for Group 4 (Computer-Assisted Feedback)**

	Mean	SD	t	df	Sig (two-tailed)
pretest-posttest	-.80	1.47	-2.97	29	.006

As Table 11 reveals, there is a statistically significant increase in writing scores from pretest ( $M = 14.43$ ,  $SD = 1.38$ ) to posttest ( $M = 15.23$ ,  $SD = 1.00$ ),  $t(29) = -2.97$ ,  $p < .05$ . The mean increase in writing scores was .8 with a 95% interval ranging from 14.43 to 15.23. The eta squared statistic (.23) indicated a large effect size. In other words, 23 percent of the variance in writing scores is attributed to the computer-assisted feedback type. The following histograms present the information regarding the normality distribution of the posttest data in all the groups.



**Figure 5. Control Group Posttest (Group 1)**



**Figure 6. Teacher-Feedback Posttest (Group 2)**

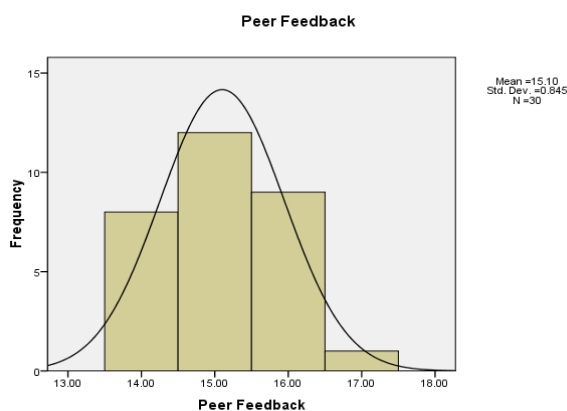


Figure 7. Peer-Feedback Posttest (Group 3)  
(Group 4)

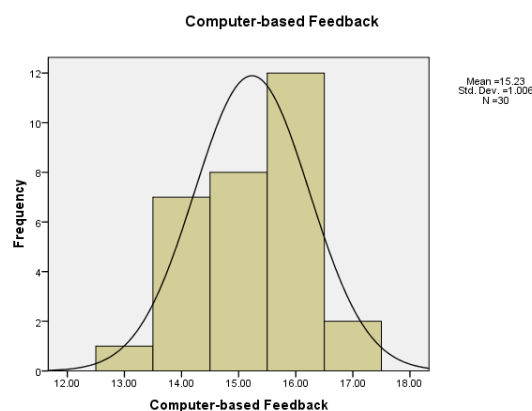


Figure 8. Computer-Feedback Posttest

As it can be seen from the figures above, the distribution of the students' writing score on posttest for the four groups is symmetrical. In other words, as the histograms indicate, the scores are normally distributed, with most scores occurring in the center.

### Discussion

As it was mentioned earlier, in order to answer the first part of the research question of the study, one-way between-groups analysis of variance was carried out. Feedback methods were the independent variable and students' writing scores were the dependent variable. As it was indicated in Table 1, there is a statistically significant difference at the  $p < .05$  level in writing scores for the four groups:  $F(3,116) = 5.96$ ,  $p = .001$ . This shows that the effect of feedback types on the students' writing achievement is significant between the groups. Eta squared showed the strength of the effect presenting an index for the effect size, which was 0.13. This would be considered a rather moderate effect size using Cohen (1988, as cited in Pallant, 2001, p.175) criteria of .01=small effect, .06=moderate effect, .14=large effect. However, since it was not clear which two groups are different from each other, therefore, Scheffe test was conducted to elucidate the difference between groups. The results of post hoc comparisons using Scheffe Test indicated that the mean score for Group 2 which received teacher feedback was significantly different from Group 1 and 3. In other words, this shows that teacher feedback has the highest effect on students' writing achievement.

This finding of the study is exactly in line with what Srichanyachon (2012), Brookhart (2010), Lee (2008), Hyland (2003) concluded in their study stating that teacher written feedback is the most significant and motivating feedback that L2 students expect to receive. These scholars believed that teacher feedback comprises two factors which are cognitive and motivational factors. It provides students with the information they need so they can understand where they are in their learning and what to do next, i.e. the cognitive factor. Once they feel that they understand what to do and for what reason, most of them develop a feeling that they have control over their own learning which refers to the motivational factor.

In congruence with the results of the Saito and Fujita (2004) study, this study also indicated that students selected teacher rating over peer rating which in turn was more favored than self-rating in terms of reliability due to personal perception of self-efficacy and subjective viewpoints. Students regard teachers as professionals in writing and evaluation while they view peers as partners who are capable of detecting blind spots that evaded their own attention. Though they did not consider the computer-assisted feedback, their findings relevant to the sequence of feedback types in terms of effect strength are in line with the results of paired samples t-tests and the eta squared statistic in

the present study yielding an effect size for each group, attributing the highest effect, i.e. 40% of the whole writing-score variance, to teacher feedback, the second, i.e. 23%, to computer-assisted feedback, and the next, i.e. 21%, to peer feedback, and the last, i.e. 16% to writing instruction with no feedback. Consequently, these results confirm that though in the absence of teacher feedback, students may indicate progression in the content of their revisions, maybe through peer feedback or self-correction, those who receive teacher feedback make greater improvement (Lalande, 1982; Ravichandran, 2002).

Furthermore, in line with the finding of the study regarding the significance of computer-based feedback as the second most influential type of feedback second-ranked significant effect of computer-assisted feedback on students' writing achievement, many former studies confirm the same issue (e.g. Hamp-Lyons, 2001; Page, 2003; Rudner and Liang, 2002; Shermis and Burstein, 2003; Rudner and Cagne, 2001; Warschauer and Ware, 2006), though a very limited number of studies, in contrast, are indicative of the computer-assisted feedback superiority over both peer or teacher feedback due to some learner-oriented socio-affective reasons such as computer anxiety and lack of interactive scaffolding (Ji-jun, 2013; Matsumara, 2004; Schultz, 2000). In fact, the literature on computer-assisted feedback has consistently confirmed that this type of feedback provides a quick way of providing indirect instruction which reduces the teacher's workload, and students produce more output and report being more motivated due to taking advantage of this type of feedback (e.g. Kern, 1996; Lavolette, Polio, & Kahng, 2014; Meagher & Castanos, 1996; Rostami & Hoveidi, 2014; Ware, 2003; Warschauer, 1996).

Finally, in line with the third-ranked significant effect of peer feedback on students' writing achievement, many studies confirm the same issue (e.g. Arndt, 1992; Chaudron, 1984; Keh, 1990; Ketabi and Torabi, 2012; Mittan, 1989; Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick, 2006; Van den Berg Admiraal and Pilot, 2006; Xu, 2000; Zainurrahman, 2010). However, a few studies, the number of which is so limited, have presented some results which are in contrast with the significance of peer feedback found in this study (e.g. Hirose, 2009; Leki, 2006; Yang, Badger, & Yu, 2006; Zeng, 2006). Nevertheless, although the value of peer feedback has been widely accepted, problems do exist. In fact, in agreement with the present research, the majority of studies in the field are more in favor of teacher feedback, and have indicated that students prefer teacher feedback and tend to trust their teachers rather than their classmates (Zhang, 1995; Nelson and Carson, 1998). In other words, although previous studies have confirmed the impact of peer feedback on L2 writing revisions and development, whether to use peer feedback as a learning activity and how to use it depends on the teachers' feedback rather than students in writing classes (Connor & Asenavage, 1994; de Guerrero & Villamil, 2000; Hu, 2005; Nelson & Carson, 1998; Tsui & Ng, 2000; Yang et al., 2006; Zhao, 2010; Zhu & Mitchell, 2012).

### Conclusions and Implications

Sustained professional achievement of academic writing is most likely to result when the focus is kept clearly on improving students' outcomes through a sort of feedback which is clear, specific, and challenging for the recipients. As a result, teachers are encouraged to be continual independent learners, especially gaining the knowledge of diverse mediums of feedback in the form of a mediated mentor in an environment of trust, support, and professional learning promoted by the institutional leadership (Coe et al, 2014). Students may take a more active role and become more interested in carrying on writing tasks when teacher replies to their questions and gives them feedback. However, students seem to be receptive to feedback not only from teachers but sources other than teachers. Whether the students receive feedback on paper, electronically, in person, or via email or video, the teacher has a central role, and can insert feedback or comments in their drafts professionally through diverse peer-oriented or computer-assisted strategies. Whatever the source is, the important point is that teachers should make students pay attention to comments in a way that they make sense to them, and that they can recognize the purpose of the feedback process (Duncan, 2007). In fact, feedback should not be delivered exclusively by the teacher and



not be perceived by students as the marking of what is right or wrong. Instead, teachers would better incline to focus on the instructional rather than the correctional aspects of feedback.

Another implication of the study specifically for L2 writing teachers is that if students can raise their consciousness about the mediational resources and contextual scaffoldings such as feedback in writing processes, they might be able to strategically mediate their writing with a multitude of resources and gradually develop themselves into better writers. Although L2 learners might have already used some of these strategies, they may not always be aware of the mediated processes like feedback entailing potential strategies enabling them to write more efficiently. By defining the strategies in terms of feedback types, insights about the verbal conversation in collaborative writing class can be increased. Scaffolding through feedback types has an intuitive appeal as effective for writing. It is crucial that learners and the teacher make advantage of feedback types to motivate each other and to increase their knowledge about how to write and revise. Feedback methods differ according to the learners' and teacher's intentions and that it can influence learners' attitude and engagement as well as their learning extent of the writing skill.

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# THE IMPACT OF SYSTEMATIC IMPLEMENTATION OF FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT (FA) ON EFL LEARNERS' AFFECT

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## ABSTRACT

THE AIM OF THE PRESENT STUDY WAS TO INVESTIGATE THE EFFECT OF SYSTEMATIC USE OF FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT (FA) ON EFL LEARNERS' AFFECT. FA INCLUDES FIVE COMPONENTS OF (A) LEARNING TARGETS: CLARIFYING LEARNING INTENTIONS AND SHARING CRITERIA FOR SUCCESS; (B) MONITORING: ENGINEERING EFFECTIVE CLASSROOM DISCUSSIONS, QUESTIONS, AND LEARNING TASKS THAT ELICIT EVIDENCE OF LEARNING; (C) FEEDBACK: PROVIDING FEEDBACK THAT MOVES LEARNERS FORWARD; (D) SELF-ASSESSMENT; ACTIVATING STUDENTS AS INSTRUCTIONAL RESOURCES FOR ONE ANOTHER, AND (E) PEER- ASSESSMENT. TO DO THE STUDY, A QUASI-EXPERIMENTAL STUDY WAS CONDUCTED. FORTY HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS AND 651 STUDENTS PARTICIPATED IN THE STUDY. THREE QUESTIONNAIRES WERE USED TO COLLECT THE DATA ON TEACHERS FA IMPLEMENTATION AND ON STUDENTS' AFFECT: (1) FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT QUESTIONNAIRE, (2) STUDENT AFFECT INVENTORY, AND (3) FA OBSERVATIONAL CHECKLIST. ANCOVA WAS UTILIZED TO SEE HOW MUCH STUDENTS' AFFECT WAS IMPROVED AFTER SYSTEMATIC APPLICATION OF FA, CONTROLLING THE EFFECT OF STUDENTS' PRETEST ON AFFECT. STUDENTS' PRETESTS AND POST TESTS ON AFFECT IN THE EXPERIMENTAL AND CONTROL GROUPS WERE THEN COMPARED. RESULTS INDICATED THAT IF FA IS PRACTICED IN AN ONGOING AND SYSTEMATIC WAY, IT WILL IMPROVE STUDENTS' AFFECT TO A RELATIVELY HIGH DEGREE. ALSO, IT WAS REVEALED THAT "MONITORING", PRACTICED BY TEACHERS, WAS THE MOST FREQUENT COMPONENT OF FA IN CLASS OBSERVATIONS.

**KEY WORDS:** FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT (FA), STUDENTS' AFFECT, EFL

## 1. Introduction

It has been claimed that formative assessment (FA), or assessment for learning (AFL) is one of the effective means to improve the quality of learning and teaching and is effective in pedagogy (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Oswalt, 2013; Popham, 2006). Crooks (1988) reports that classroom evaluation guides students' judgment of what is important to learn, affects their motivation to learn, forms their self-perception of competence, helps them make decisions about what and how much to study, consolidates learning, and impacts the development of their learning strategies and skills. Additionally, assessment for learning has a significant impact on learning because it can

help students improve their learning and remain confident to move to productive levels (Stiggins, 2002). On the other hand, improving teaching and learning situations has always been a great challenge for people involved in education, in general and language education in particular. A large body of research indicates that FA or AFL, if properly implemented, will improve students' mastery of what is being taught in class and will enhance performance on tests (Black & Wiliam, 1998a, 1998b). In addition to this, most of the time, AFL requires students to become personally involved in monitoring and adjusting how they are attempting to learn. This kind of assessment leads to students' achievement (Wiliam, Harrison, and Black ,2004). Therefore, it seems probable that FA also has an impact on students' affect, that is, students' personal perceptions and predispositions about their learning (Stiggins & Popham, 2008).

## 2. Literature Review

According to Clark (2010), the origin of FA can be found in the idea of providing feedback. However, feedback is not always formative; it is formative when students are provided with scaffolding instructions or thoughtful questioning that lead to further enquiry which help us reach desired learning goals. Therefore, feedback becomes formative when learners are in the following situations:

- engaged in a process that focuses on metacognitive strategies that can be generalized to performance more generally,
- supported in their efforts to think about their own thinking,
- understand the relationship between their previous performance, their current understanding, and clearly defined success criteria,
- positioned as the agent improving and initiating their own learning. (p. 344)

Perhaps because of the effect that FA has on students' learning, Black (2002) prefers the term 'AFL'. In this sense, FA is considered as any assessment for which the first priority in its design and practice is to serve the purpose of promoting pupils' learning. An assessment activity can help learning if it provides information to be used as feedback by teachers and by their pupils in assessing themselves and each other, to modify the teaching and learning activities in which they are engaged. Such assessment, Black believes, becomes formative when the evidence is actually used to adapt the teaching work to meet learning needs. Furthermore, Wiliam (2010) believes that when we add the term formative to the word *assessment* to form FA, the term is directed towards serving two important roles: ( 1) to determine the level of mastery (either competence or performance) during a teaching/ learning task, and (2) to pinpoint that part of the taskis not mastered or yet to be mastered. On the other hand, as Stiggins and Popham (2008) believe, FA is a student-focused approach to instruction in which students will be active in the process of learning, as well. In other words, students will be personally involved in their own learning. Therefore, this kind of assessment i.e. AFL will have an impact on students' perceptions. Accordingly, fruitful results will be gained if AFL uses these perceptions appropriately toward learning. However, there are some affective factors involved when teachers implement AFL. According to Stiggins and Popham (2008), among these factors are two variables believed to be influenced by teachers who try to use FA namely academic efficacy and eagerness to learn. The first refers to, "student's perceived ability to succeed and the student's sense of control over her or his academic well-being" (p. 1). The second is associated with the desire students should have in order to try to use their capabilities by the help of the teacher who is implementing FA.

Different theories are said to be associated with FA. According to McMillan (2010), two important skills are involved when FA is used for deep understanding: metacognition and self-regulation. Self-regulation is a broader construct that includes metacognition, self-evaluation, self-reaction, and self-assessment. Self- regulation helps students realize that they can manage their own learning and they have the necessary skills to monitor and evaluate their performance, hence to enhance deep understanding (Hattie & Timperley, 2007).

Deep understanding metacognition focuses on the process not the product of learning. Therefore, it encourages students to develop self-appraisal and self-management skills that, in turn, enhance

self-directed learning. Students learn, “how and when to request feedback. They become adept at error detection and corrective skills” (McMillan, 2010, pp.47-48).

Furthermore, in an attempt to find a powerful connection between different and sometimes seemingly opposite theories underlying FA, Clark (2010) reports, based on the works of Damon (1984), that there are powerful potential of high quality peer interactions which support learning. Different traditions such as cognitivism, and social constructivism, whose leading theoreticians were Piaget (1952) and Vygotsky (1978), are blended into a functional theoretical framework in which individual cognitive development and collective classroom activity are involved. Therefore, FA gains its theoretical validity from a cognitive theory, on the one hand, and a number of seemingly opposite sociocultural theories arising from the work of Vygotsky (1978), on the other (Clark, 2010). Some characteristics are associated with FA. Popham (2010) emphasizes that FA is a process, not a test. Process means that it is carefully planned. It is not simply a collection of interim tests which are administered periodically school- or district-wide. Also, FA does not account for the situation when an adjustment from the teacher is made in response to the teacher’s feeling that students are puzzled. The reason is that, in this situation, no planning, which is one of the indispensable features of FA, has been made and the teacher has not thought about what instructional adjustment may be suitable for that specific situation. Effective FA practice has been described by experts in the field as characterized by some attributes or components. According to McManus (2008), there are five attributes to an effective FA: learning progressions, learning goals and criterion for success, descriptive feedback, self- and peer- assessment, and collaboration. McMillan (2010) claims that FA is a process characterized by specific features. First, it includes some components which are connected and affect one another. Second, it involves both teachers and students. Therefore, other forms of assessment conducted under the name of FA are not considered as formative unless the teachers’ and students’ roles are recognizable throughout the whole process. Third, FA is a dynamic process which is implemented during and after the instruction because it is supposed that FA improves learning. In other words, FA is not a mere report on learners’ performance at a point at the beginning or end of the instruction and must, therefore, cover the whole process of the learning and teaching process. Furthermore, FA includes feedback, and it is also a means of data gathering based on which instructional adjustments will be made. Crooks (1988) states that too much emphasis has been placed on the role of grading as a method of evaluation and too little on its role of assisting students to learn. “A classroom culture in which teachers and students are partners in learning should be established” (McManus, 2008, p. 5).

Popham (2008) described learning progressions as “. . . a sequenced set of subskills and bodies of enabling knowledge that, it is believed, students must master en route to mastering a more remote curricular aim” (p.10). Popham (2008) believes that it is important to design learning progressions to include FA because it will help determine the position of students in the curriculum and help guide them on the course of attainment. According to McManus (2008), learning targets must be identified and communicated to students and the criteria based on which learning will be assessed must also be clarified so that students know whether they are progressing toward the successful mastery of the learning targets. Also, descriptive feedback should be based on learning goals, progressions, or learning targets and not comparisons with other students and should help students identify where they are on the learning continuum. McManus (2008) also claims that both self- and peer- assessment provide students with an opportunity to think metacognitively about their learning. It is also implied from the research done by Black and Wiliam (1998b) that successful implementation of FA encourage the use of self- and peer- assessment and students’ ability to accurately determine own and peer current position in the learning process and try to improve the skills or concepts based on learning targets.

## 2.1. Affect and Formative Assessment

Much research surrounding the use of FA attributes has supported the claim that they will improve student academic performance (Ruland, 2011). Furthermore, Stiggins (2007) has claimed that the



reason why FA can have such an impact is that its philosophy originated in changing the student's affect concerning the use of assessments and in involving the student as the number one user of that data. Leahy, Lyon, Thompson, and Wiliam (2005) have supported this claim, stating that education needs to change its function of collecting rights and wrongs and to encourage teachers to collect information to inform instructional decisions. Likewise, students should also be provided that information to make decisions about learning. Leahy et al. (2005) made the comparison that current education is like quality control in manufacturing: At the end of teaching, identify those who did not learn. They suggested that education should rather be a quality assurance process: collecting information through FA to determine what needs to happen for each student to learn (Leahy et al., 2005). Stiggins (2004) believe that if assessment is used with skill, it can motivate the unmotivated students, restore their desire to learn, encourage them to keep learning, and create—not simply measure—increased achievement. Furthermore, the impact of using FA attributes in daily instruction on student affect was studied by Ruland (2011) who wanted to determine if the systematic use of FA attributes had an impact on two affective variables. The study utilized a quasi-experimental design along with a study of correlation. The results showed a strong statistically significant correlation between the affect variables and the FA attributes.

Furthermore, Guskey (2002) and Carlton (1992) investigated the differences in the perceptions of grades and grading practices of three stakeholder groups: teachers, students, and parents. In Guskey's study, he reported the perception of the purpose of grading. Although all the stakeholders expressed similar ranking on a given list of words and phrases, the teacher responses were much more varied than parents or students. The teachers also valued grades as incentive much lower than both parents and students. The parents, students, and teachers all ranked the importance of grades as a measure of communicating information about student achievement and behavior to students as more important as the years in school increased. As the grade levels increased, the teachers valued grades as incentive increasingly lower. Parents and students ranked them as an increasingly more important incentive. In examining the rankings of performance elements, the students and teachers ranked homework completion as an important factor in determining grades. Also, Stiggins and Popham (2008) ,in Stewart (2011), claim that, "descriptive formative feedback would engage students in learning and increase student affect toward the formative assessment process" (p. 33). Six strategies are identified to engage students in the way that their affect is increased: First, it is possible to provide student-friendly learning targets when introducing the lesson. This will help students feel more secure in the process of learning. Second, it is possible that these targets are accompanied by samples of the students themselves. Third, descriptive feedback can be provided continuously. This continuity give students enough time to know what they should do next. Fourth, students can be taught self-assessment so that they can be an active participant in the whole process. Fifth, we can help students focus on one component at a time so that they are not frustrated dealing with a confusing mixture of components simultaneously. Finally, it is also possible to teach students how to reflect on their work so that they will be involved in a dynamic and active learning process rather than being a passive receiver of information. Ruland (2011) investigated the effect of FA attributes on students' affect in reading and math classes and reported a significant relationship between these variables. However, utilizing FA in language classes and with different methodologies in different contexts seems to be needed in order to add to the literature related to the mentioned theme. McMillan, Cohen, Abrams, Pannozzo and Hearn (2010) investigated the effect of FA on students' motivation. According to the findings, many teachers make limited use of FA practices. Also, insufficient attention is paid to the use of FA to guide instruction and learning. Furthermore, the statistically significant positive relationships between overall formative practice and average of students' motivation suggests an association between these two variables. When the teachers reported using several types of FA practices, the students were more likely to report higher levels of motivation.

In this study, attempts will be made to find an answer for the question, "Does systematic and ongoing implementation of FA improve student affect". The researchers adhere to the definition of "affect"



and its components as presented by Stiggins and Popham (2008). Furthermore, the study will make the point clear which FA component or attribute, as named by McManus (2008), is practiced by the participant teachers more.

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1. Participants

The study was conducted with teachers and their students in Khorramabad, Lorestan, Iran. The total number of teachers was 92. There were 37 (40.21%) male and 55 (59.78%) female teachers. The participants were 40 teachers and their students. The sample contained 15 (37.7%) male and 25 (62%) female teachers. The number of students were 651 high school students including 351 (38.56%) boys and 400 (61.44%) girls studying in grades 7-9 at the time of the study during the academic year of 2015-2016. Sample selection was a mixture of random, purposive, and convenience processes. In this case, the teachers were selected based on their willingness to participate. In other words, the experimental group included volunteer teachers. The teachers in the experimental group attended in a workshop and implement FA in their language classrooms accordingly. Moreover, the classes from the same grade levels were selected in order to have the chance of obtaining more accurate data. However, the teachers were randomly assigned to either the control or experimental groups. It was hoped that this procedure would enhance the reliability of the results.

In the control group, the teachers taught based on the common syllabus, and the teachers in the experimental group followed the same syllabus based on what they learned in the workshop. In neither case, the study intended to disrupt the normal teaching and learning context in the educational system. Therefore, the study was a quasi-experimental one.

#### 3.2. Instruments

In order to conduct the study, three measures were used: (1) Formative Assessment Questionnaire, (2) Student Affect Inventory, and (3) FA Observational Checklist.

Based on the purpose of the study, a measure was needed to help differentiate between FA users and FA non-users. Therefore, the adapted version of Formative Assessment Questionnaire for Teachers developed by Qualification and Curriculum Authority in United Kingdom was utilized. The questionnaire includes a variety of questions on FA components and is scored based on a Likert-type scale (from *strongly agree* to *strongly disagree*). This is a suitable measure to identify the teachers who use FA strategies in their classes and those who do not.

The Student Affect Inventory created by Stiggins and Popham (2008) includes eight questions and takes students about 10 minutes to complete. The questionnaire tests students on their affect. It is an instrument to measure affective variables. It contains eight statements with which students are asked to agree or disagree. In each pair, one statement is phrased negatively. Answers range from *strongly agree* to *strongly disagree* on a Likert-type scale.

To explore to what extent FA was practiced in high schools, an observational instrument was used. The practice of FA was measured by an adapted version of Formative Assessment Observational Instrument developed and used by Oswalt (2013). The instrument includes five components: (a) Learning targets: Clarifying learning intentions and sharing criteria for success; (b) Monitoring: Engineering effective classroom discussions, questions, and learning tasks that elicit evidence of learning; (c) Feedback: providing feedback that moves learners forward; (d) Self-assessment; activating students as instructional resources for one another, and (e) Peer- assessment. Each item was scored based on a scale from 1 to 5. The data were analyzed using this 5-point Likert scale.

#### 3.3. Data Collection and Analysis Procedure

To start the experiment, the Formative Assessment Questionnaire was distributed among the teachers in the sample. The teachers were asked to report, by answering the questions, how they use FA in their classrooms. The purpose was to determine if they were utilizing FA strategies effectively as part of their ongoing instruction. The items in the questionnaire were scored. The teachers then,

based on the obtained scores, were divided into two groups of FA-users (those who use FA strategies effectively), and FA- nonusers.

According to the purpose of the study, the teachers should have used FA strategies based on the materials presented in the workshop. Therefore, the study was conducted with 40 volunteer teachers from the FA non-users group. It was necessary that the study be conducted with volunteers since they should have agreed that their classes would be observed and/or recorded several times during the experiment. Each teacher was randomly assigned to either the control or experimental group. This resulted in having two groups of control and experimental group, each with 20 teachers. Before the academic year starts, the workshop was organized. Twenty teachers (the experimental group) took part in the workshop. They learned and updated themselves on the theories of FA. Also, FA strategies which were to be used in class were presented. At the start of the academic year, the teachers in the control group followed their usual methodology during the experiment. The teachers in the experimental group implemented the FA strategies continuously, as trained during the workshop. The content was from the works of experts in the field of FA (e.g., Black & Wiliam, 1998b; Heritage, 2010; McManus, 2008; Popham, 2008; Stiggins, 2005) Heritage, McManus, Popham, Stiggins, & Wiliam). The workshop took about 12 hr.

Also, the Persian translation of Student Affect Inventory was filled out by the students on their affect. The students were briefed about how they were supposed to answer the questions. The data collection was done during the class hour and took about 15 Min. to complete. The results of the Affect Inventory were considered as the pretest of students' affect.

During the experiment, the classes in the experimental group were observed for three times with sufficient time interval (3 weeks) to make sure that FA was implemented effectively. To do this, the Formative Assessment Observational Checklist was used during the semester, with the goal of determining whether FA was observable in an ongoing and effective way. The classes were observed during English class, and observational checklist was completed by trained observers based on what teachers do with regard to FA.

Of course, ethical issues were also considered and observed. Also, confidentiality of the data including the teachers' personal information was ensured. Furthermore, consent letters were given to the teachers in both the experimental and control groups to be signed prior to the experiment. At the end of the semester, a post-test was conducted on students affect in both groups. The results of the pre- and post-tests on affect in the control and experimental groups were compared to discover if the systematic use of FA strategies had statistically significant impact on student affect.

After the data collection was completed, a data matrix was prepared. As a result, the EFL learners' affect scores and the teachers' FA scores could be measured. The affect questionnaire and FA observation checklist were in a likert-type scale. In both measures, the answers ranged from, "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree". The scores ranged from 1 to 5, accordingly. In students' affect inventory, there were both positive and negative items. To compute students' affect score, positively phrased items, were scores from 5 for "strongly agree" to 1 for "strongly disagree". Negatively phrased items were scored negatively i.e. 5 for "strongly disagree" to 1 for "strongly agree". As for the teachers FA observation checklist, all items scores ranged from 5 for "strongly agree" to 1 for "strongly disagree".

The ANCOVA was conducted to measure students' affect improvement at the end of a semester-long ongoing implementation of FA. This measure is used to adjust or control for differences between the groups based on another variable i.e. covariate (Leech, Barret & Morgan, 2005). Post test scores on affect in the experimental and control groups were compared afterwards. To analyze the data, the SPSS software (version 20), which is commonly used for analyzing the results of social sciences studies, was used.

#### 4. Results

The research question was whether systematic and ongoing implementation of FA will improve EFL learners' affect. Since the experimental and control groups were found to differ statistically on the pre-test, one-way ANCOVA was used for analyzing the data. The pre-test whose effect on post-

test scores was to be controlled was used as the covariate in the ANCOVA analysis. As for other statistical measures, there are some assumptions as the prerequisite for ANCOVA to be met and dealt with. The first assumption is the linearity relationship between the dependent variable and the covariate. It was tested by drawing a scatterplot of the data in the study. The second assumption has to do with the regression line within the groups. This assumption is checked by the test of the homogeneity of slopes. This test was also conducted for the present study. Based on the calculation, the F value was 3.08. This value indicated that the assumption of homogeneity of slopes is met, and conducting ANCOVA became, therefore, justified. Table 1 shows that the linearity assumption for conducting ANCOVA is met .

Table 1. The F-value for the Data on Students Affect

F-value	df	Sig.
3.08	647, 1	0.08

Based on the met criteria and to know if there was a statistically significant difference between students' posttests on affect, with the pre-tests being controlled as the covariate, in the experimental and control group, ANCOVA was conducted. To do this, students' post-test scores in the experimental and control groups were compared using pre-test scores as the covariate. Table 2 shows the mean and SD of the experiment and the control groups.

Table 2. Experimental and Control Group Information

Group	Affect Mean	Affect SD	N
Experimental	29.47	2.30	371
Control	24.15	3.80	280
Total	27.18	3.74	651

The following results were drawn after conducting ANCOVA. Table 3 indicates ANCOVA results for the experimental and control groups in terms of students' scores on their affect after the treatment i.e. FA continuous implementation.

Table 3. ANCOVA Results

F-value	df	Sig.	Eta Squared
584.4	648, 1	0.005	0.47

As shown in table 3, F-value for the independent variable i.e. FA, is statistically significant so the research hypothesis, "Systematic and ongoing implementation of FA does not improve students' affect" is rejected. In other words it is implied that the continuous and ongoing implementation of FA does improve students' affect. To put it another way, and as shown above, the mean score of students' affect in the experimental group is 5.32 scores more than that of the control group. To know to what degree the implementation of FA had affected students affect, eta-squared was calculated. The value i.e. 0.47 (Table 3) indicated that the impact of FA implementation was satisfactory as well. Also, based on the three observations of the classes in the experimental group, it was revealed that the teachers were conducting FA effectively. The results of the mean score of FA components are presented in Table 4.

Table 1. FA Scores for the Experimental Group Teachers

Components	Total score	Mean
Clarifying Learning Targets	292	73
Monitoring	392	78.4

Feedback	372	74.4
Self Assessment	205	68.33
Peer Assessment	232	77.33

## 5. Discussion and Conclusions

Based on the statistical analysis of the data, the following conclusions were drawn.

First, the results of the research indicated that FA implementation is clearly effective at improving EFL learners' affect. Also, it is implied that if FA is practiced in an ongoing and systematic way, it will be even more effective in boosting students' affect. By ongoing, it is meant that FA should be an integral part of teacher instruction so that it is embedded in the teachers' daily planning for instruction. Furthermore, systematic use of FA is emphasized. In the workshop in which the teachers took part, necessary strategies needed for successful and effective implementation of FA were offered to the teachers. In other words, the teachers were trained to be able to conduct FA effectively, considering all components and strategies. In short, if teachers are trained how to practice FA as part of their teaching, students' feelings as one of the most important learner-related factors can be boosted. The results of the present study were in line with those of Ruland (2011). In the study, the impact of FA on two components of affect were investigated. The results of the study showed a positive correlation between FA implementation and students affect. Also, the present study results were similar to a study conducted by McMillan et al. (2010). They studied the effect of FA on students' motivation. They found a positive and significant relationship between these two variables.

Second, among all FA components, "monitoring: engineering effective classroom discussions, questions, and learning tasks that elicit evidence of learning" was the most practiced sub components of FA. In other words most teachers who know how to conduct FA try to keep track of their students' improvement by asking a variety of questions and providing students with opportunities to respond. Therefore, questioning students to elicit evidence of their learning as well as difficulties is an effective tool in conducting FA and it is also a preferred strategy to most teachers. "Self-assessment" was the least frequent strategy encouraged by teachers. Perhaps more studies are needed to shed more light on the issue and explore possible ways to help students and inform instruction as well. A point in case is that the participant teachers in the workshop had various experience range. This may be indicative of the fact that FA is not generally practiced by EFL teachers. Part of the problem may be attributed to lack of FA assessment literacy and implementation knowledge, and can be alleviated by conducting pre-service and in-service courses on FA for teachers. It is hoped that the findings of the present study help inform EFL teaching and learning situation.

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# USING WRITTEN INSTRUCTION IN DEVELOPING EFL LEARNERS' STRESS RECOGNITION AT THE PRE-INTERMEDIATE LEVEL

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## ABSTRACT

THE PRESENT STUDY INVESTIGATED THE EFFECTS OF WRITTEN INSTRUCTION ON DEVELOPING EFL LEARNERS' WORD STRESS RECOGNITION. IT STUDIED WORD STRESS RECOGNITION WHICH FOCUSED ON THE ROLE OF WRITTEN EXPLANATIONS OF STRESS RULES IN STRESS RECOGNITION TASKS. TO ACHIEVE THIS PURPOSE, A TEACHER-MADE ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEST ON STRESS RECOGNITION AS A PRE-TEST WAS ADMINISTERED TO ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY LANGUAGE LEARNERS MAJORING IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TRANSLATION AT AZAD UNIVERSITY OF ABADAN, IRAN. ULTIMATELY, 92 PRE-INTERMEDIATE LANGUAGE LEARNERS WERE NON-RANDOMLY ASSIGNED INTO TWO GROUPS OF EXPERIMENTAL AND CONTROL, EACH GROUP HELD WITH 46 PARTICIPANTS. FIRST OF ALL, BOTH GROUPS TOOK THE PRE-TEST ON WORD STRESS RECOGNITION. THE PARTICIPANTS IN THE EXPERIMENTAL GROUP RECEIVED WRITTEN RULES OF WORD STRESS ALONG WITH SAMPLES ON THE BOARD BUT THE CONTROL GROUP WERE INSTRUCTED WITH THE USE OF REHEARSAL AND USING DICTIONARY ACTIVITIES IN LEARNING WORD STRESS. AT THE END OF INSTRUCTION AFTER 10 SESSIONS, BOTH GROUPS TOOK A POST-TEST ON WORD STRESS RECOGNITION. DATA WERE ANALYZED THROUGH PAIRED SAMPLES T-TEST AND INDEPENDENT SAMPLES T-TEST. CONSEQUENTLY, THE PERFORMANCE OF THE EXPERIMENTAL GROUP SHOWED BETTER RESULTS THAN THE CONTROL GROUP. RESULTS SHOWED THE WRITTEN INSTRUCTION FOR PRE-INTERMEDIATE LANGUAGE LEARNERS WAS MORE EFFECTIVE COMPARED TO THE CONTROL GROUP ( $P < .05$ ). MOREOVER, THE RESULTS OF THE INDEPENDENT SAMPLES T-TEST ANALYSIS REVEALED THAT THERE WAS A SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE CONTROL GROUP AND EXPERIMENTAL GROUP ( $P < .05$ ). THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY SUGGEST THAT WRITTEN STRESS RECOGNITION ACTIVITIES FOR TEACHING WORD STRESS SHOULD BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT AT PRE-INTERMEDIATE LEVEL TO ENHANCE THE LEARNERS' RECOGNITION OF WORD STRESS.

**KEY WORDS:** EFL LEARNERS, WORD STRESS RECOGNITION, WRITTEN INSTRUCTION

## 1. Introduction

This article studied the use of word stress recognition rules which may help the learners explain the rules of stress determination. Word stress plays a significant role in understanding spoken English. Word stress is a part of language which is used by English speakers to communicate rapidly and accurately. Comprehensible input (Krashen, 1982) as one of the external factors plays an essential role in learning English language pronunciation. The importance of learning supra-segmentals for language learners has received considerable attention in the last few decades

(Foote, Holtby & Derwing, 2011). Generally, supra-segmental features consist of two main elements: stress and intonation.

Burani, Paizi and Sulpizio (2013) found that word frequency and outweighing influenced stress dominance. They argued that neighboring words' stress is the most effective factor in assigning stress to words in reading. The research has shown that the texts and contexts can affect students' vocabulary growth. This article intends to improve learners' stress recognition ability by written instruction of word stress among Iranian EFL learners at the intermediate level. This study attempts to answer the following research questions:

- RQ1: Does written instruction develop EFL learners' stress recognition at the intermediate level?  
RQ2: Is there a significant difference between written and traditional instruction in developing EFL learners' stress recognition?

## 2. Literature Review

Hudson (2000) stated that syllables may differ by degree of stress. Stress is the intensity or loudness of airstream and consists of three levels: acute accent mark ['] for primary, the grave accent mark [˘] for secondary, and mark [ˌ] for tertiary stress. Levis (2007) noted that both researchers and pronunciation teachers increasingly use technology to develop theories and practices which more closely match acoustic reality. Tanner and Landon (2009) examined the effects of computer-assisted pronunciation on ESL learners' pausing, stress, intonation and overall comprehensibility. The results showed that computer had a significant effect on learners' perception of pausing, word stress and stress production (Bian, 2013). According to Roach (2009), the following information is required to decide on the stress placement: (I) whether the word is morphologically simple or complex in having one or more affixes. (II) The grammatical category the word belongs to (e.g., noun, verb, adjective, etc). (III) The number of syllables in the word. (IV) The phonological structure of those syllables. He also maintained some rules for placing stress on verbs: in Two-Syllable verbs, if the second syllable contains a long vowel or diphthong, or if it ends with more than one consonant, the second syllable is stressed (e.g. "apply" /ə'plai/). If the final syllable contains a short vowel and one (or no) final consonant, the first syllable is stressed (e.g., "enter" /'entə/).

Nouns require a different rule in determining word stress: if the second syllable involves a short vowel, the stress will usually come on the first syllable. Otherwise, it will be on the second syllable. (e.g., "money" /'mʌni/). In the Three-Syllable nouns, if the last syllable contains a short vowel and ends with not more than one consonant, the stress will be placed on the penultimate syllable (e.g., "encounter" /ɪn'kaʊntə/). But if the final syllable contains a long vowel or diphthong, and or ends with more than one consonant, that final syllable will be stressed (e.g., "entertain" /entə'teɪn/). Zarifi and Mukundan (2012) shed light on the extent of agreement between the Malaysian ESL textbooks and the empirical corpus findings concerning the inclusion and presentation of the phrasal verb combinations by adopting a corpus-based approach. Results provided enough insight into the textbook-related difficulties that non-native speakers might experience in learning phrasal verbs and the areas of the pedagogy in need of supplementary activities. According to Bian (2013), word stress plays a significant role in comprehensibility and intelligibility but this poses problems for EFL learners because little attention has been given to it within the last thirty years. He examined the differences between Chinese and English stress and claimed that transfer of native language sound systems is one of the main reasons for making errors in foreign language pronunciation.

There are other stress recognition instruction modes such as rehearsal, repetition, demonstration, etc. Shing and Ying (2014) indicated that *films just give minor impact on the students' pronunciation. However, it is a good source to help them to improve their mastery of intonation, stress and pauses.* Teaching stress recognition tasks may include oral, written, or through using technology such as computer-assisted language learning (CALL), films, power point, etc. In these teaching modalities, the learners receive the rules of stress patterns through explicit instructions. Witt and Young (2000) investigated a method of automatic pronunciation scoring in CALL systems. The results

indicated that a likelihood-based pronunciation scoring can achieve usable. Chan and Li (2000) examined the phonological differences between Cantonese and English. At the segmental level, substitution, deletion and epenthesis are the most common strategies employed by Cantonese in reading English. Pronunciation problems which exist at the supra-segmental level are due to incomprehension of foreigners' accent.

Kim (2006) examined the reliability of automatic speech recognition (ASR) software to teach English pronunciation by focusing on a particular piece of software. The findings showed that ASR technology is still not as accurate as human analysis, the software maybe very helpful just in practicing pronunciation. AbuSeileek (2007) reviewed the efficiency of computer-based pronunciation instruction to advanced EFL at the university level to comprehend and produce the correct stress patterns. The findings revealed that computer-assisted pronunciation instruction is impressive in developing the EFL learners' ability to comprehend and produce various stress patterns in words, phrases, and sentences.

Ellis and Shintani (2010) studied the effects of two types of comprehension-based instruction (CBI) and production-based instruction (PBI) on Japanese learners' implicit learning of English plural -s. The results evinced that the two groups performed better than the control group on both the comprehension and production tests. Nassaji and Tian (2010) examined the effect of reconstruction cloze tasks and reconstruction editing tasks in learning English phrasal verbs. The study was conducted in two intact pre-intermediate adult English as Second Language (ESL) classrooms. The effectiveness of the tasks was determined by how successfully learners completed the tasks before and after the treatment. The results indicated that completing the tasks collaboratively resulted in a greater accuracy of task completion than completing them individually.

Johanne (2011) investigated how various child-internal and external factors predict English second (L2) children's acquisition. One hundred and sixty nine children from newcomers to Canada participated in this study that has been exposed to English between 3 to 62 months. The consequences showed that factors such as language aptitude, age and length of exposure to English were significant variations in children' L2 outcomes. Kim (2012) examined the effectiveness of incorporating computer-assisted language learning in instructing pronunciation to adult learners of English as a second language (ESL). The Technology Enhanced Accent Modification (TEAM) software was used to enhance the pronunciation of international graduate students at a U.S. university. Special emphasis was given to improving supra-segmental (e.g., tone, level, pitch, rhythm, stress, intonation, etc.) features in addition to segmental (e.g., vowels, consonants and semi-vowels) ones. This study focused on two male Korean graduate students, majoring in science and the Visual Aural Read/Write Kinesthetic (VARK) questionnaire (an instrument that measures learning preference). He found that the visual feedback of the TEAM program and individual learning preferences can enhance their self-awareness and self-monitoring of pronunciation.

Burani, Paizi and Sulpizio (2013) investigated stress assignment in Italian adult and young readers. Word frequency and number of stress friends influenced reading times and accuracy. In the presence of a majority of stress friends, the reading of low-frequency words was only affected by stress neighborhood. They argued that distributional information based on the number of stress friends is more effective in assigning stress to words in reading compared to stress dominance.

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1. Participants

The learners took a researcher-made pre-test on stress recognition which determines the scores at the beginning of the treatment. The learners were second year students majoring in Translation at the Abadan University, Iran. The research population included 127 students with the age ranging from 20 to 46. 92 students whose scores were one standard deviation below the mean were selected as the participants of the study. Then they were divided into two groups of experimental and control based on non-random convenience sampling method. Each group includes 46 participants.

### 3.2. Instrumentation

The first instrument was the pre-test designed based on the 10 reading passages in the participants' textbook "*ACTIVE skills for reading 2*" developed by Anderson (2007). The items were designed on 50 multi-syllable words in the format of multiple-choice items. The time allocated to the pre-test was 50 minutes. Before conducting the pre-test, it was piloted on 10 learners at the same level but they were other than the participants of the study. The pilot test revealed reliability of the pre-test as (.845) through KR-21 method. The second instrument was the post-test (i.e., the modified version of the pre-test which was the same in difficulty level but different in the word selection) which comprised of 50 multi-syllable words to determine the effectiveness of the treatment after the course.

### 3.3. Materials

The participants' textbook included 14 units and each unit contains one reading passage. Totally, ten readings passages were derived from the textbook. They were taught in ten sessions. The words were selected based on their patterns of stress in the multi-syllabic words. The words were highlighted in the passages and their stress patterns were taught either orally, through dictionary, or explained on the board.

### 3.4. Procedure

To fulfill the purpose of the study, before instruction, the researcher-made pre-test of word stress was used based on 10 reading passages and then 50 words were extracted from the participants' text book. The test served as the homogeneity test too. It was given to the participants to determine their level of proficiency of recognizing the primary stress on the words. Thus, 90 learners whose scores were one standard deviation below the mean were selected as the pre-intermediate level. Then they were assigned in two equal groups of experimental and control groups based on non-random convenience sampling method. The time of instruction in each group was 90 minutes which lasted in 10 sessions. Treatment was conducted based on Richards and Renandya (2002) who worked on teaching pronunciation methodologies.

In the experimental group, the participants were taught the rules of word stress with explanation on the board and determined the place of primary stress through presenting some samples on the board that were adopted from the textbook "Select Readings: Pre-Intermediate" in terms of the learners' difficulties on determining the place of stress on the specific syllables. The selection of syllables which get stress were explained regarding the loudness of stressed syllable or the sonority of the vowel which makes the syllable stressed. The participants were asked to read the text in which the words were derived and determine the primary stress on each word orally and on the board or in their notebooks.

The control group was given the same reading passages extracted from the same textbook and they were taught the stress rules through rehearsal and oral instruction. They were taught how to use dictionary and find the place of the primary stress. The word stress was taught to the participants by means of listening to CD of the book and repeating the sentences to be familiar with the words stress in accordance with their function in the sentence.

In the end of the treatment, a post-test which is similar to the pre-test in terms of the format of words and was extracted from 10 reading passages. The post-test included 50 words in the format of 50 multiple-choice items. The time was allocated to the test was 50 minutes. In which the participants were asked to put the primary stress on each word. Eventually, attained results compared with each other to find out the effect of the treatment in the two groups.

### 3.5. Data Analysis

The data were analyzed through Paired and Independent Samples t-test to compare the pre and post-tests of the experimental and control groups. The Independent Samples t-test compared the pre-

test and the post-test of both groups while the Paired Samples t-test compared the pre and post-test of each group before and after the course.

#### 4. Results

This section deals with the results obtained throughout the research and analytically examines the groups' performance in the study. To answer the research questions, the descriptive statistics of the pre-test in both groups are set forth in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of the Groups' Pre-tests

Pre-test	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Experimental	46	15.5435	4.04808	.59686
Control	46	13.8478	6.01098	.88627

Table 1 shows descriptive statistics of the both groups' pre-tests. The results indicate that each group included 46 participants. The mean of pre-test in the experimental group was 15.5435 but in the control group was 13.8478. Since the two standard errors of mean are close to each other, the differences are presented in Table 2 through Independent Samples t-test.

Table 2. Independent Samples t-test (pre-test)

Table 2: Independent Samples t-test (pre test)										
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
Written	n	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Equal	var	.08	.76	-	90	.551	-.717	1.198	-3.09	1.66



p	ria							
r	nc							
e	es							
t	as							
e	su							
s	m							
t	ed							
Equal		-	89.	.551	-.717	1.198	-3.09	1.66
va								
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nc								
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Table 2 shows that the observed  $t$  (.598) is less than the critical  $t$  (1.99) with  $df=90$ . Thus the difference between the two groups is not significant at ( $p<0.05$ ).

Table 3. Descriptive statistics of the Groups' Post-tests

Post-test	N	Mean	Std.	Deviat ion	Std.	Error Mean
Experimental	46	15.5435	4.04808		.59686	
Control	46	13.8478	6.01098		.88627	

Table 3 demonstrates mean, standard deviation and standard error of mean of the post-test. The mean in the experimental group is 15.5435 but the mean in the control group is 13.8478. The differences between the performances of the two groups in post-test were illustrated in Table 4.

Table 4. Independent Samples  $t$ -test (post-test)

Levene's Test for Equality of		Test		t-test for Equality of Means				95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
F	Sig.	t	df	Sig.	Mea	Std.	Lo	Upper	
					i	E			
					l	r			
					i	o			
					f	r			
					f	D			

								€	i		
								1	f		
								€	f		
								1	e		
								c	r		
								€	e		
									n		
									c		
									e		
Equal variances assumed	10.144	.002	1.587	9	.11	1.695	1.061	-42	3.81		
Equal variances not assumed			1.587	7	.11	1.695	1.061	-43	3.82		

Table 4 shows the Independent Samples t-test of the post-test. Since the observed  $t$  (1.587) is less than the critical  $t$  (1.99) with  $df=90$ , the difference between the two groups is not significant at ( $p<0.05$ ).

Table 5. Paired Samples Descriptive Statistics

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Written pretest	10.9348	46	5.59524	.82497
	Written posttest	15.5435	46	4.04808	.59686
Pair 2	Control pretest	11.6522	46	5.89997	.86990
	Control posttest	13.8478	46	6.01098	.88627

Table 5 shows the Paired Samples descriptive statistics of the two groups. The results proved that the difference between pre and post-test of the first pair is more than the second pair. Furthermore, the details of this difference are calculated through Paired Samples t-test in Table 6.

Table 6. Paired Samples t-Test (Pre vs. Post-tests)

Table 6 exhibits the differences between the pre and post-test of the two groups. Results show that the observed t (4.977) is greater than the critical t (1.99) with df=45, the difference between the experimental pre and post-tests is significant at ( $p < 0.05$ ). Since the observed t in control group

		Paired Differences			95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Written pretest - written posttest	-4.60	6.28	.926	-6.47	-2.74	-4.977	45	.000
Pair 2	Control pretest - control posttest	-2.19	7.60	1.12	-4.45	.06	-1.957	45	.057

(1.957) is less than the critical t (1.99) with df=45, the difference between the control group's pre and post-tests is not significant at ( $p < 0.05$ ). Therefore, the participants in the first pair (experimental group) showed a significant promotion in learning stress recognition.

## 5. Discussion

The performance of the experimental group was significant compared with the control group. This is raised by cause of activities were utilized by participants to recognize the place of primary stress. Further to the purpose of the study, participants in the experimental group were instructed explicitly and concentrated on studying word stress rules and phonetics accompany with the written samples with distinct stress on the board and their explanations. The words were adopted from the textbook "select readings intermediate" written by (Lee & Gundersen, 2011) shed light on the learners' problematic areas including vowels, diphthongs, and triphthongs. Then participants were asked to read the passage and put the primary stress on each of given words considering their functions within the context. Therefore, one of the main reasons resulted better performance

of the experimental group compared with the control group was explicit instruction and furnished by explanations of the stress rules nevertheless both groups were subject to the input and repetition which are in the same line with Krashen and Terrel (1982) who claimed that second language learning occurs as the same way the first language was acquired. It emphasized communication, and placed less importance on correction of student errors and conscious grammar study.

The result of this study is supported by Bassetti and Atkinson (2015) who examined various orthographic effects on the pronunciation of English words among Italian native users of the Italian phonologically writing system. Results showed that orthographic forms affected known words of experienced instructed learners. Ellis and Shintani (2010) are in the same line with the results of this study by examining the impression of production-based instruction (PBI) and comprehension-based instruction (CBI) on acquisition of English plural -s among young Japanese learners. The findings demonstrated that the both CBI and PBI were better than the control group.

## 5. Conclusion

This study concentrated on word stress recognition among intermediate EFL learners through written instruction. The participants in both experimental and control groups were listened to CD of the passage but the rules of phonetics and word stress in the experimental group instructed explicitly accompanied by explanations while on the contrary in control group was taught implicitly with no explanations.

After instructions, the participants were given a post-test; the results showed that the word stress recognition ability of the experimental group who received explicit instruction and explanation about the rules surpassed that of the control group. The null hypothesis of the study in the experimental group was rejected due to a significant difference between pre and posttest but it was accepted in the control group because the difference between pre and post-test was not significant.

The findings of this study demonstrated the fact that this study can be effectual if EFL teachers help students to improve their pronunciation and comprehension by means of word stress recognition. To this end, using self-correcting and affective activities might be helpful. The learners may improve their pronunciation and word stress recognition. Although, the role of other activities such as repetition, role play, conversation drills and communicative in developing word stress should not be neglected.

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## EFFECTS OF ONLINE READING ON IRANIAN EFL LEARNERS' WRITING APPREHENSION

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### ABSTRACT

TEACHING AND LEARNING A FOREIGN/SECOND LANGUAGE VIA EMPLOYING COMPUTERS AND THE INTERNET HAS BEEN THE FOCUS OF A LARGE BODY OF RESEARCH. HOWEVER, LITTLE ATTENTION HAS BEEN PAID TO THIS NOTION IN THE IRANIAN CONTEXT. THE PRESENT STUDY WAS AN ATTEMPT TO SHED LIGHT ON THE EFFECTS OF ONLINE READING, AS PREWRITING ACTIVITY, ON IRANIAN EFL LEARNERS' WRITING APPREHENSION. PARTICIPANTS OF THE STUDY WERE 57 INTERMEDIATE EFL LEARNERS FROM TWO BRANCHES OF ISLAMIC AZAD UNIVERSITY IN ISFAHAN. THIS QUASI-EXPERIMENTAL STUDY USED A PRETEST-POSTTEST DESIGN WITH EXPERIMENTAL AND CONTROL GROUPS. LEARNERS' WRITING APPREHENSION WAS EXAMINED USING DALY AND MILLER'S (1975) WRITING APPREHENSION TEST (WAT) AS THE PRETEST. DURING THE EXPERIMENT, STUDENTS IN THE EXPERIMENTAL GROUP RECEIVED ONLINE READING AS THE TREATMENT, WHILE TRADITIONAL WRITING INSTRUCTIONS WERE UTILIZED FOR THE CONTROL GROUP. AFTER A FOUR-WEEK INSTRUCTION WHICH REQUIRED STUDENTS TO WRITE SIX ESSAYS ON THE TOPICS PROVIDED BY THE INSTRUCTOR, THEIR WRITING APPREHENSION WAS MEASURED AGAIN USING THE SAME RUBRIC. IN ORDER TO INVESTIGATE THE EFFECTS OF THE TREATMENT, AN INDEPENDENT SAMPLES T-TEST AND A PAIRED SAMPLES T-TEST WERE CONDUCTED. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY REVEALED THAT ONLINE READING BEFORE WRITING ASSIGNMENTS SIGNIFICANTLY DECREASED STUDENTS' WRITING APPREHENSION. RESULTS OF THE STUDY PROVIDED PRACTICAL ASSISTANCE FOR CURRICULUM DESIGNERS AND ENGLISH TEACHERS TO FACILITATE TEACHING WRITING AND MAKE WRITING ASSIGNMENTS MORE PLEASANT RATHER THAN STRESSFUL FOR STUDENTS IN EFL CONTEXTS.

**KEYWORDS:** ONLINE READING; EFL WRITING; WRITING APPREHENSION

### 1. Introduction

Writing is an important productive skill which can be utilized in learning other receptive or productive skills (Zhu, 2004). Notwithstanding the importance of writing, most EFL learners, and even their teachers, experience a variety of unfavorable emotions, such as fear and anxiety (Arnold, 2007; Byrd, 2010; Zhu, 2004) which can hamper the process of developing writing skills. Pajares and Valiante (1996) believed if learners are unwilling to express their ideas in writing or feel apprehensive about writing, they are unlikely to be proficient at writing compositions (as cited in: Sadeghi, 2014).

The intricacy of writing enhances anxiety level in students which often demotivates students and results in negative attitudes towards writing (Gere, 1987; Sharples, 1993). The challenging nature of writing makes most students regard it as an ability they need to obtain to pass their exams (Yavuz & Genc, 1998). Even those proficient in other language skills experience the same problems and are afraid of making errors in their writing. Indeed they feel expressing ideas in written English is beyond their command of the language (Erkan, 2011).

The term 'writing apprehension' was first introduced by Daly and Miller in 1975 as "the tendency of a person to avoid the process of writing - particularly when it is to be evaluated in some way" (p.244). Moreover, writing apprehension is defined as "dispositional attitudes, existing over time and context and situational attitudes specific to particular tasks" (Rife & Stacks, 1988, p. 39).

Horwitz et al. (1986) discriminated foreign language anxiety (FLA) from general anxiety and defined it as a "distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process" (p. 128). They argued language anxiety consists of multiple elements such as the learners' attitudes and beliefs towards learning a foreign language which bears no resemblance to other learning processes. Moreover, Gardner and MacIntyre (1993) defined language anxiety as the feeling of stress which arises when the learners are required to use a foreign language despite their insufficient knowledge. Indeed, foreign language anxiety is specific to EFL contexts and cannot be perceived in other learning situations. Obviously, writing apprehension is a critical problem that teachers need to find a solution to overcome it (Smith, 1984).

### 1.1. The Internet and Online Resources

Today the accessibility to computers for most learners and educational institutes has caused a growing attention among many researchers to utilize its potentials such as the Internet, to facilitate EFL/ESL learning. As Hirvela (2005) mentioned, with the advent of computer technologies, in particular the Internet and World Wide Web, which provide easy access to infinite texts and other sources of information, reconceiving teaching and writing is essential. By virtue of the internet, both students and teachers access to a new wide range of authentic materials, such as online newspapers, books, and other similar sources that can be used for reading activities (Linder, 2014). King (2003) affirmed that:

Educational technology application and innovation hold the potential to greatly impact educational practice; as we consider such application, we face an opportunity to truly transform our perspectives of the profession, our paradigms of what learning experiences are like, and our dreams of what can happen. (p. 5).

## 2. Review of the Literature

According to Daly and Wilson (1983), students with high levels of writing anxiety gain lower scores, and produce less effective and low quality writings compared to their less anxious counterparts. In their study Horwitz et al. (1986), discovered a significant correlation between foreign language anxiety and the students' grades, findings of this study revealed that more anxious students were less proficient and received lower grades than those who had lower levels of foreign language anxiety.

Writing apprehension has been investigated in numerous studies which provide surprisingly controversial results. According to Daly (1978) students who have lower levels of writing apprehension exhibit better writing skills compared to those experience high levels of apprehension. Erkan (2011) investigated the relationships between writing apprehension and writing performance, and reported a significant correlation between students' writing apprehension and performance. Phinney (1991) argued little research has been conducted on the impact of computers on students' writing apprehension; however, he believed using computers in writing classes decreases students' writing apprehension (as cited in Izzo, 1996).

Employing computer technology in both teaching and learning languages has been under study for the past few decades. O'Donnell (2006) contended that online resources are available approximately

24 hours which, compared to traditional in-class instructions, provides more opportunities for learners to practice. As Naqvi (2006) put it students prefer utilizing technology, in particular computers, as a means of delivering knowledge and information in their learning process. Establishing such positive attitudes towards web learning, would result in more effective learning and understanding.

Results of a study conducted by Sullivan and Pratt (1996), in which computer assisted and traditional classrooms were compared to observe the effect of computers on the students' writing apprehension, revealed no significant difference in terms of writing apprehension between the two classrooms. Zaid (2011) investigated the effects of web-based pre-writing activities on college EFL students' writing apprehension. Surprisingly, findings of his study demonstrated raising writing apprehension.

The present study was an attempt to discover whether online reading before writing affects writing apprehension among Iranian EFL learners.

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1. Participants

Participants of this study were 57 EFL learners selected from two branches of Islamic Azad University, Isfahan (Khorasgan) and Najafabad, majoring Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL). Regarding the significance of homogeneity, in order to choose homogeneous participants in terms of their writing performances, first, the Quick Placement Test (2001) was conducted. The obtained scores ranged from 29 to 42, which indicated intermediate level of English proficiency. Second, so as to evaluate their writing apprehension before the study, their writing apprehension was assessed through Daly and Miller (1975) Writing Apprehension Test (WAT). The results indicated that they were homogeneous in terms of writing apprehension. Afterwards, students from Isfahan (Khorasgan) branch (N=27) were chosen for the experimental, and students from Najafabad branch (N=23) were chosen for the control group. The experimental group received online reading before writing as the treatment, while the control group received traditional methods of accomplishing writing activities.

#### 3.2. Instruments and Materials

The first instrument utilized in this study, was the Quick Placement Test (2001) which consisted of 60 questions. The second instrument utilized in this study, was the Writing Apprehension Test (WAT) developed by Daly and Miller (1975); it was conducted as both pretest and posttest to assess students' writing apprehension. The WAT is comprised of a 26-items Likert Scale and the students answer the questions by selecting 1(strongly agree), 2(agree), 3(uncertain), 4(disagree), 5(strongly disagree). Scores may range from 26 to 130 indicating respectively the highest and lowest levels of anxiety. The scoring process follows a simple formula (Daly & Miller, 1975):

Writing Apprehension = 78 + positive scores - negative scores

The materials used for the experimental group were eight webpages, introduced by the instructor, which provided online reading texts for the students to use as samples for writing. Each week the instructor introduced two webpages which provided a text, with a similar topic to the students' writing topic. This reading process served as a prewriting activity for the students in writing the assigned essay (Table 1). In selecting reading materials it was essential to provide texts which were comprehensible for all learners. Therefore, McAlpine's EFLAW readability scale (2004) was used and materials with appropriate readability were selected. However, the control group was taught through product-oriented methods and did not benefit from any prewriting activities.

Table 1.

*The Procedure of the Study for the Experimental Group*

Week	Topic
Pretest	Can technology facilitate learning English as a foreign language?

1	How necessary is a higher education?
2	The effects of technology on education.
3	The benefits of reading for EFL learners.
4	Does the Internet facilitate research?
Posttest	Can technology facilitate learning English as a foreign language?

### 3.3. Procedure

The present study was conducted among students who enrolled in Advanced Writing course at two branches of Islamic Azad University in Isfahan province. As an initial stage, it was essential to investigate whether the participants were homogeneous prior to the experiment. To do so, firstly, all students took the QPT which indicated that they were homogeneous in terms of English proficiency and they were all intermediate level learners. Secondly, the participants were asked to answer the WAT in order to discover their anxiety levels. Results obtained from the WAT indicated that they were homogeneous in terms of writing apprehension.

After making certain about the participants' homogeneity, students from Isfahan branch (N=30) were selected for the experimental, and students from Najafabad branch (N=27) were selected for the control group.

During the four educational sessions, learners in the control group wrote an essay each week on the topic provided by the instructor with no prewriting activities. In the experimental group, on the other hand, each session the instructor introduced two webpages which contained reading texts relevant to their writing topic. They were asked to read the webpages and extract new ideas, information, vocabularies, styles, and grammatical structures; afterwards, start writing down their essays. The procedure of online reading and writing essays were more time consuming to be performed within the class time limits, consequently, both groups were asked to complete their assignments at home. The students in the control group wrote their essays on papers and delivered them to the instructor. However, those in the experimental group wrote and typed their essays via using Microsoft Word and emailed them to their instructor.

As the final stage of the experiment, in order to discover whether online reading activities had any effect on the learners' writing apprehension, the WAT posttest was conducted to all students.

### 3.4. Data Analysis

In order to answer the posed research question, it was essential to examine the participants' writing apprehension both before and after the study. Therefore, Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was employed to calculate mean scores and standard deviation in pretest and posttest WAT in both experimental and control groups. Then, the mean scores of both groups, in pretest and posttest, were compared through independent samples *t*-tests. Finally, a paired samples *t*-test was run in each group to discover how the learners' apprehension level changed at the end of the study.

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Results of the Placement Test

In order to choose homogenous participants in both experimental and control groups, a Quick Placement Test (2001) was used. Table 4.1 presents descriptive data about each group in terms of the number, mean, standard deviation, and standard error of measurement, respectively.

Table 2.

*Descriptive Statistics for the Placement Test*

	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Means
Placement	Experimental	30	34.63	4.18	.76
	Control	27	34.78	4.57	.88

According to the descriptive statistics presented in Table 4.1., the mean score of the experimental group ( $M = 34.63$ ,  $SD = 4.18$ ) was less than the mean score of the control group ( $M = 34.78$ ,  $SD = 4.57$ ). Therefore, in order to discover whether this difference was statically different, an independent samples  $t$ -test was used.

Table 3.

*Independent Samples T-Test for the Placement Test*

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances	Test Statistics		t-test for Equality of Means	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Placement	Equal variances assumed	.501	.482	-.125	55	.901
	Equal variances not assumed			-.124	52.981	.902

According to the results presented in Table 3., the  $p$  value under the *Sig* column is greater than the alpha level ( $.90 > .05$ ) which indicates that there was not a statistically significant difference between the participants and that they were homogenous. The results of the QPT are illustrated in Figure 1.

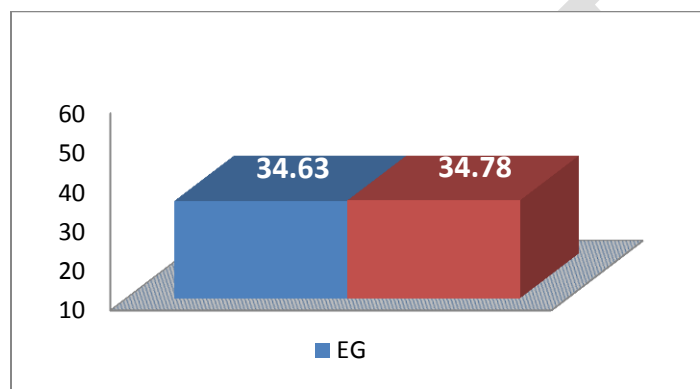


Figure1. Results of the QPT for the experimental and control groups

#### 4.2. Results of the Writing Apprehension Pretest

The rationale behind employing the writing apprehension (WAT) pretest was to investigate whether both experimental and control groups were homogeneous in terms of writing apprehension at the beginning of the study. In order to achieve this objective, an independent samples  $t$ -test was used. Descriptive statistics and the results of the independent samples  $t$ -test are presented in Tables 4. and 5., respectively. Additionally, the results are graphically represented in Figure 2.

Table 4.

*Descriptive Statistics for the Writing Apprehension-Pretest*

	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Apprehension for Pretest	Experimental	30	82.20	13.61	2.49
	Control	27	76.74	10.11	1.95

According to Table 4., the mean score of the experimental group on the WAT pretest ( $M = 82.20$ ,  $SD = 13.61$ ) was greater than the mean score of the control group ( $M = 76.74$ ,  $SD = 10.11$ ). Which indicate at the beginning of the study writing apprehension in the experimental group was less than the control group. However, in order to discover whether this difference was statically significant, an independent samples  $t$ -test was used. Table 5., presents the results.



Table 5.

*Independent Samples T-Test for the Writing Apprehension-Pretest*

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means			
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	
Apprehension Pretest	Equal variances assumed	3.475	.068	1.703	55	.094	
	Equal variances not assumed			1.730	53.173	.090	

According to Table 5., the  $p$  value was greater than the alpha level ( $.09 > .05$ ) which indicates that there was not a statistically significant difference between the participants in the two groups in terms of writing apprehension at the beginning the experiment.

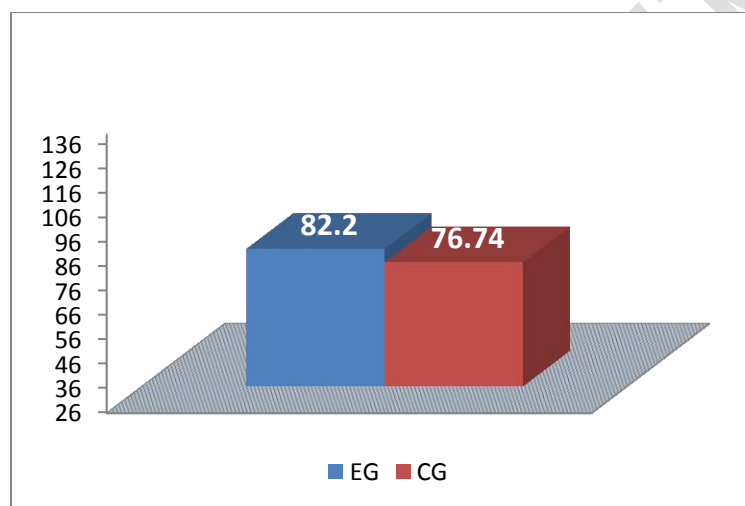


Figure 2. Mean scores of the WAT pretest for the experimental and control groups

#### 4.3. Results of the Writing Apprehension Posttest

The second research question of this study intended to find out whether online reading before writing affects writing apprehension among Iranian EFL learners. Like the analysis performed for the first research question, descriptive statistics obtained from their WAT posttest, Table 6., was analyzed.

Table 6.

*Descriptive Statistics for the Writing Apprehension-Posttest*

Group		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Posttest	Experimental	30	91.97	12.21	2.23
	Control	27	78.70	9.96	1.92

As it is demonstrated in Table 6., the mean score of the experimental group on the WAT posttest ( $M = 91.97$ ,  $SD = 12.21$ ) was greater than the mean score of the control group ( $M = 78.70$ ,  $SD = 9.96$ ). These results indicate that writing apprehension was noticeably decreased in the experimental group, while the control group exhibited a slight decrease. Nevertheless, in order to find out

whether this difference was statically significant, an independent samples *t*-test was used. Table 7. presents the results of the independent samples *t*-test.

Table 7.  
*Independent Samples T-Test for theWriting Apprehension-Posttest*

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means		
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Posttest	Equal variances assumed	.467	.497	4.464	55	.000
	Equal variances not assumed			4.513	54.503	.000

According to table 7., the *p* value was less than the alpha level (*p*<.05) which indicates that there was a statistically significant difference between the participants in the two groups in terms of writing apprehension at the end of the experiment. These results proved that the treatment, online reading, significantly reduced writing apprehension among Iranian Intermediate EFL learners. Figure 3. represents the results graphically.

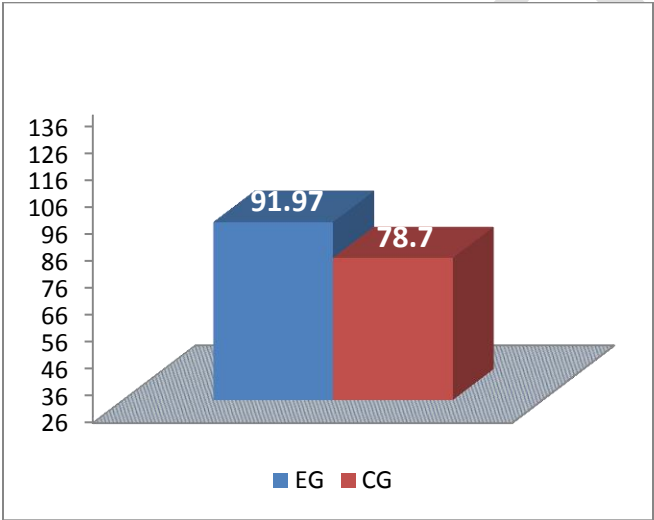


Figure 3. Mean scores of the WAT posttest for the experimental and control groups

4.4. Results of Paired Sample T-Testsfor Writing Apprehension Pretest and Posttest

After showing the differences between the performance of the experimental and control groups in terms of their writing quality and writing apprehension before and after the treatment, it was essential to explore how the participants in each group benefitted from their own instruction. Hence, two paired samples *t*-test were conducted. Table 8. presents the descriptive statistics for the performance of the participants of experimental group in the WAT pretest and posttest.

Table 8.  
*Descriptive Statistics for Writing Apprehension for the Experimental Group in Pretest and Posttest*

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean

Pair 1	Apprehension for Experimental Group in Pretest	82.20	30	13.61	2.49
	Apprehension for Experimental Group in Posttest	91.97	30	12.21	2.23

As it can be observed in Table 8., the mean score of the posttest in the experimental group ( $M = 91.97$ ,  $SD = 12.21$ ) was notably greater than the mean score of the pretest ( $M = 82.20$ ,  $SD = 13.61$ ). In order to examine whether this difference was statically significant, an independent samples  $t$ -test was used. Table 9., presents the results of the independent samples  $t$ -test.

Table 9.

*Paired Samples T-Test for Writing Apprehension for the Experimental Group in Pretest and Posttest*

	Paired Differences Mean Std.	t	df	Sig.	(2- tail ed)
Pair 1					
Apprehension for Experimental Group in Pretest	-9.77	11.38	29	.000	
Apprehension for Experimental Group in Posttest					

According to table 9., the  $p$  value was less than the alpha level ( $p < .05$ ) which indicates that there was a statistically significant difference between the performance of the participants in the experimental group, in that their writing apprehension was significantly reduced. Figure 4. clearly demonstrate this difference.

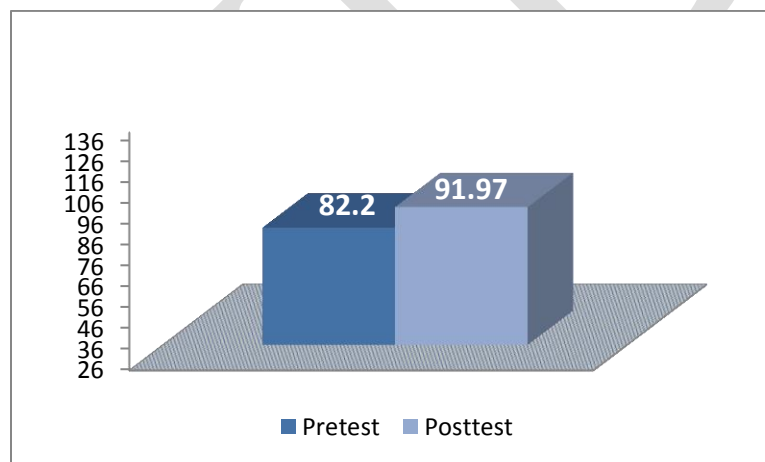


Figure 4. Mean scores of the experimental group pretest and posttest WAT

A similar analysis was then employed for the control group. Table 10., presents the descriptive statistics obtained.

Table 10.

*Descriptive Statistics for Writing Apprehension for the Control Group in Pretest and Posttest*

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Apprehension for Control Group in Pretest	76.74	27	10.11	1.95
	Apprehension for Control Group in Posttest	78.70	27	9.96	1.92

The results presented in Table 10., indicate a slight difference in the mean score of the WAT pretest ( $M = 76.74$ ,  $SD = 10.11$ ) and that of the posttest ( $M = 78.70$ ,  $SD = 9.96$ ). According to these results, the writing apprehension in the control group was reduced at the end of their instruction. To discover whether this difference was significant, an independent samples  $t$ -test was conducted. Table 11., presents the results.

Table 11.

*Paired Samples T-Test for Writing Apprehension for the Control Group in Pretest and Posttest*

	Paired Differences	t	df	Sig.	(2-tailed)
	Mean Std. Deviation				
Pair 1					
Apprehension for Control Group in Pretest	-1.96	.81	26	.000	
Apprehension for Control Group in Posttest					

According to Table 11., the  $p$  value was less than the alpha level ( $p < .05$ ) which indicates that writing apprehension in the control group was significantly reduced at the end of the study. Figure 5., illustrates the results graphically.

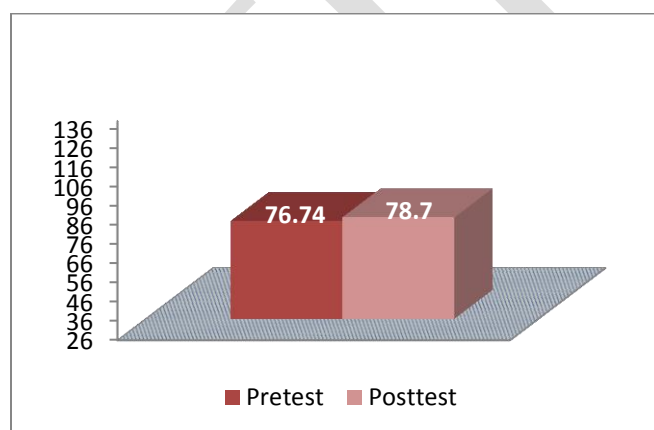


Figure 4.9. Mean scores of the control group pretest and posttest WAT

Considering the results of the paired samples  $t$ -tests for both groups, it can be observed that the writing apprehension in both groups was reduced at the end of the experiment. However, participants in the experimental group were more successful in reducing their writing apprehension than their counterparts in the control group.

## 5. Discussion and Conclusion

This study aimed at investigating effects of online reading, as a prewriting activity, on the writing apprehension in Iranian intermediate EFL learners. To answer the research question, the results of

the WAT pretest and posttest were analyzed. According to the results of the WAT pretest, participants in the control group gained lower scores which indicated that their writing apprehension was slightly higher than the experimental group; nonetheless, this difference was not significant. After the treatment, results of the posttest WAT revealed a remarkable increase in the experimental group's scores which indicated that they could successfully reduce their writing apprehension. Likewise, the control group showed slight degrees of increase in the posttest scores; however, this was not considerable in comparison with the experimental group.

Thus, it can be concluded that online reading before writing significantly decreased writing apprehension in the experimental group. These results are consistent with several studies including Erkan and Saban (2011) who found a negative relationship between students' writing apprehension and writing achievements and observed that students with high levels of anxiety gained lower scores in writing; and Liu and Ni (2014) who found the negative impact of writing anxiety on students' performance in writing argumentative essays.

Findings of this study affirmed that online reading significantly reduced the learners' writing apprehension. Results of this study can be beneficial for material developers, curriculum designers, language teachers, and language learners.

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# THE EFFECT OF GUIDED-WRITING STRATEGY ON IRANIAN INTERMEDIATE EFL LEARNERS' WRITING IMPROVEMENT

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## ABSTRACT

THE PRESENT STUDY MAINLY DISCUSSED AND EXEMPLIFIED THE EFFECT OF GUIDED-WRITING STRATEGY ON IRANIAN INTERMEDIATE EFL LEARNERS' WRITING IMPROVEMENT. FOR THIS PURPOSE, 60 LEARNERS WERE SELECTED AND THEY WERE RANDOMLY ASSIGNED INTO TWO GROUPS, CONTROL AND EXPERIMENTAL (N=60). THEN BOTH GROUPS SAT FOR A PRE-TEST OF WRITING. AFTERWARDS, THE EXPERIMENTAL GROUP RECEIVED TREATMENT BASED ON GUIDED-WRITING STRATEGY WHILE THE CONTROL GROUP RECEIVED NO TREATMENT. THE TREATMENT PROCEDURE TOOK FOR 12 SESSIONS. FINALLY, BOTH GROUPS SAT FOR THE POST-TEST OF WRITING. THE STATISTICAL ANALYSIS WAS RUN THROUGH INDEPENDENT SAMPLES T-TEST. IT WAS EXPLORED THAT LEARNERS' WRITING IMPROVED WHEN THEY WERE PROVIDED WITH GUIDED-WRITING STRATEGY.

**KEY TERMS:** GUIDED-WRITING STRATEGY, WRITING IMPROVEMENT, EFL LEARNERS.

## 1. Introduction

Writing is usually thought to be the most difficult skill to acquire and should only be thought after students have learned the other skills. It is a matter of putting together strings of grammatically correct sentences. Among four skills in learning a new language, writing competence is the abstract knowledge that proficient writers have about it. It is one of the least understood of skills and also the most difficult to teach. The notion that writing is simply a skill that students learn has been convincingly challenged by research and theory and social practice theory and academic literacy. Learning to write as a basic skill in second language learning and teaching is a fundamental goal in foreign language classroom. It plays a significant role in L2 learning at any level. The importance and role of writing as a medium to convey ideas and a channel to L2

learning has been acknowledged by several authors (Eisterhold, 1990; Hughey, Wormuth, Hartfiel, & Jacobs, 1983; Raimes, 1983).

In this study guided-writing is defined as instruction presented to small, temporary groups of students who share similar needs at a particular point in time (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001). Guided-writing provides an important context for teachers' "in-the-moment" assessment and guidance of student writing.

Guided-writing is an essential component of a balanced writing curriculum, providing an additional supported step towards independent writing. Through guided writing, children are supported during the different stages of the writing process. As an activity, it should be carefully targeted towards groups of children according to their current targets or specific needs. Within the teaching sequence, guided-writing would normally follow on from shared writing, though not necessarily during the same session. Teachers should consider carefully the purpose of the guided session and select the children accordingly. The aim is to provide support that is going to help children to improve their writing and to work with increasing independence.

The development of language skills affects a person's productive ability. Several researchers have demonstrated personal success in disciplines that is strongly related to a person's writing ability (Lerstrom, 1990) and depends on good writing skills (Cho & Schunn, 2007). Specifically, good writing skills require training and prior research has proven writing as an important part of the elementary school curriculum (Lidvall, 2008). However, most students are usually apprehensive toward writing activities, and writing instruction remains an area of low interest for those students (Clark, 2004; Lidvall, 2008). Besides, the lack of suitable learning strategies in writing results in low motivation for students (Lo & Hyland, 2007; Yang, Ko, & Chung, 2005). To solve these problems, Lipstein and Renninger (2007) suggested that students who are interested are more likely to develop a better understanding of writing, set writing goals, make use of various strategies, and seek feedback on their writing.

Therefore, a better understanding of how to develop a suitable learning strategy or authoring tool to enhance students' writing interest and motivation is worth examining. Many studies have been conducted on the relevant factors related to writing attitudes in terms of pedagogy and learning strategy. For instance, Brindley and Schneider (2002) pointed out writing instruction should evolve into a more effective set of techniques and strategies that include modeling, shared writing, guided-writing, and interactive writing (Pinnell & Fountas, 1998 ; Routman, 1991).

Regarding the learning strategy to improve writing, Lee (1994) showed how pictures can be used as an effective guided-writing strategy to facilitate students' writing process and improve writing proficiency. More specifically, such instruction using pictures in a guided-writing environment can assist beginning foreign language students to develop and improve their writing skills as well as lower their anxiety in terms of expressing themselves in the target language.

## 2. Literature review

One of the important language skills in our life could be the writing skill, people can inform others, carry out transactions, persuade, infuriate, and express their feelings through writing. However, writing or learning to write in a second language is not just writing something down, it could be a hard task, and it is one of the four basic skills in learning a language. Writing is marked as one of the ways to give an idea or message which is formed in writing on a piece of paper or the other area. It is an act of making marks on certain surface. Specifically, writing is one kind of expression in language which is created by particular set of symbols, having conventional values for representing the wordings of particular language which is drawn up visually.

Prior to the advent of student-centered learning, heralded by the communicative approach, ELT was largely pre-occupied with the finished product in directing its learners towards pre-specified objectives. In the, aptly named, product approach a student's attention focuses on adhering to and duplicating models and in particular on correct language. As Johnson (2003) maintains, in the product approach meaning and functions are not taken into account and writing is

decontextualized. In other words, typically, students in classes adopting the product approach, find themselves studying model texts and attempting various exercises aimed toward drawing their attention to relevant features of a text. These exercises would require students to check comprehension by completing sentences or adding logical connections, following which, in a final exercise students would produce parallel products based on their own information. Moreover, in this approach, the writing reinforces or tests the accurate application of grammatical rules; controlled composition tasks provide the text and ask the student to manipulate linguistic forms within the text. In other words, writing classes emphasize the correct grammar, using a range of vocabulary and sentence structures, meaningful punctuation, and accurate spelling.

According to Pincas (1982a, p. 185), "in this approach the learner is not allowed to create in the target language at all. The use of language is the manipulation of fixed patterns. These patterns are learned by imitation; and not until they have been learned can originally occur". This comment implies that the approach seems willing to sacrifice learner's motivation and instead emphasize the correctness. On the same front, Grabe & Kaplan (1996) criticized this approach and believed that the product approach underestimated many dynamic aspects in the process of writing. They propose that the product approach led students and teachers to believe that the planning stage began and ended in the initial period of composition.

Along the same lines, Johnson (2003) refers to grammatical focus of this approach and attributes the failure of most students to find a close relationship between grammatical form and function to their being taught grammatical features separate from the context. Therefore, their knowledge of grammar was carried over to their ability to write.

In recent years, there has been emphasis on the writing process. Many process writing textbooks have been published which focus on content through several drafts of a paper and leave scrutiny of form to the final draft. In this approach, students' learning English composition as a second or foreign language, struggle with many structural issues including selecting proper words, using correct grammar, generating ideas, and developing ideas about specific topics.

In line with the above-mentioned perspective, Chastain (1988, p. 251) asserts that: "Recently, various writing specialists have proposed a distinction between the process of writing and the written product. Their contention is that if the teacher wants to improve the product, she must assist the students in the ways that will enable them to improve the process they go through to produce the product". The process-oriented approach to teaching writing is an idea that began to flourish 30 years ago, as a result of executive research on first language writing and that the approach has long been used in English language composition and English as a second language courses, and in recent years it has been adopted in foreign language classes as well. Logically, this approach could have been developed as a reaction to the confines presented by the product approach. Consequently, students changing classes from product to process, from an approach devoted to correct form and accuracy would potentially find themselves liberated with an approach concerned with individual levels of fluency and expression.

In the reader/genre-oriented approach, the additional elements of audience and social context are included in the teaching of writing. According to this approach, writers who recognize the context and audience (the discourse community) for which and for whom the written product is generated are likely to appreciate the importance of rhetorical knowledge such as format, style and content in matching a text to a social purpose and shaping a successful text. This emphasis on the constraints of form and content is related to the notion of 'genre' (Bryant & Bradley, 1983).

Communication scholars and second language acquisition researchers have attempted to give a new theory that clears the ways for developing learner skills. It makes sense here to consider the most recent Hayes' (1996) model and its latest modification (Hayes, 2000). The concept of this model describes writing in terms of two dimensions which are related to the task and individuals. The part related to the task comments about the different factors affect on individual and this factor also divided into two parts. First part related to social environments and second part is related to physical environments.

Guided writing:

- enables the teacher to tailor the teaching to the needs of the group;
- facilitates the teaching and learning of individual children. Although guided-writing is a group activity focused on the needs of the group, the teacher is able to observe and respond to the needs of individuals within the group;
- provides the teacher with the opportunity to extend and challenge more-able groups of children;
- encourages the children to be active participants in discussions about writing;
- builds confidence – the groups are all grappling with the same issues;
- allows the teacher to give immediate feedback on success and the opportunity to discuss further areas for improvement.

### 3. Methodology

This study took different steps in application and managing the methodology of the research, which include the selection of the subjects, instrument and materials. It should be noted that three types of tests were used in this study, one is an OPT test which was used to make the subjects homogeneous.

#### Participants

At the first stage, about 115 learners of English at Shokoufa Language Institute in Somesara participated in the study. The participants were female and there was no age limit and discrimination in choosing them. In order to homogenize the participants and make sure they were at the same English proficiency level. Having been homogenized by an OPT, 60 students were selected, and they were randomly divided into two groups, control and experimental (NE=30 and NC=30).

#### Materials

To conduct the present investigation and to implement the process of data collection, the researcher used various tools including the OPT of English language proficiency in order to measure the subjects' current status of proficiency level. A pre-test of writing was given to the participants to measure the participants' initial differences in writing. And finally a post-test of writing was administered to both groups to find out the effectiveness of the treatment.

#### Data Collection and Analysis

The researcher selected one group as the control group who were taught traditionally and the other one as experimental group who were taught according to guided-writing strategy. Normally they would not receive any instruction in writing in Iranian high schools' curriculum. Classes met once a week, each session took 40 minutes. All groups received an equal amount of instruction (ten sessions, each of 40 minutes duration and spread over the period of ten weeks) from the same teacher, who was also the researcher. And the last step was the post-test of writing in which the subjects' ability in both groups on the specific treatment program was assessed.

#### Research Question and Hypothesis

Based on the objective of the study, the following research question guides the present study:

**RQ:** Does guided-writing strategy have any statistically significant effect on Iranian Intermediate EFL learners' writing improvement?

In line with the above research question, the following null hypothesis was formulated as follows:

**H0:** Guided-writing strategy does not have any statistically significant effect on Iranian Intermediate EFL learners' writing improvement.

### 4. Descriptive and Inferential Data Analysis

The intended goal of the current study was to investigate the effect of guided-writing strategy on Iranian Intermediate EFL learners' writing improvement. Released data from tests were calculated through an Independent Sample T-test was used to show the degree of differences that would believe exists between control and experimental group.

A descriptive analysis of the obtained data of the current study, which has been calculated by SPSS is presented below.



Tab1

Mean, variance and standard deviation of pre-tests for control and experimental groups

	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
Pre-tests	Control	30	10.5333	4.51613	20.395
	Experimental	30	10.6667	5.28716	27.954

In this table, it is clearly observable that the mean scores for both groups are close to each other, which has meaning. The closeness in two groups mean scores indicates that both control and experimental groups were at the same level of writing improvement before administrating any treatment or providing any material.

Table 2

Mean, variance and standard deviation of post-tests for control and experimental groups

	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
Post-tests	Control	30	11.0667	5.00299	25.030
	Experimental	30	14.5333	4.86885	23.706

The mean for post-test scores of experimental group is 14.53 as compared to the mean of post-test scores of the control, which is 11.06. It is crystal clear that these two groups are different in overall mean; it implies that both groups of the study are at a different level of writing after the treatment process.

Table 3

Descriptive analysis for the pre-test and the post-test of experimental group of the study

Group	Tests	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
Experimental	Pre	30	10.6667	5.28716	27.954
	Post	30	14.5333	4.86885	23.706

The above table shows the pre-test mean for experimental group, which is 10.66, as compared to the mean of the post-test of the same group which is 14.53. As for the standard deviations obtained for the experimental group, there seems to be more variability among the pre-test scores than the scores in the post-test.

Table 4

Descriptive analysis for the pre-test and the post-test of control group of the study

Group	Test	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
Control	Pre	30	10.5333	4.51613	20.395
	Post	30	11.0667	5.00299	25.030

According to this table, the mean for pre-test of control group is 10.53 while the mean for its post-test score is 11.06. This shows no significance improvement from pretest to posttest administration in control group.

Table 5

Independent samples test between 2 post-tests

Levene's Test for Equal- ity of Varia- nces	t-test for Equality of Means

	F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Diffe rence	Std. Error Diffe rence	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference Lower Upper
Equal variances assumed	.040	.843	-2.720	58	.009	-3.46667	1.27457	-6.01799 - .91534
Equal variances not assumed			-2.720	57.957	.009	-3.46667	1.27457	-6.01803 - .91530

The Independent Samples t-Test is a kind of parametric test, which results in rejecting or supporting the hypothesis of the study. As it is shown in table (5) the significance level equaled to 0.009. Since this amount is smaller than the critical value (0.05) the null hypothesis of the study is rejected. According to the procedures run, the hypothesis of the study is rejected and the data is summarized as follows:

Sig = 0.009 < 0.05 =  $\alpha$

The hypothesis of the study which connoted the guided-writing strategy does not affect Iranian EFL learners' writing improvement was rejected. Some evidences came to justify the rejection of the hypothesis. The result of t-test as shown in Table (5) showed that the significance level is 0.009. This amount is smaller than the critical value (0.05) and led to rejection of the null hypothesis of the study.

## 5. General Discussion

According to the findings, Guided-writing strategy plays a very important role in writing process and is beneficial for improving writing performance. This study has proved that intermediate EFL learners can benefit from guided-writing strategy. There are the same results as Kellogg's (1988) who pointed out proper writing strategies can enhance writing performance and reduce attentional overload. This research is in line with Cross (1993) who states that ESL writing classes, particularly at the lower levels of language proficiency, successfully use guided writing techniques to build vocabulary and sentence structure knowledge. It is also in line with Huebener (1965) who states that practice in guided writing helps students to express themselves freely and independently.

Guided writing has some instructional values by which teachers go through the writing process through modeling, support, and practice (Tyner, 2004). Holdich and Chung (2003) indicated the usefulness of guided writing which offers greater opportunities for young writers to make valuable connections between text, sentence and word level decisions and help children shape and redraft texts with particular criteria in mind.

This study was conducted on intermediate EFL learners. Many scholars believe that if such instruction is applied in early stages of writing it is probably more fruitful. Matsuda (2003), for instance, believes that guided-writing proposed at the first stage of language learning is more helpful. Pincas (1962) emphasizes the importance of controlled and guided composition in the same stage in order to prevent errors occurring due to L1 to L2 conversion. This kind of writing was created out of behavioral and habit formation theory of learning, in which the focus was on the sentence level development through substitution exercises that can eliminate the probability of making mistakes (Pincas, 1982).

Many like Rivers (1981) believe that lack of systematic practice like teaching writing strategies, in early stages of language learning can cause shortcomings in advanced levels. Besides, the lack of suitable learning strategies in writing results in low motivation for students (Yang & Chung, 2005; Lo & Hyland, 2007). Consequently, Hyland (2003) emphasizes the importance of writing strategies like guided writing and considers it as an essential factor for learners' writing improvement. It is

thus necessary to pay attention to writing strategies and apply them at earlier stages of language learning.

There is no doubt that a person's writing ability depends on good writing skills (Cho & Schunn, 2007). Consequently, teachers should be clever in choosing the appropriate techniques that can both change their students' attitude towards writing and improve their students' writing skill. One of the ways they can use is guided-writing strategy.

## 6. Conclusion

Guided-writing strategy is particularly effective and provides opportunities to assist students with any step in the writing process, to focus instruction on specific concepts and strategies, and to enhance student learning.

The findings of this study are useful for language teachers and require them emphasize on the importance of guided-writing strategy in relation to the teaching of writing and help them gain insight into the different techniques and approaches to the presentation of writing strategies. The findings of this study also would help Iranian teachers to see the benefits of guided-writing strategy and try it in teaching grammatical structures.

Finally, these findings are of great importance to material designers. When the importance of guided-writing strategy is revealed, language material designers can apply the findings to their books and improve the materials of the available textbooks.

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# THE STUDY OF THE EFFECT OF DYNAMIC ASSESSMENT ON IRANIAN INTERMEDIATE EFL LEARNERS' RECALL OF COLLOCATION

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## ABSTRACT

NOWADAYS EDUCATORS ARE RECOMMENDED TO USE MULTIPLE ASSESSMENTS TO EVALUATE WHAT LEARNERS HAVE LEARNED. DYNAMIC ASSESSMENT (DA) IS A RELATIVELY NEW APPROACH TO L2 ASSESSMENT THAT HAS BEEN INTRODUCED TO L2 RESEARCH AND EDUCATIONAL COMMUNITY BY LANTOLF AND POEHLER (2003) AND POEHLER AND LANTOLF (2005). THIS STUDY HOLDS IMPORTANCE IN THAT, THERE ARE FEW STUDIES CONDUCTED TO SHOW THE EFFECT OF DYNAMIC ASSESSMENT ON RECALL OF COLLOCATION ON IRANIAN EFL LEARNERS. HELPING STUDENTS IN THE CHALLENGE OF DEVELOPING RECALL ABILITY IS OF PARAMOUNT IMPORTANCE. ALL IN ALL, THE FINDINGS OF THIS STUDY SHOWED THAT THE EXPERIMENTAL GROUPS HAD A BETTER PERFORMANCE IN COMPARISON TO THE CONTROL GROUP IN THEIR RECALL OF COLLOCATIONS, AND THIS BETTER PERFORMANCE SEEMED TO BE THE RESULT OF THE DA THAT THE LEARNERS USED DURING THE TREATMENT. THE FINDINGS OF THE PRESENT STUDY WHILE IS IN LINE WITH PREVIOUS STUDIES' SUGGEST THAT THE APPLICATION OF DA TO TEACHING COLLOCATION IS SIGNIFICANTLY MORE EFFECTIVE IN PROMOTING EFL LEARNERS' RECALL OF COLLOCATIONS THAN STATIC APPROACH (SA).

**KEYWORDS:** DYNAMIC ASSESSMENT, COLLOCATION, RECALL, MEDIATION.

## 1. Introduction

According to Zimmerman, vocabulary is central to language and language learning. As a subcategory of vocabulary, collocations are believed to be the stumbling block for second and especially foreign language learning (Mohammadi Darabad, Bahrebar, & Javid, 2013). Collocations are frequently recurring two-to-three word syntagmatic units which can include both lexical and grammatical words, e.g. verb + noun (pay tribute) ,(adjective + noun (hot spice), preposition + noun (on guard) and adjective preposition (immune to).It has been widely argued (e.g. Boers et al., 2006; Boers & Lindstromber, 2009) that collocational competence is important for language production and reception, enabling both the L1 and L2 language user to make idiomatic choices and come across as native-like.



Teachers are well aware that every decision that they make or every step that they take in their class has a profound effect on learners' academic achievement. Teacher actions consist of both teaching and testing. Recent views and works in the field of applied linguistics have attempted to reveal the interfaces between teaching and testing so that these two fields are now considered interdependent. The recent approach known as dynamic assessment (DA) has established a stronger link between language teaching and language testing (Zoghi & Malmeer, 2014).

Nowadays educators are recommended to use multiple assessments to evaluate what learners have learned. Dynamic assessment (DA) is a kind of interactive assessment used most in education. DA is a relatively new approach to L2 assessment that has been introduced to L2 research and educational community by Lantolf and Poehner (2004) and Poehner and Lantolf (2005).

While several studies have been conducted to investigate DA in foreign language learning, (Lantolf & Poehner; 2005; Zoghi & Malmeer, 2013), it appears that almost no research has been carried out to examine the effect of dynamic assessment on recall of collocations. In line with the previous studies in DA and to extend the scope of its applications, this study aimed to apply dynamic approach to teaching and assessing of collocation by Iranian EFL learners. The present study aims to answer the following research question:

1. To what extent is dynamic assessment effective on EFL students' recall of collocations?

Based on the above research question, the following hypotheses were formulated:

H0. Dynamic assessment does not have any effect on EFL students' recall of collocations.

H1. Dynamic assessment has significant effect on EFL students' recall of collocations.

## 2. What is Dynamic Assessment (DA)?

DA in language learning derived from sociocultural theory (SCT) of Vygotsky and his idea on cognitive development offers new insights into assessment in the language classroom by revealing hidden aspects of individuals' abilities in answering each test item. While the results of traditional non-dynamic assessment (NDA) or Static Assessment (hereafter SA) can only show the already existent abilities of the student, the analysis of zone of proximal development (hereafter ZPD) makes it possible to evaluate the ability of the student to learn from the interaction with a teacher or a more competent peer and predict their possible future development. Vygotsky (1978) defined ZPD as the distance between a child's "actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving" and the higher level revealed in "potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more able peers" (p. 86). Unaided performance on static measures tells us what has already been learned or accomplished, whereas the breadth of ZPD is thought to provide prospective indications of what can be learned. While studying the development of children's mental abilities, Vygotsky (1978) observed that what a child is able to do independently only displays the tip of iceberg, that is, a partial picture of child's full capability, because the child can often do more when just a bit of assistance, or mediation, is offered by someone else. According to Vygotsky, what the child is able to do automatically shows a view of the child's past development, but what the child is able to achieve with mediation, provides insights into the child's future development. The mediator facilitates learning, allowing the access and the unfolding cognitive functions that the subject has not yet mastered: "... what the child can do today with the help of an adult, it will do tomorrow without any help" Vygotsky (as cited in Villar, 2002, p. 2).

### 2.1 Theoretical Basis of Dynamic Assessment

DA has emerged from the work of Vygotsky and Feuerstein. This notion views intelligence developmentally rather than as a static entity. Vygotsky' Zone of Proximal Development is the difference between the learner's actual level of development and that level of performance that can be attained in collaboration with an adult. It is hypothesized that a learner is able to imitate a cognitive strategy only if the potential exists within the learner. Kinginger (2002) points out that the ZPD construct is a shorthand device emphasizing the emergence of cognitive development within social interaction, when participants engaged in a learning activity receive assistance from

more-competent others (teachers or peers). Taking into account the role of social interaction in SL and FL classes, the concept of the ZPD provides an important understanding of the focuses and practices of language assessment (Hessamy & Ghaderi, 2014).

## 2.2 Is There a Need for DA?

Currently, DA is not a viable alternative to traditional assessment. Some believe DA should not replace traditional assessment, but rather be used in conjunction with it (e.g., Lidz, 1987). The question then becomes, "What unique information can DA provide?" First, DA may offer a less-biased measure of achievement for certain populations because it is less dependent on mainstream language skills and background experience (e.g., Sewell, 1979; Sewell & Severson, 1974; Peña et al., 1992). It may be especially useful to differentiate various low-achieving students. As discussed, traditional tests are often subject to floor effects for low-achieving students. Items are scored "right" or "wrong" using an all-or-nothing mentality. DA, by contrast, gives multiple opportunities for success. Low-achieving students, therefore, can be differentiated along the continuum of how easily they learn. (e.g., Feuerstein, 1979; Haywood, 1992). If a test is susceptible to floor effects and students fail all items, we do not have useful data to gauge their academic functioning and plan appropriate interventions.

## 2.3 Dynamic Assessment vs. Statistic Assessment

The purposes of educational assessment are to evaluate current achievement, predict future achievement, and prescribe educational treatments. Conventional one point-in-time assessment (i.e., "static") or traditional pretest-posttest assessments have been used to accomplish these aims because they are standardized, easily administered, and norm-referenced. Traditional assessment produces clear-cut results that are used to evaluate, identify, and classify children. Nevertheless, many believe it should not be used for these "high-stakes" purposes. Traditional assessment has been criticized for underestimating general ability and lacking sensitivity toward so-called disadvantaged students (e.g., Peña, Quinn, & Iglesias, 1992; Utley, Haywood, & Masters, 1992) and students with disabilities (e.g., Lidz, 1987). Ironically, traditional assessment is often used to identify and place low-achieving, at-risk students. Scores on traditional assessment tests are difficult to interpret for low-achieving students because of floor effects.

DA has been defined and operationalized in different ways, such as learning potential assessment, mediated learning experience, testing-the-limits procedures, mediated assessment, and graduated prompts, DA differs from traditional assessment in terms of the nature of the examiner/student relationship, the content of the feedback, and the emphasis on process, rather than product (Erin, 2006).

In traditional assessment, the examiner is a neutral or "objective" participant who provides only standardized directions. In DA the examiner attempts to form a closer relationship with the student that will foster learning. In traditional assessment, the examiner does not give performance-contingent feedback. Indeed, the traditional assessment examiner is often explicitly discouraged from making any statements that may alter the independent achievement of the student. In DA, the examiner not only gives performance-contingent feedback, but offers instruction in response to student failure to alter or enhance student achievement. In short, traditional assessment is oriented towards the product of student learning (or performance), whereas in DA the interest is in both the product and process of student learning (or rate of growth).

Because of the variety of DA procedures, it is difficult if not impossible to offer a single, all-encompassing definition. In general, DA investigates the change in student performance brought about by deliberate examiner intervention. The performance change due to this examiner intervention is used as a presumably unbiased measure of current achievement, to predict future achievement, and to inform intervention. Proponents of DA claim it is based on the often ignored link between assessment and intervention by measuring both the process and product of student learning. For example, some students may enter kindergarten with little background knowledge.

These students may score low on traditional assessment. But if they possess the intelligence, behavioral maturity, and motivation necessary for learning, they may score higher on DA. Such a child may be in less danger of school failure than one who scores low on both traditional assessment and DA. The pattern of low traditional assessment score and low DA score may truly represent those students who are most likely to experience school failure. In addition to their predictive information, prescriptive data can be derived to identify the type and intensity of intervention that is required for success. DA incorporates a test-teach-test format, conceptually similar to response-to-intervention (RTI) techniques. However, DA can potentially measure RTI within a much shorter time frame (Erin, 2006).

DA can be better understood when contrasted with static assessment (SA). Poehner and Lantolf (2003) proposed understanding the future as the main difference between DA and SA. They believed that "DA is very much in line with Valsiner's future-in-the-making model, since it is anticipated that future performance will be different from current performance. This model enables us to chart out development before it happens and compel us to participate actively in the developmental process itself. In DA, as called for in Vygotsky's ZPD, assessment and instruction are dialectically integrated as the means to progress and move towards an always emergent future. They also mentioned some methodological differences between these two conventions. Focusing on the product of past (SA) and future (DA) development, the relationship between the examiner and the examinee, and the provision of feedback are the main methodological difference between them. The marked difference between DA and SA is that DA focuses on the learning process, whereas SA stresses the results or products of learning. In SA, which is usually done for summative purposes, any kind of interaction or assistance during the assessment is considered unacceptable. In fact, interaction and assistance of any kind could be seen as being unfair or even cheating. In particular, changes in the learner's performances during the assessment process jeopardize the reliability of test scores (Lidz, 1991). However, DA adopts a categorically different stance and underscores this idea that important information about a learner's abilities can only be obtained by offering assistance and intervention during the assessment (Hessamy & Ghaderi, 2014).

### 3. What Is Collocation?

Collocation, or how words occur together in speech and writing, is an important part of speaking and writing fluently. To be able to produce native-like speech and writing, students need to know which words work together well (Hashemi et al., 2012). Words are learned and stored in memory in groups, not in isolation. Handing out traditional vocabulary lists of isolated words is of little value if students don't know and haven't practiced the context in which the word may occur. For example, teaching the word "regard" is more powerful if taught with the collocations and phrases that go with it: "in regard to," for example. "Contrast" should be taught with its collocation, "in" as in "In contrast." Knowing the collocates a word occurs with like this will make students less likely make mistakes in grammar, word choice, and use of idiom and also contributes to fluid speech and writing as students are less likely to need to stop to search for the correct word (Rahimi & Momeni, 2012, p. 37)

Collocations in language learning appear to be a worthwhile subject of study, as collocations are, on the one hand, pervasive in language, and, on the other, difficult even for advanced learners of English (Hill, 2000, p. 49). Collocation can be a key to differentiate natives from non-natives. Likewise, correct uses of collocation are the symbol of advanced level English and writing proficiency; therefore, collocation is the benchmark for total fluency in L2 learning.

Hill (2000), who emphasizes the importance of collocational knowledge in L2 pedagogy, addresses a fundamental question of what it means to know a language. He claims that "[students] do not really 'know' or 'own' a word unless they also know how that word is used [emphasis in original], which means knowing something about its collocational field" (p.60). Wray (1999) proposes two functions of collocations as: first, they play an essential role in language learning, as they seem to be the basis for the development of creative language. And second, they are essential for fluency in both spoken and written language.

Howarth (1998) claims that more cohesive collocations are less difficult for advanced learners than less cohesive ones. And collocations with high-frequency and/or light verbs are deemed worthy of particular attention (Hill, 2000). Moreover, Hill argues that the use of fixed expressions can facilitate naturalness, fluency, and effectiveness in language use. According to him, the obstacle for intermediate students to move to the advanced level is the lack of collocational knowledge. As he puts it:

### 3.1 Problems English Learners Have with Collocation

According to Hashemi et al., (2012) one of the biggest problems with collocation is its arbitrary nature: there is no “rule” or reason that it’s “in regard to” and not “on regard to” – it just is.

Lack of Awareness

Students need to have a problem brought to their attention before they even know it is a problem. They may be unaware that some words go together better than others, especially as this doesn’t tend to be emphasized in language instruction.

First Language Transfer

Is another ESL problem with collocation—students transfer the appropriate collocation from their first language. “Make” and “do” confusion is common, for example, among students of Latin language backgrounds: e.g., “make my homework” rather than “do my homework” Hashemi et al., (2012).

Lewis insists that the lexical approach is not simply a shift of emphasis from grammar to vocabulary teaching, as language consists not of traditional grammar and vocabulary, but often of multi-word prefabricated chunks (Lewis, 1997). Chunks include collocations, fixed and semi-fixed expressions and idioms, and according to him, occupy a crucial role in facilitating language production, being the key to fluency. It is suggested that native speakers’ fluency is related to the fact that their vocabulary is not stored only as individual words, but also as parts of phrases and larger chunks, which can be retrieved from memory as a whole and reducing processing difficulties.

On the other hand, learners who only learn individual words will need a lot more time and effort to express themselves (Willis & Willis, 2006).

Consequently, it is essential to make students aware of chunks, giving students opportunities to identify, organize and record these. Hill (2000) explains that most learners with “good vocabularies” have problems with fluency because their “collocational competence” is very limited, and that, especially from intermediate level, we should aim at increasing their collocational competence with the vocabulary they have already got. This type of vocabulary teaching follows the principles of data-driven learning where learners take the role of analysts and explorers.

Also, Faghih and Sharafi (2006) investigated the role of collocation on Iranian language EFL learners’ interlanguage. They found that most of errors learners made in their productions were rooted in their lack of proficiency in collocations. They, also, concluded that among the different types of collocations adjective, plus noun one poses the largest amount of difficulty to Iranian learners. Their study showed a strong correlation between collocation knowledge and language proficiency. In another study, Koosha and Jaefarpour (2006) found that concordancing materials presented through data -driven learning has a strong effect on learning collocation of preposition. They concluded that if the teacher presents the preposition through the learners’ consultation of concordances as well as their textbooks the learners will learn them much more easily. They also come to this conclusion that learners’ difficulty in spoken and written product is not related to their grammatical or lexical knowledge but to lack of knowledge of the words accompanies it, that is, the collocation.

## 4. Methodology

The current study aimed at exploring the effects of dynamic assessment on Iranian intermediate EFL learners’ recall of collocation. This section consists of detailed explanation of the participants, materials, procedures, independent and dependent variables, and a summary of data analysis.

### 4.1 Participants



The original participants of this study were 63 female Azeri students studying English as a foreign language at Pishghaman and Rezvan institutes in Ardabil. The participants' ages were 16–18. Key English Test (KET) was given to the participants in order to determine their proficiency level and make them homogeneous. Based on the results obtained on this test, 50 students were selected as intermediate level and were divided into two groups (25 in experimental group and 25 in control group).

#### 4.2 Procedures

This study composed of 8 sessions. Several steps were taken in order to accomplish the purpose of the study.

To begin the study, Key English Test (KET) was administrated to 63 students to assess the students' proficiency level. Fifty students who scored above 89 constituted the participants of the study. The selected students were then randomly assigned to two groups: an experimental group with 25 and a control group with 25 students. After that, the collocation recall pre-test was administered to both groups in order to examine their collocation recall ability before the treatment.

In the next step, a 20-items collocation test was administered as pre-test which adopted from English Collocations in Use (MacCarthy & O'Dell, 2005). The treatments then were introduced to the participants in two groups for 8 sessions. In the experimental group, dynamic approach was used in the class after collocation pre-test. The mediation was provided for the experimental group as an instruction. During 8 sessions, 30 minutes of class time was allocated to mediation and discussion of the results of their exams. DA in the experimental group included mediation between the examiner and the examinee such as hints, explanations, suggestions, and using vocabulary learning strategies such as guessing. In the control group, collocations were taught using traditional method and there was no mediation after pre-test by the teacher. Finally, a parallel post-test was administered to both experimental and control group. In other words, the pre-test-mediation-posttest design (sandwich model of DA) was used in the study. The results were analyzed though SPSS program. It is worth mentioning that all treatment sessions were conducted by the researcher.

#### 4.3 Design and Variables

This study involved examining the effects of dynamic assessment on Iranian intermediate EFL learners' recall of collocation to clarify how much it affects achievement. The design of this study was true experimental. It contained one control group and an experimental group with treatment, a pre-test, and a post-test. The study comprised one dependent and one independent variable. The dependent variable of the study was the recall of collocations and the independent variable was dynamic assessment.

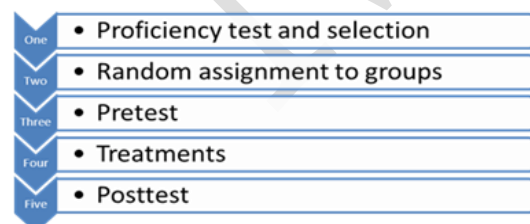


Figure 1 Design of the study



#### 4.4 Materials

The materials used in this study included: Key English Test (KET), collocation pretest, collocation posttest, and, collocation passages for treatment sessions.

**4.4.1 Key English Test (KET):** In order to assess participants' general English proficiency, Cambridge Ket Exam was administered. Based on the result of this test, students who scored above 89 were selected. In the following table (Table 1) Reliability Statistics for KET is presented.

Table 1  
*Reliability Statistics for KET Scores*

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.801	3

**4.4.2 Collocation Recall Pre-test.** In order to ensure that the participants were not familiar with the collocation items prior to the study and to ensure homogeneity of the groups in terms of their familiarity with collocations, a collocations recall pre-test was administrated to students. Table 2 indicates the descriptive statistics of this test.

Table 2  
*Descriptive Statistics for Performance of Two Groups on Collocation Recall Pre-test*

	Group	N	Mean	S.D
Collocation recall	Control	25	5.2800	1.20830
	Experimental	25	5.8000	1.29099

As you can see in Table 2, the mean score at pre-test for control group was 5.28 and for experimental group, it was 5.80. It indicates that the two groups might have been equal in terms of familiarity with collocations before running the treatment.

Before conducting the t-test, the assumption of normality of the distribution was checked. Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was run to make sure the scores were normally distributed. Table 3 shows the result of this test.

Table 3  
*Normality Check for Scores on Collocation Recall Pre-test*

		Kolmogorov-Smirnov	
	Statistic	Df	Sig.
Control	.215	25	.074
Experimental	.162	25	.091

The result of Kolmogorov-Smirnov test (Table 3) indicated  $p = .074$  and  $.091$  which means that the data was normally distributed. Since the data was normally distributed, so a parametric test (independent sample t-test) was used to compare to groups.

Table 4  
*Independent Sample T-test for Performance of two Groups on Collocation Recall Pre-test*

	Levene's Test	t-test for Equality of Means
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		for Equality of Variances				Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	Df				Lower	Upper
Metacognitive	Equal variances assumed	.001	.973	-1.47	48	.148	-.5200	.35365	-1.2310	.19106
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.47	47.79	.148	-.5200	.35365	-1.2311	.19114

Since in the 'equal variances assumed' the significant rate is .97 which is greater than 0.05 ( $p\text{-value} = .97 > .05$ ), the equality of the variance is assumed and the data in the first row are considered. The result of t- test indicates that the  $p\text{ value}$  for pretest is .14 , so there is not any differences between the mean scores of the two groups in terms of familiarity with collocation recall for the two groups.

#### 4.5 Statistical Analysis

To examine the hypotheses of the study and in order to select the most appropriate statistical analysis to compare the performance of groups on these tests, it was necessary to make sure whether these scores enjoyed a normal distribution and met the assumption of using parametric tests (T-test); the scores were submitted to the One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. Table 5 shows results of normality check for the scores on collocation recall posttest for two groups.

Table 5  
*Normality Check for Scores on Collocation Recall Posttest*

	Statistic	Kolmogorov-Smirnov	
		Df	Sig.
Control	.157	25	.115
Experimental	.167	25	.072

Table 5 indicates the normality check for scores of the two groups. The results revealed that scores were normally distributed ( $p\text{-value}=.115, .072 > .05$ ). Then to examine the hypotheses an independent-sample T-test was run. Table 6 shows the results of the descriptive statistics for this test:

Table 6

*Descriptive Statistics for Performance of Two Groups on Collocation Recall Posttest*

	Group	N	Mean	S.D
Collocation recall	Control	25	12.0800	1.55242
	Experimental	25	15.7200	1.67133

Descriptive Statistics of collocation recall posttest indicates that in the posttest the experimental group out performed the control group. The mean score of the experimental group was 15.72 and the mean score of the control group was 12.08. It is clear that there is a sizable difference between two groups in terms of collocation recall. Table 7 indicates the results of independent sample T-test used to compare two groups' performance on collocation recall.

Table 7

*Independent Sample T-test for Performance of two Groups on Collocation Recall Posttest*

Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means							
	F	Sig.	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	.000	1.000	-7.97	48	.000	-3.6400	.45622	-4.557	-2.722
Equal variances not assumed			-7.97	47.741	.000	-3.6400	.45622	-4.557	-2.722

Since in the 'equal variances assumed' the significant rate is 1.00 which is greater than 0.05 ( $p\text{-value}=1.00 > .05$ ), the equality of the variance is assumed and the data in the first row are considered. The result of t- test indicated that the  $p\text{ value}$  for posttest is .000 , so there was a meaningful difference between the mean scores of the two groups. In other words ,the results showed that the experimental group which were taught by dynamic assessment outperformed the

control group which were taught by a traditional assessment. Thus, the null hypothesis of the research is rejected but the directional hypothesis was not rejected. Furthermore, the graph presented below (Figure 2) suggests that participants in the experimental group had higher mean than those in the control group on the posttest.

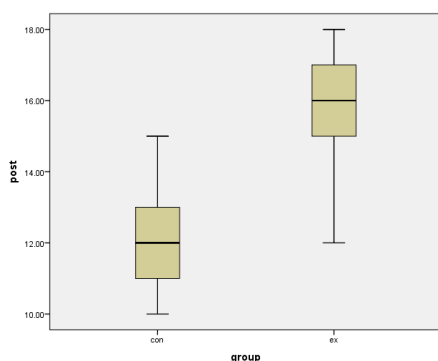


Figure 2 Mean performance on collocation recall across the groups

## 5. Discussion and Conclusion

The aim of the present study was to investigate the effects of dynamic assessment on Iranian intermediate EFL learners' recall of collocation. The obtained data were analyzed through descriptive and inferential statistics, and all hypotheses were tested. This led to the rejection of the null hypothesis but accepting the directional hypothesis.

The hypothesis which claimed that dynamic assessment does not have any effect on Iranian intermediate EFL learners' recall of collocation, was rejected as a result of running a Paired-samples T-test on pretest and posttest results of the students in the experimental group. Findings from the T-tests indicated that dynamic assessment had positively and significantly influenced the students' recall of collocation, thus, the next hypothesis claimed that dynamic assessment has significant effect on EFL students' recall of collocation, was not rejected.

Findings of this study are in conformity with the sociocultural theory of Williams and Burden (1997) which states that education should be concerned not just with theories of instruction, but with learning to learn, developing skills and strategies to continue to learn, with making learning experiences meaningful and relevant to the individual, with developing and growing as a whole person. These findings also provide further support for the idea of Ellis (2000), who asserts that sociocultural theory assumes that learning arises not through interaction but in interaction. Learners first succeed in performing a new task with the help of another person and then internalize this task so that they can perform it on their own. In this way, social interaction is advocated to mediate learning

## 6. Pedagogical Implications

This study is expected to contribute to the field by shedding light on the effects of DA on recall of collocations and would encourage teachers to employ this approach more than ever before for the well-being of their students.

Various organizations can also benefit from this research including: Ministry of Education, language institutions and departments of teaching foreign languages. Teachers who recognize that their students suffer from recall of what they read, may find it useful to broaden their students' familiarity with and understanding of the usefulness of this method by pushing their students to actually use them.

Furthermore, having in mind that the purpose of testing is to evaluate the teaching program and the improvement of the learners, this study inspires the test developers to bring about changes in testing, developing tests to affect the quality of teaching as well as improving the students ability to be creative in their performance on tests.

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# CREATIVE WRITING: COMPOSING AND ENJOYING HAIKU IN THE EFL CLASSROOMS

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## ABSTRACT

THE PRIMARILY GOAL OF THIS PAPER IS TO THROW LIGHT ON THE CONTRIBUTION OF ENGLISH HAIKU COMPOSITION TO ACADEMIC LITERACY DEVELOPMENT IN AN IRANIAN EFL CONTEXT. THIS PAPER EXPLORES IN WHAT WAYS COMPOSING HAIKU CAN CONTRIBUTE TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS FROM BOTH THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL STANDPOINTS. IT SEEMS THAT VERY FEW STUDIES HAVE INVESTIGATED THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CREATIVE WRITING AND ACADEMIC WRITING. EVEN IF SOME FEATURES OF CREATIVE WRITING CAN CONTRIBUTE TO ACADEMIC WRITING, IT IS WORTH INDEED TO ENCOURAGE CREATIVE WRITING IN COLLEGE COMPOSITION CLASSROOMS. THE THEORISTS AND RESEARCHERS WHO SUPPORT THE TEACHING OF CREATIVE WRITING IN LANGUAGE CLASSROOMS BELIEVE THAT STUDENTS WHO START TO WRITE CREATIVELY LEARN HOW TO EXPRESS THEMSELVES IN THEIR OWN WRITING. THE APPLICATION OF LITERARY LEARNING IN EFL CLASSROOM HAS NEVER BEEN SO POPULAR AS IT IS IN L1. EFL TEACHERS NEVER EXPECT THEIR STUDENTS TO LEARN TO WRITE CREATIVELY; THEY ARE MERELY EXPECTED TO IMPROVE THEIR ACADEMIC ENGLISH WRITING SKILLS. THERE SEEMS TO BE NO CONNECTION BETWEEN COMPOSING POETRY AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY. IN AN EFL CLASSROOM READING AND COMPOSING POETRY SEEMS TO BE A TIME-CONSUMING ACTIVITY. HOWEVER THIS ARTICLE THROWS LIGHT ON USING HAIKU AS A TEACHING STRATEGY THAT CAN INCREASE STUDENTS VOCABULARY ACQUISITION AND IMPROVE THEIR CREATIVE WRITING SKILLS. IT ALSO PROVIDES A STEP-BY-STEP PROCEDURE FOR WRITING HAIKU.

**KEY WORDS:** COMPOSING HAIKU, IMPROVING CREATIVE WRITING SKILL, EFL CLASSROOMS

## 1. Introduction

Many college freshmen who study English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in Iran have little idea how to use the English they learned in middle school and high school. They have learned basic English grammar rules and improved their reading skills, *enlarged their vocabulary* in preparation for university entrance examinations, but the focus on error reduction and memorization of forms cannot help them when they have to use English in real-life situations. Iranian EFL students, in general, have difficulty in expressing themselves particularly in written forms. This is partly due to the fact that a grammar-centered curriculum in middle school and high school provides very little opportunity to write papers in English. They are not capable of expressing their inner thoughts, feelings and emotions. They have not taught how to describe the feelings that boil inside of them. In order to develop students' written communication skills, however, it is crucial for EFL teachers to seek for effective strategies and methods to encourage students how to discover and verbalize their inner thoughts in the EFL writing classroom. Many language scholars and researchers believe that reading and composing literature and poetry helps English learners

develop their reading, writing, speaking and listening skills. Lazar (1993) summarizes the benefits of using literature in the language classroom in the following manner:

- it is very motivating
- it is authentic material
- it has general educational value
- it is found in many syllabuses
- it helps students to understand another culture
- it is a stimulus for language acquisition
- it develops students' interpretative abilities
- students enjoy it and it is fun
- it is highly valued and has a high status
- it expands students' language awareness
- it encourages students to talk about their opinions and feeling (p.19)

Povey (1972, p.187) in summarizing the aims of using literature in language classes, argues that "literature will increase all language skills because literature will extend linguistic knowledge by giving evidence of extensive and subtle vocabulary usage, and complex and exact syntax." Many language researchers have claimed that poetry can increase student motivation. A remarkable number of EFL teachers do have faith in poetry as a motivator. They believe that poetry is more "interesting" and "stimulating" than exercises found in course books and supplementary materials because poetry "bring learners closer to the target language culture, making learning more enjoyable and therefore more motivating" (Peacock, 1997). Aladini, *et al.* (2015), in using poetry with Iranian students, found that they "were all very motivated and enthusiastic to improve their English, and participated in the class activities and discussions eagerly. Indeed, poetry helped our students to develop their reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills." In spite of all these advantages, however, English poetry is often excluded from an EFL/ESL curriculum. Often language instructors consider poetry as one of the most sophisticated literary genres and hence too challenging and difficult for EFL/ESL learners. Several views have been expressed about the reason why poetry is seen distant to EFL and ESL contexts. Linguists such as Topping (1968) argues that "literature should be excluded from the ESL curriculum because of its structural complexity, lack of conformity to standard grammatical rules and remote cultural perspectives". Cook (1986) makes a similar point when he claims that the study of English literature "has little relevance to the learners' aim of understanding and producing more functional forms of the language". The solution suggested by some experts in this field is to select materials that are suited to maturity level of the language learners. As Lazar (1993) points out: "A poem may elicit a powerful emotional response from students. If the materials are carefully chosen, students will feel that what they do in the classroom is relevant and meaningful to their own lives" (p.18). One simple literary form that is free from any complex or compound figures is haiku. The main purpose of this paper is to illustrate how the practice of composing English haiku helps Iranian EFL college students to develop their academic writing skills. Unfortunately very little research on the use of Haiku in EFL/ESL writing classrooms has been conducted.

## 2. Haiku and Creative Writing in EFL Contexts

It seems that very few studies have investigated the relationship between creative writing and academic writing. Even if some features of creative writing can contribute to academic writing, it is worth indeed to encourage creative writing in college composition classrooms. The theorists and researchers who support the teaching of creative writing in language classrooms believe that students who start to write creatively learn how to express themselves in their own writing. A series of creative writing practices puts students at the center of writing and helps them to express themselves in their writing process. In other words, a principal purpose of creative writing is to empower students and make them feel confident enough to regard themselves as writers (May,

2007). The number of teachers, language researchers, and scholars who advocate the use of poetry in creative writing has been increasing. Bizzaro (2009) emphasizes the use of poetry as a creative genre in a composition classroom:

We must develop methods that enable us to find out from an array of sources, including “professional writers’ stories, anecdotes, aphorisms, and other forms of self-report” –and we must include poems here – whatever we can about writers and writing and to use what we find in those sources to help our students become better writers. (p. 269)

Young (1982) is another researcher who in his theory focuses on the poetic function of language. He argues that poetic writing is a place for “play, imaginative thinking, developing personal knowledge” (p. 84). Young's finding which particularly refers to “the relatively high inverse correlation between students who did well on the poems and those who did well on essay exams” (p. 91) provides the justification for using poems in writing courses. A poetry-across-the-curriculum project at Clemson University (Connor-Greene et al., 2006, cited in Iida, 2011) illustrates a new approach to using poetry writing in academic disciplines. The application of poetry was as “a means of emphasizing creativity, new perspectives, and a wider range of ways for students to engage with course materials” (Connor-Greene et al., 2006, p. 5) in a various disciplines. The project revealed that the practice of writing poems allowed students to develop their critical thinking skills which consisted of their reflections of academic knowledge or theory in a course. Students did not have to write great poems nor were they expected to be successful poets in each course. There are other scholars who also describe poetry writing as a tool for learning, as a creative writing to express the writer’s inner thoughts and emotions in a brief but meaningful way. Hanauer (2004, p. 10) defines poetry writing as producing “a literary text that presents the experiences, thoughts and feelings of the writer through a self-referential use of language that creates for the reader and writer a new understanding of the experience, thought or feeling expressed in the text”. Iida (2011) in his dissertation explores the interaction between composing haiku and L2 academic literacy development. Participants were 20 college freshmen at a Japanese private university. Data were collected from multiple sources: pre- and post-essays, the books of haiku, weekly journals, self-reflections, and face-to-face interviews. His study demonstrated that, for the participants, haiku composition had positive effects on the development of the language learners' academic literacy skills. For instance, from grammatical aspects, "statistical data illustrated an increase in the use of verbs, passive forms, perfect forms, impersonal pronouns, and transition words and a decrease in the use of negations in the post-test" (Iida, 2011, pp. 179-180).

Lee (2011, p. 25) summarizes the advantages of using haiku in second and foreign language classrooms in the following ways:

- Learners can explore their language through trying to express their thoughts and feelings within the constraints of a simple literary form; through doing this, they will discover whether their linguistic knowledge is sufficient to express their thoughts and feelings or not.
- Through the experimental process of trying to stretch their language boundaries, learners can consolidate and develop their language.
- Since poetry depends on the appropriateness of the words and phrases chosen, learners have to be attentive to, and consciously reflect on, the form of the language itself.
- A further advantage is that the language the learners have produced in their haiku will be easily remembered, and this will help with the acquisition process.



- Language learners can easily remember their haiku, and no doubt this will help with the language acquisition process.

### 3. A Brief History of Haiku

Haiku originated in Japan about six to seven hundred years ago. It was originally called *haikai* appeared in the sixteenth century and thus is one of the world's oldest surviving poetic forms (Henderson, 1958). It was popularized by a famous poet, Matsuo Basho in the seventeenth century. However, the English-speaking world did not learn of its existence until after 1868 when Japan opened its shores to the West and envoys from England started to translate this type of Japanese genre (Giroux, 1974). According to Higginson (1985), the approach for composing haiku, at that time, was restricted to a simple observation and description of natural phenomena. In the late nineteenth century, haiku was established by Shiki Masaoka for the purpose of highlighting the significance of individual creativity as a modern art. The modern haiku is not restricted to a simple observation of natural phenomena, but rather it is integrated to the writer's personal feeling or thought. In short, haiku is "writers' voices reflecting cultural contexts" (Iida, 2011, p. 28).

### 4. Definition of Haiku

We all have special moments in our lives, times that are meaningful and important to us. Naturally we try to immortalize those precious moments, we capture them, in a photograph, a video, or simply an *unforgettable* memory, so that we could recall them, and often share what made those moments special. Haiku does the same thing; it captures a unique and deep moment and immortalizes it. Just as we capture a special moment in our lives, haiku captures a moment in time, creating and sharing the joy, the wonder, the profound emotional experience that exists within that moment. Haiku is a three line poem with seventeen syllables in which the first line contains five syllables, the second line seven syllables and the third line has five syllables. A haiku is usually written in present tense, with a pause at the end of the first or second line, and usually doesn't rhyme. Haiku also includes *kigo*, which refers to seasonal references. *Kigo* is a word or phrase which can be associated with a particular season. For instance, 'cherry blossom', 'plum' and 'skylark' represent spring and 'hot sun', 'sunflower' and 'cicada' are used as a seasonal reference for summer. Furthermore, haiku has a *kireji* which literally means cutting words. This function divides haiku into two parts with an imaginative distance between the two sections: a scene and a message, but both sections remain, to some degree, independent of each other. Using these strategies can allow readers to have their own interpretations. Since haiku is a means for expressing the writer's voice, there never exists the notion of right or wrong in haiku (Iida, 2011, p. 29).

### 5. Examples of Haiku

Basho (1644 – 1694) is perhaps the most famous of all the Haiku poets. His haiku is notable for its simple and natural style. The most famous haiku is about the old pond, of which there are many different translations. A traditional Japanese haiku is a 3-line poem with 17 syllables, written in a 5-7-5 syllable count, however since Japanese is a character-based language, when it is translated into English which is a letter-based language the syllable count evaporates, take for instance Matsuo Basho's well-known haiku:

An old pond!

A frog jumps in ---- (*kireji*)  
the sound of water

The temple bell stops.

But the sound keeps coming  
out of the flowers

Butterfly -

Wings curve into  
White poppy



The first snow

the leaves of the daffodil  
bending together

Buson (1716-1783) was not only a great poet, but also a painter. The rich, eloquent language and impressive visual imagery of Buson's poetry prove that his haiku was closely influenced by his experience as a painter.

On the great temple bell  
stopped from flight and sleeping  
the small butterfly

Clinging to the bell  
he dozes so peacefully  
this new butterfly

Before the white chrysanthemum  
the scissors hesitate  
a moment

A flash of lightening!  
The sound of drops  
Falling among the bamboos

Kobayashi Issa (1762-1826) is the third of the four haiku masters. He wrote many haiku about smaller creatures like grasshoppers, sparrows and cicadas.

Young sparrows get out of the way!  
get out of the way!  
A great horse is coming by!

Don't get alarmed  
you corner spiders  
I won't touch your webs

Come with me,  
let's play together, swallow  
without a mother

## 6. The Practice of Haiku Writing in EFL Classrooms

In order to practice haiku writing effectively in EFL language classrooms, a specific plan is necessary. This lesson plan is written and reviewed by scholars using current research and the best instructional practices.

### 6.1 The First Stage: Reading and Discussing Haiku

At the beginning of the class, it is helpful to read a few haikus. Before providing a formal definition of what haiku is, the instructor should give students opportunities to experience reading haiku and feel the syllables coming alive with the whole of their being. Giving examples of haiku poems written by famous poets is an excellent way to become familiar with this form of poetry. They illustrate what a haiku poem looks like and a little about their history can be helpful too. As it was mentioned in the previous section the three masters of haiku from the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century were Basho, Buson and Issa. Their works are still the model of haiku writing today.

The next step is for the students to make their own interpretations. The instructor encourages them by asking the following questions:

- What is the theme?
- What is the context?
  - What is happening in the poem?
  - What does the writer want to tell you in the haiku?
  - What is your impression from this haiku? (Iida, 2010, p. 32)

At first students responds individually, then they form small groups to share and discuss their comments and interpretations. Remember that there is no right or wrong way of responding to a haiku. There are no correct or incorrect comments. The instructor is to welcome any possible interpretation made by students. The aim of this step is to review the nature of haiku and digest

the basic features of this type of Japanese poem. It can help the students when they start writing haiku in English.

### 6.2 The Second Stage: Guidelines for Writing Haiku

The aim of this stage is to help the learners to gain a better understanding of the nature of Haiku. The instructor reads aloud the poems. The poems should be read slowly. Then the instructor asks the following questions about the haiku:

- How many syllables are used in each line?
- What is the seasonal reference?
  - Where do you see a cutting word in this haiku? (Iida, 2010, p. 31)

The instructor allows a few minutes for each student to think about these questions and then discusses them in class. The learners are asked what common features the poems have. The instructor's role in this activity is to lead the discussion and help learners understand the special guidelines that dictate the form of haiku. The common characteristics will be written on the board as the students mention them. Finally the instructor completes the list so there will be a comprehensive list of the features of haiku for later use.

- Traditional Japanese haiku had a total of seventeen syllables divided into three lines.
- It can be written in the traditional pattern of 5-7-5 syllables but they do not have to be.
- It contains sensory images and seasonal references (*kigo*).
- It avoids figurative language (metaphor, simile, personification ...)
- It avoids complicated language or high sounding words.
- It does not have to rhyme.
- It pictures simple ordinary subject matters in everyday language.
- It contains two juxtaposed ideas (two seemingly unrelated things). This juxtaposition arouses powerful responses in the readers.
- A haiku has usually one strong break in meaning (a division in thought between the earlier and later parts of the poem. It may come at the end of the first or second line. In Japanese it is called *Kireji* (cutting word). In English this division may be indicated by dash, colon, semi-colon or ellipsis.

### 6.3 The Third Stage: Brainstorm for Ideas

Now it is time to offer our students a chance to start writing haiku. The instructor is to help the learners to collect material for their poems. It can be done in the classroom. Beautiful landscapes drawings and pictures of natural scenes can stimulate creativity. When students form mental pictures with their mental eyes, when they are still in the right mood, encourage them to record their inner thoughts and feelings in their haikus.

Some instructors suggest taking students outdoors or even to art exhibitions. You should find a place that can spark students' imaginations and inspire them to write poetry. Ask the students what they saw, heard or felt at that particular inspiring moment. They can start by making a list of seasonal images, and emotional responses. This list can be very helpful when they start writing their haikus. Iida (2010) believes that it works if the instructor asks them to spend 10 to 20 minutes there to answer the following questions:

- What do you see and hear?
- What do you smell and taste?
- What do you feel?

This activity allows students to situate themselves to a specific time and collect as many impressions as possible by answering the above questions (p.32).

### 6.4 The Fourth Stage: Start Writing Haiku

The aim of this stage is to help students understand how to write haiku in English. Now it is time to use their collected impressions to write haiku. However, in spite of reading and reviewing the nature of haiku in the previous stages, our language learners may still feel confused when they are asked

to start writing their first haiku. Therefore the instructor is to guide the students' thought process by asking specific questions. For instance, first of all, students may be asked to consider the main idea that they intend to convey to the readers of their poems. Now students can write three lines. In order to adjust to the traditional structure of haiku, the instructor should help students by encouraging them to search among synonyms, and rewrite the poem that fit into the 5-7-5 syllable pattern.

### 6.5 The Fifth Stage: Small Group Reading Activity

Having students work in small *groups* to improve *writing* skills is just smart. When all the students have written their haiku, they can share their works with other learners in small groups. While reading their haiku aloud to each other, students can recognize whether the flow of the language in their haiku is natural or it is necessary to bring some changes. Kramsch suggests that each student who is in the listening role can write down something "he or she particularly liked about the poem" or suggest the points "he or she would have said differently" (p. 171). Feedback from friends can be very helpful. The students can exchange their haiku and try to formulate themes for those poems. If the interpretation of the readers matches with the main idea that the writer has tried to convey, the haiku can be assumed to be written appropriately. If in vain the readers attempt to guess what was on the writer's mind, he or she needs to revise the work. This activity can incorporate several *language skills* simultaneously such as *reading*, *writing*, listening and speaking. Thus, "if the student author's friends cannot understand his or her haiku, he or she should explain its meaning in the target language, a process which will enhance the learners' communicative competence" (Lee, 2011).

### 7. Examples of Haiku Composed by EFL Students

Lee (2011) used haiku written by poets such as Basho Matsuo, Eric W. Amann, Jack Cain, Sydel Rosenberg, and Cor van den Heuvel as models. The participants were first-year students of the University of Tokyo. The following haiku poems were composed by those students.

the silent wind . . .

birds are flying in the sky.

the sea in the morning.

lively voices

hope and a little apprehension:

the eve of a school festival

learning philosophy . . .

looks like space

broad and unseen place

After raining

there is a spider web

shining with drop of rain

one rainy day

I feel only wet air

in my warm room

a summer day

a ball flying over

in the blue sky.

A cold autumnal wind blowing

along the row of trees  
I am alone . . .

At the top of a mountain  
rocks covered with orange snow  
as the sun rises.

a child in the snow  
how did he get here?  
one silent night

White breath  
appears and disappears  
on a winter's night

Victoria Harbor  
Shining light standing behind the sea  
in front of him and me

## 8. Conclusion

This article aims to throw light on using haiku as a teaching strategy that can increase students' motivation and improve their proficiency in English language. Researchers (Apol, 2002; Cheney, 2002; Higginson, 1985; Iida, 2010, 2012; Lee, 2011; Reichhold, 2002) have proved that composing haiku can help language learners to improve their English. Creating haiku helps EFL students learn to write fluently and acquire vocabulary because this highly structured form requires close attention to the choice of the appropriate words to convey specific feelings (Iida, 2010). Indeed, writing haiku acts as good stimuli to bring out creativity and originality. Students can use their own past experiences, memory and imagination to write their poems. Our experiences as teachers in EFL classrooms have supported these theories. Haiku brings up powerful emotional responses to the classroom. Language learners gain pleasure from reading, discussing, and even composing haiku. Students' haikus are personal and unique because they could relate their own real lives to the poems. Language learners can easily remember the haiku, because they spring from their deepest part of their own souls. No doubt writing haiku will speed up the language acquisition process. Of course we are not recommending the exclusive use of haiku in the language curriculum; however, it can play a valuable role in a balanced EFL programme which has been specially designed to incorporate several language skills simultaneously such as *reading, writing, listening and speaking*.

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# IRANIAN EFL LEARNERS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE DEVELOPMENT OF L2 WRITING THROUGH COLLABORATIVE BLOGGING

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## ABSTRACT

WEBLOGS (BLOGS) ARE BEING INCREASINGLY EMPLOYED IN MANY EDUCATIONAL CONTEXTS AS VEHICLES FOR PERSONAL EXPRESSION AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF VARIOUS EDUCATIONAL PREREQUISITES. THEREFORE, THIS RESEARCH INTENDED TO INVESTIGATE THE LEARNERS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS USING COLLABORATIVE BLOGGING. 21 IRANIAN MALE AND FEMALE INTERMEDIATE EFL LEARNERS WERE CHOSEN THROUGH THE OXFORD QUICK PLACEMENT TEST (OQPT). THE PARTICIPANTS' AGE RANGED FROM 15 TO 22. TO INVESTIGATE THE LEARNERS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS USING BLOGS, A QUESTIONNAIRE WAS GIVEN TO THEM AFTER THE BLOGGING PROJECT WAS OVER. THIS QUESTIONNAIRE WAS RATED ON A FOUR-POINT LIKERT SCALE RANGING FROM 1 FOR STRONGLY DISAGREE, TO 2 FOR DISAGREE, 3 FOR AGREE AND 4 FOR STRONGLY AGREE. THE RESULTS OF THE ATTITUDE QUESTIONNAIRE REVEALED THAT MOST OF THE PARTICIPANTS AGREED ON USING BLOGS IN WRITING ASSIGNMENTS. THE FINDINGS ARE DISCUSSED AND PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS ARE SUGGESTED ON HOW USING COLLABORATIVE BLOGGING MAY HELP LANGUAGE TEACHERS AND LEARNERS.

**KEYWORDS:** COLLABORATIVE BLOGGING; COMMUNICATIVE SKILLS; L2 WRITING; EFL LEARNERS' ATTITUDE; WEBLOG; E-LEARNING.

## 1. Introduction

Weblogs are a flexible medium that can be used in approaches that provide educational participants with a 'middle space' of options as to how to integrate face-to-face and online modes. Weblog construction encourages the development of individual, critical voices within the broader context of classroom interactions. According to Oravec(2010, P.17) Weblogs (blogs) "are emerging in many educational contexts as vehicles for personal expression and the dissemination and critique of Internet materials".

Campbell(2003)suggested that blogs can be used for personal, educational, journalistic and commercial purposes. In terms of blogs in education, Campbell stated that there were three types of blogs that can be used in ESL classrooms: the tutor blog, the learner bog and the class blog. He suggested various positive and possible uses of these weblogs. Learners are benefitted as they can refer to the previous comments and re-read all the drafts which are stored in their weblogs(see also Heidari-Shahreza, Vahid-Dastjerdi, Marvi, 2011 for related gender variables). This retrieval feature allowed students to enhance their autonomy in making corrections and reflecting on their writing. This motivates students to reflect on the process of learning in which they are actively participated in a recurring learning cycle Heidari-Shahreza, Dabaghi, & Kassaian, 2012; Heidari-Shahreza, Moinszadeh, Barati, 2014 b). Writing has been viewed hugely important, yet it is a daunting task for both English as a second language (ESL) teachers and learners. With the development of different approaches to teaching in general, numerous approaches to the teaching of writing have been evolved such as product, process and post-process approaches. Although these approaches have changed the role and status of writing over the years, writing still

appears as one of the difficult areas to tackle as students lack academic writing skills and they are demotivated to write in English. In view of this, researchers show an interest in looking into the possibilities of using Information and Communication Technology (ICT) tools for language teaching and learning (See for example Heidari-Shahreza and Moinzadeh, 2012 for an innovative application of computer software to teach word stress patterns of English). With the number of blogs that are available on the internet these days for sharing information to the public, it seems appropriate to study the communicative skills in students' writing through their blogs. With so much information available just from blogs on the internet these days, the exploration of student variables regarding blogging can be reconsidered and stretched out to find out how the integration of collaborative blogging can be applied in Iran. Collaborative blogging is a type of weblog in which posts can be contributed by more than one author and the authors work in a group. These posts are usually centered on a single theme. In this study attitude represented the attitudes of the participants towards the use of collaborative blogging.

This study intended to investigate EFL learning in Iranian contexts. Much research so far has been conducted on different language skills in Iran (Heidari-Shahreza, Moinzadeh, Barati, 2014a). However, most of EFL learners encounter problems in writing essays and paragraphs. Thus, this study investigated Iranian EFL learners' attitude towards using blogs to teach writing.

## 2. Literature Review

Writing is one of the important skills taught to EFL learners. EFL learners usually face problem in writing, due to the fact that the writing system of their mother tongue is different from English. Students cannot write well because they have limited knowledge in English grammar and vocabulary (Hyland & Hyland, 2006).

According to Graves (2000), there are several ways that writing is important in our lives: "Writing is a highly complex act that demands the analysis and synthesis of many levels of thinking". Writing develops initiative. In reading, everything is provided. In writing, the learner must supply everything: the right relationship between sounds and letters, the order of the letters and their form on the page, the topic, information, questions, answers, order. Writing develops courage. At no point is the learner more vulnerable than in writing. Writing, more than any other subject, can lead to personal breakthroughs in learning. Writing can contribute to reading from the first day of school. Writing, some say, is active, whereas reading is passive. Writing contributes strongly to reading comprehension as children grow older. The ability to revise writing for greater power and economy is one of the higher forms of reading (pp. 5-6, as cited in Cotton 2002).

Yang (2008) stated that blogs can be used to teach writing, and teacher could ask students who use blogs to post their pieces of writing regularly. They can choose their best compositions per term, each composition should contain all the writing process from construct to edit, this action can be done on Facebook, too. Yang (2008) also commented that teacher and students can treat Blog as a 'blackboard' and teacher can save all the students' works. Furthermore, teacher can post and introduce articles to students; students could chain their blogs in order to share information.

Yunus, Nordin, Salehi, Amin Embil and Salehi (2013) attempted to examine the use of ICT in the teaching of ESL writing skills in Malaysian secondary schools. This study focused solely on the data collected from four English teachers in a secondary schooling Kuala Lumpur who were interviewed by the researchers. This study revealed that the use of ICT in the teaching of ESL writing was very low. Advantages of using ICT were reported to be attracting students' attention, facilitating students' learning process, helping to improve students' vocabulary and promoting meaningful learning. Disadvantages found included the difficult class control, distraction and the students' tendency to use short forms in their writing. Yunus, Tuan and Salehi (2010) used a semi-structured interview to investigate how English lecturers perceive using blogs to promote students' writing skills. In addition, they tried to understand the advantages of

using blogs in encouraging ESL students to write; they were also interested in finding out the challenges encountered by the lecturers in using blogs to promote students' writing skills. The interviews showed that the components and functions in blogs encourage ESL learners in promoting their writing skills. As indicated by one of the interviewees, blogs can help to seal the connection between the students and the lecturer. Also, it was found that blogs provide a platform for individual expression and support reader commentary, critique, and interlink age as subsequent steps. As far as the challenges of using blogs are concerned, they found that there are many challenges that hinder the lecturers from encouraging ESL learners to use blogs for improving their writing skills. The lack of time, students' lack of skills and less participation from the students are regarded as some of the existing challenges.

Simsek (2010) in another study under the title of investigated the effect of weblog integrated writing instruction on students writing performance. 70 Primary School students participated in the study. Data were collected through students, written products. Results indicated that weblog integrated writing instruction improved students. Tse, Yuen, Lo, Lam and Ng (2010) and Dawson, Drexler and Ferdig (2007) investigated motivation among students from the feedback received as a result of the blogging process and the impact of blogging on the reading skills of students. The results of these studies have been positive and have shown the positive effects that the collaborative blogging can have on the students' communicative skills in writing.

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1 Research Design**

This study adopted a quantitative, experimental design to investigate Iranian EFL learners' attitude towards using blogs to teach writing.

#### **3.2 Research Question**

What are the learners' attitudes towards using collaborative blogging?

#### **3.3 Participants**

The sample of the study was 21 EFL learners including six male and fifteen female learners. The participants' age ranged from 15 to 22. The setting of the current study consisted of a language institute in Isfahan. The general proficiency level of the participants was set to be intermediate according to an OQPT and the background of the participants. The participants had already taken Basic Writing, Paragraph Writing. They created their own blogs and did all the eight blog assignments collaborating with the researcher. The sampling method for this research was non-probability sampling (selective methods) and the type of sampling was purposive sampling. Purposive sampling was non-probability and hence can be subject to bias and error. According to Saumure and Given (2008), non-probability sampling relied on the judgment of the researcher).

#### **3.4 Research Instruments & Materials**

The instruments of this study were Oxford Quick Placement test (OQPT), blogs, interviews and questionnaires. Multiple instruments were chosen to bring about a triangulation of data.

##### **3.4.1 Blogs**

Blogs have been used for the instrument of the study, in which the participants wrote their assignments. The participants were given explicit instructions on how to set up their blogs on Blogfa and also how to add other blogs to their reading list. Blogfa was a world-class weblog service for Persian language

speakers. It is designed to enable Persian people to rapidly configure and deploy weblogs for personal, as well as for marketing purposes. Blogfa was a wholly-owned product of RavandCybertech Inc. developed by Alireza Shirazi. Blogfa, being used for blogging and hence it was chosen as the blogging software for this study.

### 3.4.2 Oxford Quick Placement Test

The Oxford Quick Placement Test (OQPT) was used to measure the participants' language proficiency. The test consisted of sixty items with different question formats comprising of two parts. There were multiple choice, item matching, and cloze test type items in the test. In each item, there was a missing word for which there were four options. Students were supposed to find the correct item among these options. All of the chosen participants for the present study were able to pass the test with a score between 30 and 46. Based on the test scoring level chart of OQPT, those whose scores in the test were between 30 and 46 were considered as the intermediate-level and categorized to be at the same level according to the OQPT results. The reason why the researcher of the study decided to utilize OQPT as the students' measure of proficiency was due to the fact that the test is a standard test of proficiency, and its validity and reliability were assumed to be satisfactory.

### 3.4.3 Attitude Questionnaire

A questionnaire was given to the participants after the blogging project was over to investigate the learners' attitude towards using blogs. This questionnaire was rated on a four point Likert scale and the scales of agreement were 1 for Strongly Disagree, 2 for Disagree, 3 for Agree and 4 for Strongly Agree. The questions in the questionnaire were adopted from a study by Iyer (2013). The validity of the items in the questionnaire were checked by the supervisor. In order to check the reliability of the items in questionnaire, it was piloted on a group of EFL students who were similar to the main participants of the present study. Then Cronbach alpha was used to check the consistency of the questionnaire. In fact, the internal consistency was calculated to be .88 for this questionnaire.

## 3.5 Procedure and Data Analysis

The OQPT was used for a group of EFL learners studying at a language institute in Isfahan. Then, based on the results, 21 whose scores fell one standard deviation above or below the mean score of the OQPT were chosen. At first, the participants were introduced to the blogging project by the course teacher and Blogfa was introduced to them in class. The email notification feature was also shown to the students and the attitude questionnaire was run among participants. Participants were shown how to set up their blogs and how to add other blogs to their own blog. The blog assignments were used to investigate how collaborative blogging contributed on students' communicative skills in writing. As part of the blog assignments, the participants wrote about their ideas on their own blog and, also they posted the comments for the other participants on their blogs. The participants wrote a total of five blog assignments. After 10 weeks, the attitude questionnaire was administered among the participants to see if their attitude had changed. The rubric coding schemes were three blog rubrics (Franker, 2011; ELT Blog Evaluation, 2009; Blogging Evaluation, 2007.) which were retrieved online by the researcher. The codes had been used for evaluating student blogs in other studies, in order to assess the effectiveness of the students' written work on the blogs.

## 4. Results

The data obtained from the questionnaire were summarized below.

Table 1: Participants' attitude towards using collaborative blogging

Questionnaire items	Strongly agree			
	P	P	P	P
1-The collaborative blogging experience was enjoyable.	0%	0%	66.66%	33.33%
2-The blogging software (Blogger) was easy to use	19.04%	33.33%	28.57%	19.04%



3-Reading and commenting on others' blog assignments was interesting	0%	4.76%	57.14%	38.09%
4-Reading other's blog assignments helped in writing my blog assignments	0%	4.76%	71.42%	23.80%
5-Commenting on others' blog assignments helped in writing my own assignments	0%	4.76%	76.19%	19.04%
6-Reading other students' comments on my blog helped in writing my blog assignments	4.76%	0%	57.14%	38.09%
7-Writing the blog assignments helped improve my writing skills	0%	4.76%	61.90%	33.33%
8-Reading others' blog assignments helped improve my writing skills	0%	4.76%	52.38%	42.85%
9-Commenting on others' blog assignments helped improve my writing skills	4.76%	9.52%	47.61%	38.09%
10-Having others comment on my blog motivated me to write better	9.52%	9.52%	33.33%	47.61%
11-There was enough time to finish writing all the blog assignments	0%	9.52%	47.61%	42.85%
12-I would like to continue blogging collaboratively	0%	4.76%	57.14%	38.09%

As shown in Table 1, the attitude questionnaire revealed that all of the participants (100%) believed that collaborative blogging project was enjoyable. 47.61% of the participants believed that the blogs were easy to use. The rest of the participants (52.37%) stated that blogs were difficult to use. The process of reading and commenting on blogs was found to be interesting by 95.24%. Similarly, 95.12% of the participants felt that reading others' blog assignments helped in writing their own assignments. Around 96% of the participants claimed that commenting on others' blog assignments helped in writing their own assignments. 95% of the participants agreed or strongly agreed that reading others' comments on their blog assignments helped them in writing their own.

95.23% of the participants believed that writing the blog assignments helped improve their writing skills. Reading others' blog assignments helped 95.23% of the participants in writing their blog assignments. Commenting on others' blog assignments also helped 85.69% of the participants improve their writing skills. Having others comment on their blog assignments motivated 80.94% of the participants to write better. Moreover, 90.46 percent of the participants felt there was enough time to finish writing all the blog assignments. Finally, 95.23% of the participants said that they would like to continue blogging collaboratively. Accordingly, as explained most of the participants agreed or strongly agreed with the positive points of using blogs for doing writing assignments.

## 5. Discussion and Conclusion

The questionnaire was rated on a four point Likert scale and the scales of agreement were 1 for Strongly Disagree, 2 for Disagree, 3 for Agree and 4 for Strongly Agree. The following result was obtained: Most of the participants regardless of their gender agreed or strongly agreed with the positive points of using blogs for doing writing assignments.

Most of the participants had a positive attitude towards blogging and found the collaborative blogging project to be enjoyable. They reported that reading others' blogs and also the comments from others on their own blogs helped in writing the blog assignments better and improved their writing skills. It also improved their relationship with other participants and motivated them to write more. According to the studies done by Kavaliauskiene and Vaiciuniene (2006) and Wu (2005), students improve their language skills and become more aware of using the language after reading and commenting on others' blogs. The



results revealed that the participants were open to receiving comments from others. Most of the participants found it enjoyable. The EFL learners showed positive attitudes towards using collaborative blogging for teaching communicative aspects of writing. All in all, more attention should be given to new technology of different types in teaching the complicated task of writing. Also, an investigation into possible effects of collaborative blogging on cognitive and metacognitive strategy use can be a fruitful area of research (See Tabibian and Heidari-Shahreza, 2016).

As the current study showed that using ICT has a positive relationship on Iranian EFL learners' and their performance in writing, then the problems associated with writing could lie in the teachers' inability to use the new technology in writing classes and learners' inability to execute this technique. Therefore, the results of this research can brighten the path for both language teachers and learners.

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#### Appendix A: Attitude Questionnaire

Please take some time to fill out this questionnaire. Your feedback will be highly appreciated and it will help in improving the collaborative blogging experience. Thank you.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_ years

Please rate the following questions according to the rating scale below

**Circle the best choice '1', '2' '3' or '4'.**

1 - Strongly disagree

2 - Disagree

3 - Agree

4 - Strongly agree

1) The collaborative blogging experience was enjoyable. 1 2 3 4

2) The blogging software was easy to use. 1 2 3 4

3) Reading and commenting on others' blogs assignments was interesting. 1 2 3 4

4) Reading others' blog assignments helped in writing my blog assignments. 1 2 3 4

5) Commenting on others' blog assignments helped in writing my blog assignments. 1 2 3 4

6) Reading others students' comments on my blog helped in writing my blog assignments. 1 2 3 4

7) Writing the blog assignments helped improve my writing skills. 1 2 3 4

8) Reading others' blog assignments helped improve my writing skills. 1 2 3 4

9) Commenting others' blog assignments helped improve my writing skills. 1 2 3 4

10) Having others comment on my blog motivated me to write better. 1 2 3 4

11) There was enough time to finish writing all the blog assignments. 1 2 3 4

12) I would like to continue blogging collaboratively. 1 2 3 4

ACCEPTED