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CHALLENGES OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN IRAN, COMMENTS ON CURRICULA AND CURRENT PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICES

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Abstract

In the present article various aspects of higher education challenges in Iran are discussed with keeping an eye on curricula and pedagogical practices from the Islamic perspective. It is clearly argued that Longstanding Problems such as faculty quality, Problems Faced by Students and Insufficient Resources and Autonomy are the most significant challenges of higher education in Iran. New Realities resulted from new revolutions such as the internet and distance learning are also playing vital role in shaping the new higher education era in Iran.

Introduction

Today, global wealth is concentrated less and less in factories, land, tools, and machinery. The knowledge, skills, and resourcefulness of people are increasingly critical to the world economy. Human capital in the United States is now estimated to be at least three times more important than physical capital. A century ago, this would not have been the case (Emily Hannun & Claudia Buchmann, 2003). The developed world is reacting quickly, with education a major political priority. High-quality human capital is developed in high-quality education systems, with tertiary education providing the advanced skills that command a premium in today's workplace (College Board, 2004).

Most developed countries have seen a substantial rise in the proportion of their young people receiving higher education. Lifelong

learning is also being used to help workers adjust to rapidly changing economies (International Comparisons of 4-year College Continuation Rates, 2001). During the past two or three decades, however, attention has focused on primary education, especially for girls. This has led to a neglect of secondary and tertiary education, with higher education in a perilous state in many, if not most, developing countries. With a few notable exceptions, it is underfunded by governments and donors. As a result, quality is low and often deteriorating, while access remains limited. Higher education institutions (and whole systems) are politicized, poorly regulated, and sometimes corrupt (Burton Bollag, 2004).

We believe that a more balanced approach to education at all levels is needed. The focus on primary education is important, but an approach that pursues primary education alone will leave societies dangerously unprepared for survival in tomorrow's world. We live in a period of major structural change. The classic industrial revolution that started in the United Kingdom at the end of the eighteenth century spread gradually and unevenly to Europe and beyond (United Joint Economic Committee States Congress, 2000). By the end of the twentieth century, a number of so-called follower countries had joined the ranks of industrial nations, and today industrial countries are found throughout the world. Some have narrowed, and even closed, the gap between rich and poor, with the East Asian countries being a good example. Average incomes have tended to increase across the world (except in Sub-Saharan Africa) in the past 20 years, although one-quarter of the world's population still lives in abject poverty. Advances in information technology, meanwhile, have made this ever-increasing volume of knowledge more accessible, effective, and powerful. Networked computers and new forms of telecommunications spread information around the world with dazzling speed (Steven J. Rosenstone & John Mark Hansen, 2003).

The Internet, in particular, means that more knowledge than ever is in circulation. Those who have the skills to use it have access to an extraordinarily valuable (and sustainable) resource (Emily Hannun & Claudia Buchmann, 2004).

Longstanding Problems and New Realities **Faculty Quality**

A well-qualified and highly motivated faculty is critical to the quality of higher education institutions. Unfortunately, even at flagship universities in developing countries, many faculty members have little, if any, graduate-level training. This limits the level of knowledge

imparted to students and restricts the students' ability to access existing knowledge and generate new ideas (Heath A. Brown & Peter D. Syverson, 2004).

Teaching methods are often outmoded. Rote learning is common, with instructors doing little more in the classroom than copying their notes onto a blackboard. The students, who are frequently unable to afford a textbook, must then, transcribe the notes into a notebook, and those students who regurgitate a credible portion of their notes from memory achieve exam success (Total Endowment Assets, 2004). These passive approaches to teaching have little value in a world where creativity and flexibility are at a premium. A more enlightened view of learning is immediately needed, emphasizing active intellectual engagement, participation, and discovery, rather than the passive absorption of facts (Thomas B. Hoffer, 2003).

Improving the quality of faculty is made more difficult by the ill-conceived incentive structures found in many developing countries. Faculty pay is generally very low in relation to that offered by alternative professional occupations. Pay increases are governed by bureaucratic personnel systems that reward long service rather than success in teaching or research. Market forces, which attempt to reward good performance, are seldom used to determine pay in the higher education sector. Higher education institutions rely on the commitment of their faculty (Burton Bollag, 2004). Their consistent presence and availability to students and colleagues have an enormous influence in creating an atmosphere that encourages learning.

Yet few institutions in developing countries have strictures against moonlighting and excessive absenteeism (Richard Florida, 2004). Many faculty works part time at several institutions, devote little attention to research or to improving their teaching, and play little or no role in the life of the institutions employing them (Richard Florida, 2004). Faculty members are often more interested in teaching another course—often at an unaccredited school—than in increasing their presence and commitment to the main institution with which they are affiliated. With wages so low, it is difficult to condemn such behavior (Richard Florida, 2004).

Problems Faced by Students

In many institutions, students face difficult conditions for study. Severely overcrowded classes, inadequate library and laboratory facilities, distracting living conditions, and few, if any, student services are the norm. The financial strains currently faced by most universities are making conditions even worse (Richard Florida, 2004). Many students start their studies academically unprepared for higher education. Poor basic and secondary education, combined with a lack of selection in the academic system, lie at the root of this problem. Yet rarely does an institution respond by creating remedial programs for inadequately prepared students (Ibid. & Richard Florida, 2004). Students also face the widespread requirement to choose their area of specialization early in their course, in some cases ahead of matriculation. Once a choice is made, change is frequently difficult or even impossible. Such inflexibility closes off options, with students unable to sample courses in different academic areas (Martin Kenney, 1990). Early specialization can prevent costly indecisiveness, but systems that are unforgiving of early "mistakes" do not develop and unleash the true potential of many students (Ronald G. Ehrenberg, Michael J. Rizzo & George H. Jakubson, 2003).

Insufficient Resources and Autonomy

Many of the problems involving higher education are rooted in a lack of resources. For example, developing countries spend far less than developed countries on each student. But finding new funds is not easy (Richard Florida, 2004). Although absolute spending is low, developing countries are already spending a higher proportion of their (smaller) incomes than the developed world on higher education, with public spending for education growing more quickly than income or total government spending. Higher education is clearly placing greater demands on public budgets,⁵ with the private sector and international donors taking up only some of the slack. Redirecting money from primary or secondary education is rarely an option, with spending per student on higher education already considerably higher than is common at other levels of the education system (Ronald G. Ehrenberg, 2004).

Most public universities are highly dependent on central governments for their financial resources. Tuition fees are often negligible or nonexistent, and attempts to increase their level encounter major resistance (Richard Florida, 2004). Even when tuition fees are collected, the funds often bypass the university and go directly into the coffers of ministries of finance or central revenue departments. Budgets must typically be approved by government officials, who

may have little understanding of higher education in general, of the goals and capabilities of a particular university, or of the local context in which it operates (William G. Gale & Peter R. Orszag, 2004). The expansion and differentiation of higher education is occurring at the same time as the pace of knowledge creation is dramatically accelerating (Derek Bok, 2003). The categories into which new knowledge falls are becoming increasingly specialized, and a revolution has occurred in people's ability to access knowledge quickly and from increasingly distant locations. These changes are fundamentally altering what economies produce, as well as where and how they produce it (Richard Florida, 2004). Organizations are changing, as are the skills needed to run them and the way they utilize human capital (Peter D. Blumberg, 1997).

Industrial countries have been by far the greatest contributors to, and beneficiaries of, this knowledge revolution. To the extent that this trend continues, the income gap between industrial and developing countries will widen further (Scott Shane, 2004). Higher education institutions, as the prime creators and conveyors of knowledge, must be at the forefront of efforts to narrow the development gap between industrial and developing countries.

Characteristics of the Knowledge Revolution

The knowledge revolution can be described in a few key dimensions.

- Worldwide, the rate at which scientific papers are published has doubled in the past two decades. In economies where scientific capacity is expanding particularly rapidly, such as China, Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea, and Taiwan, the publication rate has more than doubled in the past decade. The number of academic journals is now doubling roughly every five years, with new titles reflecting increasingly narrow specialties (Sheila Slaughter & Larry L. Leslie, 2003). The higher education in Iran should enhance its level in publishing scientific journals.
- In both industrial and developing countries, the number of patent applications has been increasing steadily. For example, in 1996 residents of Brazil, India, and the United States filed 42, 66, and 71 percent more patent applications, respectively, than in 1986 (www.caut.ca, 2004). Recording of inventions in international scientific societies can be an indication of high level of higher education in Iran.

- A country ranking of published scientific papers per capita during 1981-94 does not include a single developing country among the top 15. China and India make the list when assessed in terms of the absolute number of papers published, but this is due mainly to the sheer size of their populations. The increasing importance of knowledge, in conjunction with the fact that most developing countries are falling further behind in their ability to create, absorb, and use it, has some major implications for developing countries (Burton Bollag, 2004).
- Countries that are only weakly connected to the rapidly emerging global knowledge system will find themselves increasingly at a disadvantage. The gap between industrial and developing countries in per capita incomes and standards of living will widen unless the corresponding gaps in knowledge and access to knowledge are successfully addressed (William G. Gale & Peter R. Orszag, 2004).
- Within countries, inequality will probably rise as some individuals and groups use their education (particularly higher education) to gain access to the knowledge system and then translate that access into higher incomes (Ibid. & Richard Florida, 2004).
- Rectifying this situation is critical, but not easy. Although higher education is the traditional venue for gaining advanced knowledge, in many countries a large proportion of secondary school graduates are ill prepared to continue their studies and join the knowledge-centered world. Remedial programs at some higher education institutions may help rectify this problem, but strenuous efforts to improve primary and secondary education, including an emphasis on using technology to gain new knowledge, will also be necessary (International Comparisons of 4-year College Continuation Rates, 2001). In most developing countries higher education exhibits severe deficiencies, with the expansion of the system an aggravating factor. Demand for increased access is likely to continue, with public and private sectors seeking to meet it with an array of new higher education institutions (Heath A. Brown & Peter D. Syverson, 2004). Rapid and chaotic expansion is usually the result, with the public sector generally underfunded and the private (for profit) sector having problems establishing quality programs that address anything other than short-term, market-driven needs. A lack of information about institutional quality makes it difficult for students to make choices about their education, making it hard to enlist consumer demand in the battle to raise standards (www.caut.ca, 2004). Developing countries are left

with a formidable task—expanding their higher education system and improving quality, all within continuing budgetary constraints.

Systems of Higher Education

A higher education system consists of three basic elements (Ronald G. Ehrenberg, 2004):

- The individual higher education institutions (public and private, whether profit or nonprofit; academic and vocational; undergraduate and graduate; onsite and distance-based, etc.), including their faculties, students, physical resources, missions, and strategic plans;
- The organizations that are directly involved in financing, managing, or operating higher education institutions, comprising a range of both public and private bodies.
- The formal and informal rules that guide institutional and individual behavior and interactions among the various actors. The system is not sealed from the outside world: it is at least loosely bound to the overall education system, for example, to secondary schools that provide most of its new students (Richard Florida, 2004). It is connected to the labor market and the business community, and to various government departments that set the policy environment in which it operates. It also has international links, to regional and global higher education communities, as well as to bilateral and multilateral donors, foundations, and nongovernmental organizations (Richard Florida, 2004). As we have mentioned, higher education across the world is undergoing a process of differentiation. This is happening horizontally as new providers enter the system, and vertically as institutional types proliferate. A diverse system, with a variety of institutions pursuing different goals and student audiences, is best able to serve individual and national goals (Burton Bollag, 2004). Recognizing the nature and legitimacy of this diversity helps ensure that there are fewer gaps in what the system can provide, while preventing duplication of effort. It is also helpful for halting institutional drift, where an institution loses focus on its “core business,” failing to recognize that it is already serving a particular group of students well. In the case of midlevel institutions, if their crucial role is not understood they may try to gain prestige by moving up the educational hierarchy (Derek Bok, 2003). This is unhelpful if it leaves a group of students poorly served and if the institutions are unable to function properly as they move upstream. Virtual Universities and Distance Learning Distance learning is an increasingly important part of the higher education system, with its

ability to reach students in remote areas and address the higher education needs of adults. It is not in itself a new idea—the University of South Africa, for example, has offered academic degrees through distance study for decades—but is growing at an astonishing rate (Scott Shane, 2004). Distance learning can be offered by traditional educational institutions or by new institutions that specialize in this mode of study. While recent developments in communication technology and computers have vastly increased the technical viability of distance education, economic viability is still an issue in many countries because of costly and extensive infrastructure requirements (Peter D. Blumberg, 1997). In the last, distance learning has been seen mainly as a cost-effective means of meeting demand, with policymakers paying inadequate attention to ensuring that it provides comparable quality to traditional modes of delivery.

The Task Force believes that distance education offers many exciting possibilities (Martin Kenney, 1990). Innovative curricula can be combined with interactive, Internet-based technology, traditional educational media such as television and print, written materials, and direct contact with tutors (Thomas B. Hoffer, 2003). Higher education institutions can thrive only if their funding levels are adequate, stable and—subject to good performance—secure in the long term. Institutions must plan far ahead if they are to provide consistent instruction and a secure and productive work environment for their faculty. In many areas, insecure funding stifles the ability and the incentive to carry out research (Richard Florida, 2004). Governments have a crucial role to play in providing stability. They must finance public institutions on a long-term basis, not as if they were part of a nonessential government sector with the attendant vulnerability to the vagaries of fluctuations in public spending (Richard Florida, 2004). They must also help create an environment conducive to the sustainable financing of private institutions and help the whole higher education system look to the future, ensuring that tomorrow's operating budgets will be sufficient to maintain and run the new infrastructure higher education will need. The new realities facing higher education mean that many traditional ways of running higher education systems are becoming less relevant (Sheila Slaughter & Larry L. Leslie, 2003). A laissez-faire approach, which assumes that all the components of a higher education system will simply fit together and serve everyone's needs, is untenable. System-wide coordination is clearly needed. But neither is centralized control the answer. Diversity is greatly needed, as are autonomy and competition among similar institutions. Funding models will also have to adapt, moving toward a flexible system that draws on both the public and the private purse

(Ronald G. Ehrneberg, Michael J. Rizzo & George H. Jakubson, 2003). The balance between the public and private sector is currently changing. Public higher education systems cannot meet sharp increases in demand and, as a result, the private components of higher education systems (especially for-profit institutions) have grown relatively quickly. But the growth of the private sector has tended to be quite haphazard (Richard Florida, 2004). As a result, in most developing countries no clearly identified set of individuals or institutions is working to ensure that all the goals of the country's higher education sector will be fulfilled. A coherent and rational approach toward management of the entire higher education sector is therefore needed. More traditional, informal arrangements are no longer adequate (Derek Bok, 2003). Policymakers must decide on the extent to which they will guide the development of their country's higher education sector, and the extent to which they think market forces will lead to the establishment and operation of a viable system. Overall, the Task Force believes that government guidance is an essential part of any solution (Scott Shane, 2004). Good governance promotes educational quality. A tradition of governance vary from country to country and by type of institution, but the Task Force has suggested a set of basic principles that promote good governance across a wide variety of situations (Richard Florida, 2004). Unfortunately these principles are frequently not observed, especially in developing countries, and especially where traditions of higher education are still not firmly established. The Task Force has therefore offered a number of tools that will help higher education systems and institutions move closer to the application of these principles. Good governance may be crucial, but it is not a panacea (William G. Gale & Peter R. Orszag, 2004).

In many parts of the world, pedagogy takes the form of canned lectures by professors and rote memorization by students; cheating is rampant and tolerated; and letters of recommendation are for sale. Shared governance does not guarantee quality if a tyrannical majority is determined to prevent progress (College Board, 2004). Perhaps most importantly, quality is not likely to be achieved as long as professors are forced to moonlight as a consequence of inadequate pay. The Task Force hopes that higher education policymakers will start to make better use of the tools of good governance (Peter D. Blumberg, 1997). They will not solve all problems quickly. But they will start the process of achieving sustainable and far-reaching improvement. Science and Technology The problem of insufficient scientific capacity in developing countries is acute, but it is not insurmountable (William G. Gale & Peter R. Orszag, 2004). Higher education has played a

leading role in bringing about impressive scientific achievements under difficult circumstances in various parts of the developing world. Generally, these achievements have arisen as a result of an early, deep, and sustained commitment to particular areas of science or technology. Notwithstanding the success stories, developing countries are falling further behind industrial countries in terms of their science and technology capacities and achievements (United Joint Economic Committee States Congress, 2004). Perhaps the most disturbing aspect of this trend is that many areas of scientific inquiry that hold great promise for the development of international public goods are receiving inadequate attention. These problems bode ill for social and economic development, and suggest a further widening of global inequality in standards of living (www.caut.ca, 2004). Many very useful discoveries end up sidelined because of a lack of support either from business or government, not because they are inherently inapplicable. Inadequate resources (both physical and human) for science education, and the absence of key values and traditions that promote effective scientific inquiry and training, are among the main causes of the deteriorating position of developing countries in the sciences (Emily Hannun & Claudia Buchmann, 2004). We have suggested some means by which higher education institutions and governments can address these problems. Strong international leadership that provides sustained intellectual and financial support for strengthening the scientific capacity of developing countries is also urgently needed. Equally important are efforts to strengthen scientific links between institutions of higher education in developing countries and centers of scientific excellence worldwide (Burton Bollag, 2004). The key question that will exercise policymakers in developing countries is "where should promoting science and technology higher education rank in the long list of priorities for resources?" The answer will vary from country to country. Science and technology are moving with extraordinary speed. Countries such as India and many of the Southeast Asian economies now play a strong role in the development of software and hardware (International Comparisons of 4-year College Continuation Rates, 2001). With the many incalculable spin-off benefits yielded by technologies such as the Internet, the world is entering the future before our eyes.

Playing a role in that future requires every developing country to think strategically about how their inevitably limited resources for science and technology higher education might best be deployed to the advantage of future generations (Total Endowment Assets, 2004). The Importance of General Education In some countries, the term "liberal education" recalls colonial domination and education. This is

unfortunate. While this particular method of education has Western roots, our emphasis is on an educational approach developed by each country, paying specific attention to its own culture and its particular needs (William G. Gale & Peter R. Orszag, 2004). The goal for all countries is similar— a broad, flexible, interactive education that addresses the whole human being— but the road to achieving this goal is unique and cannot simply be transplanted from one country to another. The time has come for national debates to begin. What is an educated person? Once a country has accepted the general education concept, what are the implications for curricula and other aspects of training? This debate is under way in a number of developing countries. Some institutions in India, the Republic of Korea, Nigeria, Pakistan, the Philippines, parts of Latin America, and some others already practice general education, although the quality of these efforts is uneven (Thomas B. Hoffer, 2003). Leaders from both government and education concluded that national preparation for the knowledge-based world required soundly designed liberal education, as opposed to exclusive emphasis on specialist, and usually technical, subjects. The Task Force hopes this interest in general education will continue to spread across the developing world, and that many more countries will develop increasingly broad, flexible, and innovative curricula (Ronald G. Ehrenberg, 2004).

Conclusion

Currently, two billion people live in the world's low-income countries. Their average income has a purchasing power of less than one-sixteenth of that enjoyed by the one billion people who live in the high-income countries. Even more astonishing is the ratio of the average income of the poorest and the richest one billion people on the planet: it is—conservatively— in the region of 1 to 80 (Total Endowment Assets, 2004). The disturbing truth is that these enormous disparities are poised to grow even more extreme, impelled in large part by the progress of the knowledge revolution and the continuing brain drain. The Task Force believes that strengthening higher education is a rational and feasible way for many countries to mitigate or avert further deterioration in their relative incomes, while positioning themselves on a higher and more sharply rising development trajectory (College Board, 2004). Higher education cannot be developed to the exclusion of other policy initiatives. The development of infrastructure, better governance, public health improvements, trade reform, and financial market development— these and others will be needed as well. The benefits of higher education require a long gestation period. There may be shortcuts to establishing educational infrastructure, but influencing people to

understand and convey higher education values and best practice will take decades, as opposed to a few years (Peter D. Blumberg, 1997). For this reason the Task Force urges policymakers and donors – public and private, national and international – to waste no time. They must work with educational leaders and other key stakeholders to reposition higher education in developing countries. Only then will it produce larger and better trained pools of graduates and research of higher quality. The chance is simply too great to miss. As H.G. Wells said in *The Outline of History*, “Human history becomes more and more a race between education and catastrophe (Thomas B. Hoffer, 2003).”

Concerning the above-mentioned discussion about the revolution of science, we can say the governments should provide the infrastructures for making an in Iran specifically in higher education level (Burton Bollag, 2004). Governmental principals and legislators must make a pattern for the higher education scientific matters that is based on the Islamic regulations so that the level of scientific education in higher education in Iran will increase and it will stand in a perfect position in the international level as well.

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- "Total Endowment Assets" from the National Association of College and Business Officers. The incremental revenue assumes an annual endowment payout of 4.5 percent.

JOY OF LEARNING: A DIRECT METHODICAL APPROACH WITH INDIVIDUAL CARE

A Short Note

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Abstract

This article deals with the methodology of L2 learning in general. The problem faced by any L2 learner is identical. There are many techniques to teach L2. The present methodology i.e., individual care is a good approach as is experienced from practice and research as well.

Key words: learning, L1, L2, lesson, grammar, individual care

Introduction

Learning must offer pleasure, not pain. One will learn then he will use it – this theme is not proper. It is livelier when a man learns the word that expresses his

Emotion/overcomes his problem he faces. For example, a drowning man will simply say “save”. This word signifies for help. Similarly, a novice if learns 2500 essential words In English, then he can manage the world from cradle to grave. He will learn the words whenever he needs those. It’s a continuous process. A learner may take 19 minutes and another may need 90 minutes for the identical lesson. So a schedule of learning cannot be Either 19 or 90 minutes. In fact learning depends on the receptivity of a learner. And Receptivity is dependent on various parameters. So, individual care is the main key. Also Cooperative learning paves the way to learn any language quickly and at ease. Learning is a slow process. It needs time for settlement. All grammar is identical. A Teacher will simply correlate between mother tongue and other language. Basic grammar is required for learning a language. In English, parts of speech, tense, voice are main Lessons. Picture helps much to grasp a matter easily. A teacher must have helping attitude with a smiling face always. His criticism must

always be helpful that will inspire the Learners who will wait for him for his careful and pleasing personality as well. In fact, Teaching is a long journey and patience is its only fuel. This is the essence of joy of Learning.

Syllabus is silly business. Yet syllabus has to prepare for learners. There are four types of Syllabi viz., linear, cyclic or spiral, parallel and communicative. The communicative Syllabus, amongst four, is the most scientific syllabus which gives emphasis on learner whereas traditional offers emphasis on teacher.

The background of the learner as well as the purpose which the language will serve for Him are of vital importance, whether he is a first language (L1) learner of the language or A second language learner (L2) will determine how much of the language is to be learnt And at what stage. Since L1 learner receives enough exposure at home, but L2 learner does not get, our concern is with L2. Since L1 is its mother tongue, L1 learner gets help of hereditary advantage. In fact, the pull of mother tongue is not less than the pull of Mother towards her child. Psycholinguistic tells us how a child learns its language (though the process of language learning is still covered in mystery to a great extent), whether the process of L1 acquisition and L2 learning are same or different. With the Help of an in-depth analysis of learners' errors the teacher can have some insights about the psycholinguistic stages through which a learner passes while learning the second Language. His understanding of L2 learning, therefore allows him to devise strategies for L2 teaching.

A child takes liquid at first, and then it gradually eats semi-solid and later on solid food. Similar procedure should be adopted in case of language learning i.e., simple to complex. Learning is complete when a learner can quarrel or join a debate or extempore speech with the concerned language either L1 or L2. Here cooperative learning enhances the Learning process faster and most effective. Gossiping in L2 language confirms the Acquisition of L2 language with confidence. Learning is accelerated by compulsion. For Example, a tourist must remember the name of hotel where he left his luggage and will Return back to get shelter in the chilly night of an unknown city. Further, motivation or Joy enables a learner to memorize the strange words. The course for an engineer will differ than a doctor. For example, an engineer has to remember – machine, software, site, Etc. A doctor lives with – medicine, hospital, surgery, etc. A tourist minds airport, hotel, Spot, etc. A businessman knows – market, product, profit, etc. A cricketer must know – Ball, bat, wicket, etc. A student keeps – book,

school, pen, etc. From practical point of view, there is no fixed rule or procedure for learning. A cock-tail of different methodologies serves the purpose. It solely depends upon the expertise or Intuitive power of the teacher. Here teacher is the real researcher. The theoreticians should take feed back of their models from the teachers for modification to make it more Effective. In fact, the syllabus of Hungary may not be fruitful at Holland. Similarly, the Procedure applied to the learners of Johannesburg may not have identical impact at Japan.

However, the data collected by one procedure may differ with other, even if be Administered on the identical learners at a particular period and environment.

COHESIVE DEVICES IN ARGUMENTATIVE, DESCRIPTIVE, AND EXPOSITORY WRITING PRODUCED BY IRANIAN EFL UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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Abstract

Using Halliday and Hasan's (1976) taxonomy of cohesive devices and their framework for analysis, this study investigated the use of cohesive devices in 180 compositions (argumentative, descriptive, and expository) produced by Iranian EFL university students. It was found that the students were able to use a variety of cohesive devices in their writing, among which lexical devices formed the largest percentage of the total number of cohesive devices, followed by references and conjunctions. The scores of writing were also revealed to significantly co-vary with the number of reference devices and the total number of cohesive devices used. Besides, mode of composition has some effect in the frequency of using cohesive devices. And topic of composition accounted for variation in using cohesive devices. Moreover, certain problems such as misuse, overuse, and restriction were identified in the compositions due to the use of reference, conjunction, and lexical devices.

Keywords: *Cohesive features, Argumentative writing, Descriptive Writing, Expository Writing, Reference device, Conjunction device, Lexical device*

1. Introduction

There is no doubt that writing is the most difficult skill for L2 learners to master. The difficulty lies not only in generating and organizing ideas, but also in translating these ideas into readable text (Richards and Renandya, 2002). Cohesion and coherence, two important textual elements (Halliday and Hasan, 1976 and 1989), have long been recognized as important features of “good” writing. As a result, a person needs to write not only coherently but correctly, which requires much more time and skills. This is especially in EFL context, where exposure to English is limited to a few hours per week (Shokrpour & Fallahzadeh, 2007).

Research on cohesion and coherence in writing has been increasingly done since the publication of *Cohesion in English* (Halliday and Hasan, 1976). Halliday and Hasan propose that in any language, such grammatical and lexical devices as reference, ellipsis, substitution, conjunction and lexical cohesion create “texture” or coherence- the property of being a text. These devices form cohesive relations between sentences and elements in sentences, thus contributing to the coherence of the text.

2. Literature Review

A lot of studies about cohesion and coherence in ESL/EFL writing and even in English itself (Jafarpur, 1991, Johns, 1980, Johnson, 1992; and Zhang, 2000 and Hartnett, 1989 cited in Johnson, 1992) have been done by using of Halliday and Hasan's (1976) framework. However, the findings of these studies have been somewhat contradictory. Some have found that there is no difference in the deployment of cohesive devices in “good” and “weak” writing (Johnson, 1992 and Zhang, 2000). Others indicate that highly rated essays differ from low rated ones in the use of cohesive devices (Jafarpur, 1991). Some researchers found that compositions scored holistically high contain more cohesion than those scored low (Jafarpur, 1991). On the other hand, Zhang's (2000) study of cohesion in 107 expository compositions created by Chinese English majors showed there was no difference in the frequency of using cohesive devices between “good” and “weak” compositions. Johnson' (1992) findings also showed there was no difference in the degree of cohesion between “good” and “weak” compositions written in Malay by native speakers or in English by native and Malay speakers. In addition, it is generally agreed that highly rated essays contain more lexical collocations than do low rated essays (Johns, 1980 and Zhang, 2000). The researchers also hold that lexical cohesion is the most common category in both good and weak essays, followed by conjunction and reference (Johns, 1980 and Zhang, 2000).

At the same time, some peculiar features have also been identified in the writing of ESL/EFL learners (Olateju, 2006; Khalil, 1989; Wikborg, 1990; Dueraman2007). Dueraman's (2007) findings about cohesion and coherence in English narrative essays written by Malaysian and Thai medical students showed that both groups used more syntactic ties (reference and conjunction) than semantic ties (reiteration and collocation). Olateju (2006) states that some of the cohesive devices were used wrongly or not used sufficiently and they were related to the insufficient exposure to the English language. Khalil's (1989) analysis showed that the Arab students overused reiteration of the same lexical item as a cohesive device, but underused other lexical and grammatical cohesive devices. The case was the same with the writing composed by Spanish-speaking students (Palmer, 1999) and by Chinese undergraduate English majors (Zhang, 2000). Findings In Wikborg'(1990) made it clear that Swedish students often showed cohesion problems in their writing ranging from missing or misleading sentence connection to malfunctioning cohesive devices to too great a distance between the cohesive items in a cohesive chain. Consequently, the misuse of these cohesive devices affected or even broke the coherence of the text. Field and Yip (1992) in comparison between 67 Hong Kong students with 29 Australian students in English writing about argumentative topic concluded that Hong Kong students used more conjunctions and usually put all of them at the beginning of the sentence. Irwin's study (1982) showed how mature readers make use of cohesion in text, and it shows that increasing the numbers of cohesive ties can improve readers' comprehension.

These empirical studies demonstrate that cohesion is an important element of any type of writing and that L1 and L2 learners of English have considerable difficulty in using cohesive devices.

3. Significant of the study

Writing in English as a foreign language is becoming more important owing to the fact that even EFL learners have to write papers and theses in English, and also sending job application letters and economic activities on an international scale have magnified the role of English language in international communications (Arvani, 2006).

Since it is the sentence rather than the text as a whole, that has received the primary focus (Johns, 1980) and on the other hand, cohesion is important both to the reader and the writer to create and comprehend a text (Halliday and Hasan, 1976), so more attention

should be paid to writing generally and to the role of cohesive devices particularly.

Adopting Halliday and Hasan's (1976) cohesion theory as the framework, this study seeks to identify the general cohesive features in writing composed by Iranian undergraduate EFL university students. It aims to answer the following questions:

- (1) Do the students use cohesive devices in their writing?
- (2) To what extent do the students use each category of cohesive devices?
- (3) What is the relationship between the number of cohesive ties and the scores of the same compositions?
- (4) What is the correlation in frequency of cohesive devices within different categories of cohesion produced in the compositions?
- (5) What is the difference in the frequency of using cohesive devices between highly-rated and poorly-rated compositions as assessed by Jacob's model?
- (6) What is the difference in the frequency of using cohesive devices among three modes of compositions (expository, descriptive, and argumentative) produced in the composition?

5. Research methodology

5.1. Participants

In this study, all the participants were in the age of 20 to 23 and all majoring in English at the University of Applied Sciences in Mashhad. The reason for selecting them was that, since they had taken the required writing courses, they were familiar with preliminary writing rules and skills.

5.2. Research design

It was assumed that cohesive devices were not used in the compositions and the scores given to each composition would not be affected by the number of cohesive devices. It was also assumed that the different categories of these cohesive devices were used equally in each composition and mode of compositions had nothing to do with the frequency of cohesive devices.

In the first stage, in three sessions, the subjects were asked to write the compositions in three different topics of different modes (expository, descriptive, and argumentative). The topics of compositions were, 'What help us to be healthy?', 'Describe a famous building in your city or somewhere else', and 'Computers can create more problems than they solve'. They were chosen because nearly all the students had had some experience or knowledge about them. The students only had

sixty minutes to complete the task for each composition. They were asked to write 150 to 200 words for each composition.

In the second stage, the compositions produced by the participants were scored first by the researcher and then another rater. They were experienced EFL teachers. The study employed Analytical method of Jacob et al (1981) as the marking scheme for assessing all the students' compositions. The profile was selected because it is believed to be "one of the most widely used scales for EFL writing" (Reid, 1993, p.235). In this research, the scale was from 0 to 100 as Jacob' (see Appendix). Compositions were scored by two raters because the more readers per paper, the more reliable the scores (Jacob et al, 1981, p.69). Reliability Coefficients of the scores given by two raters was 0.8846.

In the next stage, the study was led to identify and quantify the cohesive devices in the compositions produced by these Iranian ELF learners. Halliday and Hassan's (1976) model was selected as the most comprehensive framework for the analysis of the cohesive features in students' writing (Jafarpur, 1991; Johns, 1980; Johnson, 1992; Norment, 1994; Zhang, 2000). Their concept of cohesion and the well-developed taxonomy of cohesive devices were adopted. The coding system was used to account for and quantify the ties.

Then it investigated the relationship of these devices with score of writing. This was done respectively through the use of *correlation*. Correlation was computed between the numerical scores of the compositions and the frequency of ties of the same ones. *Chi-Square* test was conducted to determine whether students had more willingness to use specific categories of cohesion. Then, *paired sample T test* used to determine the correlation among three different categories of cohesive devices. Also, *Independent Samples t_ Test* was used to determine the difference in the frequency of use of cohesive devices between highly-rated and low-rated compositions if there would be. Finally, One-way ANOVA was also used to determine the difference in using cohesive devices among three modes of compositions (expository, descriptive, and argumentative).

6. Findings

6.1. Assessment results

Altogether, 180 compositions produced by the 60 students were collected and marked by two raters. In order to ensure consistency in the grading in this study, the results of grading were checked for inter-rater reliability. The scores given to each composition by the

raters were averaged and the mean determined as the final score for that piece. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Mean Standard deviation, etc., of the scores of 180 compositions given by the raters

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
AVTOT180	180	36.00	96.00	65.4861	13.30
Valid N (listwise)	180				

Since most of the scores fell into the range from 52 to 78 (mean score ± 1 SD), the compositions scored 78 or above were considered the best, while those scored 52 or below the weakest.

6.2. Cohesive features found in these compositions

Applying Halliday and Hasan's (1976) cohesive framework as the basis for data analysis, the numbers of cohesive devices used in each composition were counted, followed by the determination of the frequency, mean and standard deviation of the cohesive devices in each category.

6.2.1. Cohesive devices

Table 2 presents the numbers and percentages of the different subcategories of grammatical and lexical cohesive devices identified in the compositions. The table rejects the first hypothesis that "these students wouldn't use cohesive devices". This proves that the students in the present study employed a variety of cohesive devices with some types of devices used more frequently than others.

Table 2. Cohesive devices used in 180 compositions.

Type of cohesive devices	Reference devices	Conjunction devices	Lexical devices	Ellipsis devices	Substitutive devices	Total number
Frequency	1214	429	3497	11	3	5154
Mean/composition	6.74	2.38	19.42			28.55
Standard deviation	5.60	2.21	9.15			13.67
Standard	0.4179	0.1649	.0682			1.01

error	4					
Range	32	11	51			83
Percentage based on total	23.44%	8.90%	67.70%	0.21%	0.05%	100%

Based on the percentage of each cohesive tie, it is evident that the lexical devices had the highest percentage (67.70%), followed by the reference devices (23.44%) and the conjunction devices (8.90%). In Zhang' (2000) findings lexical devices were also the most frequently used, but they followed by conjunctions and reference devices. Since Ellipses and Substitutive devices do not have a significant role in the writing, as Halliday (2000) mentioned they were not taken into consideration.

Besides, Chi-Square test was conducted (see table. 3) to determine whether students would have no willingness to use specific categories of cohesion.

Table 3. Frequency of different categories of Cohesion

	Observed N	Expected N	Residual
Lexica	3497	1713.3	1783.7
Conjunction	429	1713.3	-1284.3
Reference	1214	1713.3	-499.3
Total	5140		

Test Statistics

	COHER
Chi-Square(a)	2965.163
Df	2
Asymp. Sig.	.000

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 1713.3. The above table shows that students would like to use some specific categories of cohesion than the others.

6.2.2. The use of cohesive devices in each category

The same compositions were also analyzed in order to discover more about the patterns of use of cohesive devices by these students. The

results are presented in the order of cohesive categories: reference, conjunction and lexical.

6.2.2.1. The use of reference devices

As shown in Table 4, among the three sub-categories of reference devices, pronouns (46.45%) had the highest percentage of use, followed by the demonstratives (29.81%). Comparatives (23.72%) had the least percentage of use.

Table 4. Reference devices used in 180 compositions

	Pronominal devices	Demonstrative devices and the definite article	Comparative devices	Total number
Frequency	564	362	288	1214
Mean per composition	3.13	2.01	1.60	6.74
Standard deviation	3.63	2.45	2.13	5.60
Standard error	0.2707	0.1831	0.1593	0.4179
Range	20	11	12	32
Percentage	46.45%	29.81%	23.72%	100%
Most frequently used cohesive items	They, it, them, their	This, these, that, the	Such as, more...than, the most, like, another	

The predominant use of pronouns in the compositions were 'they', followed by 'it' 'them', 'these', which might be due to topics. Among demonstratives, 'this' and 'these' occurred much more frequently than 'that' and 'those'. This might manifest that the students were more comfortable at using items that refer to something absent, against the claims by Halliday and Hasan (1976). They state that for the things which are absent demonstrative like that and those are used more. Among Comparatives, 'more...than or adjective/er' occurred most of the time.

6.2.2.2. The use of conjunction devices

As shown in Table 5, among the five sub-categories of conjunction devices, additive devices (43.35%) accounted for the largest

percentage of use, followed by temporal (18.64%), causal (16.08%), and adversative (14.91%) devices. Continuative devices occurred only 30 times in the 180 compositions analyzed, probably because they are seldom used in formal written work. As can be seen from Table 4, all the students appeared to be aware of the five sub-categories of conjunction devices. Additive devices were the most frequently used because they are helpful in connecting phrases, clauses and sentences in writing. The cohesive items with the highest frequency were 'and', 'also', all of which belong to the group of easy words and expressions Iranian students start to learn as soon as they have access to English. Among adversative devices, 'but', 'However', and 'Although' were used with the highest frequency, while 'on the contrary' and 'instead' rarely occurred in the writing. This may imply that the students were not competent enough to use other cohesive items to indicate transition of meaning such as 'rather', and 'on the contrary'. Among causal devices, 'because' was the most frequently used item, followed by 'so' and 'for'. Other items such as 'as a result' and 'thus' were only occasionally or rarely used. As to 'temporal', the students preferred using 'first', 'firstly', 'second', 'secondly', 'third', 'thirdly' and 'finally' to indicate the sequence of time or importance, etc. However, items as 'sum up', 'meanwhile', and 'all in all' were hardly found in the writing.

Table 5. Conjunction devices used in 180 compositions

	Additive devices	Adversative devices	Temporal devices	Causal devices	Continuative devices	Total number of conjunction devices
Frequency	186	64	80	69	30	429
Mean per composition	1.03	0.35	0.44	0.38	0.16	2.38
Standard deviation	1.43	0.57	0.85	0.72	0.57	2.21
Standard error	0.1535	0.04	0.06	0.05	0.04	0.16
Range	8	3	5	5	4	11

Percentage	43.35 %	14.91 %	18.64 %	16.08 %	7 %	100 %
<i>Most frequently used cohesive items</i>	And, also, For example, In addition, First, second, third,	But, However, Although, on the other hand	Nowadays, when, Now, In the past, First, firstly, second, secondly, third, thirdly, finally	Because, so, Because of,	Of course, Unfortunately,	

6.2.2.3. The use of lexical cohesion

As shown in Table 6, in the five sub-categories of lexical devices, repetition (89%) of the same word formed the highest percentage of use, followed by collocation (5.31%), synonym (3.26%) and general (1.65%). Super ordinates were rarely used.

Table 6. Lexical devices used in the 180 compositions

	Repetition	General	Synonym	Super ordinate	Collocation	Total number of lexical devices
Frequency	3113	58	114	26	186	3497
Mean per composition	17.29	0.32	0.63	0.14	1.03	19.42
Standard deviation	8.09	0.67	0.92	0.41	1.34	9.15
Standard error	0.60	0.05	0.06	0.03	0.99	0.68
Range	41	3	4	2	9	51
Percentage	89%	1.65%	3.26%	0.74%	5.31%	100%
<i>Most frequently used</i>	Computer, health,	Thing, element,	Shop, store, Childre	Famil y, parent	Tired, buy, stress,	

<i>cohesive items</i>	children , advance d, advanta ge, exercise ,buildin g, game, floor, shop, store	way, place,	n, kids	, sport walki ng	relaxed, success, internet
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As further indicated in Table 6, the students tended to use repetition more often than synonym, collocation and so on. Further, the majority of the most frequently used cohesive items were 'computer', 'healthy', 'university', and 'building'. These were the words given in the title and closely related to the theme of the topic. These results are similar to Tierney and Mosenthal' (1983) findings that the topic accounts for variation in types of cohesive items. Thus, the topic seems to affect the options a writer has for choice of cohesive devices.

6.3. The relationship between the number of cohesive devices and the scores of writing

The figures in the above Tables show that the students had knowledge of cohesive devices and used a variety of them in their writing. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that three leading cohesive devices used i.e. reference, conjunction and lexical cohesion, had a considerable range, that is 32, 11, and 50, but the other two, i.e. substitution and ellipsis were used rarely. Halliday (2000) believes they are used more in conversations. Anyway, the definite article 'the' was extensively used in a few compositions; it was seldom used in most. In order to investigate the relationship between the number of cohesive devices and writing score, correlation was computed between the numerical composition scores and the frequency of devices (total devices per composition) in terms of cohesive categories (reference, conjunction and lexical cohesion). The results are displayed in Tables 7.

Table.7. Correlation between the 180 composition scores and cohesive devices

Compositi on scores	Referen ce devices	Conjuncti on devices	Lexica l device	Total numbe r of
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	s				cohesiv e devices
Composition scores	1				
Reference devices	0.3481	1			
Conjunction devices	0.2876	0.2461	1		
Lexical devices	0.2874	0.4716	0.3012	1	
Total number of cohesive devices	0.3818	0.7658	0.4646	0.9119	1
<i>Reliability Coefficients 5 items Alpha = .7468</i>					

The correlations among composition scores and different cohesive variables demonstrated in Table 6 reveal that the composition scores significantly co-varied with the total number of cohesive devices ($r = 0.3818$). This rejects this hypothesis that "there is no relationship between the frequency of cohesive devices and the score of the same composition". Moreover, the composition scores were highly correlated to reference devices among the three main categories of cohesive devices ($r = 0.3481$). Similar to Yang' (1989) and Norment' (1994) findings that there was a relation between cohesive devices and writing quality. Contrary to the findings claimed by other researchers (Johnson, 1992; Dueraman ,2007; Tinrney and Mosenthal ,1983 and Zhang, 2000; Karasi,1994), this finding is quite unexpected and might be partly due to the fact that compositions with high scores tended to be longer and involved more reference items.

6.4. The correlation in frequency of cohesive devices within three different categories of cohesion themselves.

Apart from correlation analysis, Paired-Sample T test also used to determine the correlation among three categories in cohesion.

Table.8. Correlation among three different categories of cohesive devices

		N	Correlation	Sig.
Pair 1	lexical & reference	180	.472	.000
Pair 2	lexical & conjunction	180	.301	.000
Pair 3	conjunction & reference	180	.246	.001

The above table shows that the correlation between lexical-reference is the most and as a whole this hypothesis that "there is no correlation within different categories of cohesive devices" is rejected.

6.5. The difference in using cohesive devices between highly-rated and poorly-rated compositions.

Besides, Independent sample T-test was also used to determine the difference in using cohesive devices between highly-rated and poorly-rated compositions. Table 9 indicates that there was statistically significant differences between compositions rated high (n=30) and rated low (n=30). All of them are statistically significant at the 0.05 level.

Table.9. Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
LEXICAL	Equality of variances assumed	17.235	.000	2.99	58	.004	8.3667	2.78989	2.79	13.9512
	Equality of variances not assumed			2.99	39.478	.005	8.3667	2.78989	2.79	14.0075
CONJUNCT	Equality of variances assumed	20.35	.000	2.95	58	.005	1.9333	.65501	.62	3.24
	Equality of variances not assumed									

	vari ance s assu med	8	0	2						
	Equ al vari ance s not assu med			2. 95 2	36. 67 1	.00 5	1.933 3	.6550 1	.60 575	3.26 092
REFE RENC	Equ al vari ance s assu med	23. 10 5	.0 0 0	3. 06 0	58	.00 3	4.466 7	1.459 83	1.5 444	7.38 884
	Equ al vari ance s not assu med			3. 06 0	45. 07 8	.00 4	4.466 7	1.459 83	1.5 265	7.40 678

p<0.05

6.6. The difference in using cohesive devices among different modes of compositions.

Moreover, One-way ANOVA was also used to determine the difference in using cohesive devices among three modes of compositions (expository, descriptive, and argumentative). First, Test of Homogeneity of Variances (Table 10) shows there is no reason to have an unbalanced variance.

Table.10. NO. Cohesive Devices

Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
.502	2	177	.606

And here is the Multiple Comparisons among three modes of compositions.

Table11. Dependent Variable: NO. Cohesive Devices

(I) GROUP	(J) GROUP	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1.00	2.00	-4.9167	2.41026	.106	-10.6136	.7802
	3.00	4.4000	2.41026	.164	-1.2969	10.0969
2.00	1.00	4.9167	2.41026	.106	-.7802	10.6136
	3.00	9.3167(*)	2.41026	.000	3.6198	15.0136
3.00	1.00	-4.4000	2.41026	.164	-10.0969	1.2969
	2.00	-9.3167(*)	2.41026	.000	-15.0136	-3.6198

* The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

Table 11 shows that there is just statistically significant difference between compositions of descriptive and argumentative mode in frequency of using cohesive devices. Similar to Hartnett' (1989, cited in Johnson, 1992) findings there was no correlation between mode of "argumentative and expository" and amount of cohesion in English. But this study shows a relation between mode of "argumentative and descriptive", and amount of cohesive devices.

6.7. Problems with cohesion

As shown in the preceding Tables, the students involved in this study were able to use a variety of cohesive devices in their writing to make it cohesive and coherent. However, certain cohesion problems also existed in the compositions created by these undergraduate EFL university students. This is similar to Khalil' (1989) findings that showed the Arab students overused reiteration of the same lexical item as a cohesive device, but underused other lexical and grammatical cohesive devices. It is also like Olateju (2006)' findings that showed some of the cohesive devices were used wrongly or not used sufficiently because of insufficient exposure to the English language and Wikborg's (1990) findings that Swedish students often had problems with cohesion. These problems were mainly concerned with the use of reference and lexical cohesion.

6.7.1. Problems with reference devices

Although reference devices were the second most extensively used categories of cohesion in the students' writing, the students appeared not to be at ease with their use. The problems with the use of reference devices were mainly of three types: the shifted use of pronouns; omission or misuse and underuse of the definite article; and overuse of the phrase like 'such as'.

The students in this study tended to shift pronouns within or between clauses such as from the first person to the second or from the singular form to the plural. As a result, the referents and the referring items were made inconsistent, which often times confused the reader and even caused problems in comprehension. Below are some examples from the students' writing.

Example: No. 10.

Always *we* should try holding healthy *yourself*.

Example: No, 41.

We know health is very important for all of us and everybody need it in their life.

Example: No, 29.

If *we* use this command in *my* life....

Example: No, 30.

This works makes confidence for people.

Another problem that the students in this study had in the use of reference devices was the omission or misuse of the definite article 'the'. The students sometimes confused the use of definite and indefinite articles, but, more often, they omitted obligatory articles or inserted unnecessary ones in their writing. This misuse of the definite article might be due to the transfer and interference of their mother tongue because Persian does not have any articles. The same problem was found in other studies (Zhang, 2000).

Example: No.1.

Mashad city is a traditional city in *the* Iran. When we arrive to end of *floor*, we see a place for children.

Example: No.19.

I was sick two days ago. I went to *doctor*.

Example: No.30.

This building is very a famous shopping centre in *the* Mashad.

In addition, the analysis of the compositions also reveals that the students were not confident in using comparatives in their writing. The most striking feature was the underuse of comparatives and the overuse of the 'such as' and 'more... than'. Nevertheless, this might

suggest that the students had difficulty in using comparative expressions such as 'as ... as', 'not so ... as'.

Example: No.2.

Now we have *more* problems *than* before. I think computers can create *more* problems *than* they solve.

Example: No.58.

We have heard that people who live in villages have *more* longevity *than* residents. As we know athletes are stronger *than* usual people.

6.7.2. Problems with lexical devices

Being the main carrier of message and the means of expression, lexical items are the principal components of any composition. That may contribute to the fact that lexical devices are the most extensively used categories of cohesion in students' writing. However, because lexicon involves both meaning and usage, it becomes a much more complicated and difficult task for foreign learners of English. The analysis of the compositions in this study indicates that the students had two areas of difficulty in using lexical devices: first, a restricted choice of lexical items that cause repetition and second, the wrong use of collocation. This is implied by the fact that the majority (83.8%) of the lexical devices were the repetition of words. Further, the repeated words were confined to a narrow range especially the words as the same of the topic of compositions. Other types of lexical devices such as synonym, antonym and super ordinate were hardly found in the writing. This restricted use of lexical items might be due to the students' English proficiency because they had little exposure to English outside the English lessons offered by the University. An additional reason could be that they only had little time for writing in English. The students' knowledge of vocabulary justifies the statement mentioned above.

The second problem the students had in using lexical devices was the wrong use or underuse of collocations (nearly 1 in each composition), as illustrated by the following examples.

Example: No, 60.

Another *device* for being healthy is.... (Factor)

Use useful materials like meat, milk, grains in our *food*. (Diet)

Example: No, 27.

Because in this time *climate* is fresh and good. (The air)

Example: No, 28.

Nowadays, they are popular *between* young people. (Among)

6.7.3. Problems with conjunctive devices

As was mentioned before, it seems that the students were capable of using a variety of conjunctive devices to bridge the previous

sentence(s) and the following one(s) to make their writing clearer and more logical. However, only those commonly used items as 'and', 'but', 'however' 'also' 'first' 'second' 'conclusion' were the students' favorites, whereas the items learned later such as 'furthermore', 'on the contrary', 'moreover', 'in addition', 'on the whole', and 'nevertheless' seldom occurred in their writing. One problem the students had in using conjunctive devices was the wrong use, as illustrated by the following example

Example: No, 6.

If we use computer in good way it's very useful and if we use it in bad way it is not benefit. *In addition* computers can make very problems. (So)

Example: No, 28.

We can spend day in this shopping centre and don't worry for lunch and shopping, *of course*, our car. (And)

Example: No, 27.

Because in this time climate is fresh and good. *Now*, try to have 20 minutes exercise in the afternoon. (So)

Example: No, 19.

We can get information of another country with computer. *In the other hand*, some people are hacker.

7. Discussion and conclusions

The findings reveal that lexical devices (67.70%) constituted the highest percentage of the total number of cohesive devices used in the compositions, followed by reference devices (23.44%) and conjunction devices (9%). Substitution and ellipsis are seldom used.

The quantitative analysis of the use of cohesive devices in the compositions shows that, among the three sub-categories of reference devices, pronominals (46.45%) were the most frequently used devices followed by demonstratives (29.81%) and comparative (23.72%) the least used. Further, the students, especially the less proficient ones, were also found to have difficulty in using reference devices in a consistent and effective way. As the compositions manifested these students have difficulty in using articles consistently and correctly: they tend to omit necessary articles, insert unnecessary ones, or confuse the use of definite and indefinite articles in their writing.

To regard the use of conjunctions, it seems that the students were capable of using a variety of devices to bridge the previous sentence(s) and the following one(s) to make their writing clearer and more

logical. However, only those commonly used items as 'and', 'but', 'however' 'also' 'first' 'second' 'conclusion' were the students' favorites, whereas the items learned later such as 'furthermore', 'on the contrary', 'moreover', 'in addition', 'on the whole', and 'nevertheless' seldom occurred in their writing.

Although lexical cohesion was the most extensively used category of cohesive devices, it appeared to be an area that needs improvement for Iranian undergraduate EFL university students. The students demonstrated a limited choice in the use of lexical items and the great majority of the lexical devices were repetitiously used. The rare use of synonyms, antonyms, superordinates, and general words, and collocation indicates that much needs to be done in the teaching of vocabulary in Iran.

A further statistical analysis shows that the composition scores were highly correlated with the number of references devices and the total number of cohesive devices used. This indicates that there was a significant relationship between the number of cohesive devices used and the scores of the writing created by these undergraduate EFL university students.

Besides, comparison between argumentative and descriptive mode of compositions also shows that these subjects are more capable in using cohesive devices in the latter. And it might be related to their gender.

On the whole, given the fact that the students, whose field of studies were English are more proficient and competent in using English than most university students in the country and that the subjects involved were at an advanced level and received training in English writing for at least three terms, it could be hypothesized that Iranian undergraduate EFL university students in general tend to use more lexical devices in their writing, followed by reference and conjunction devices. Concerning the use of each category of cohesive devices, they most probably have more difficulty in making effective use of pronouns, articles, comparatives and lexical items due to low English proficiency and/or little or even no training in writing. As a consequence, much needs to be done in the teaching of writing to enhance the students' awareness of the importance and use of cohesive devices in their writing.

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Appendix

EFL Composition Profile

Score level criteria

Content

30 excellent to very good: knowledgeable. Substantive thorough development of thesis • -27 relevant to assigned topic

26-22 good to average: some knowledge of subject • adequate range • limited development of thesis mostly relevant to topic, but lacks detail

21-17 fair to poor: limited knowledge of subject • little substance • inadequate development of topic

16-13 very poor: does not show knowledge of subject • non-substantive • not pertinent • or not enough to evaluate

Organization

20-18 excellent to very good: fluent expression • ideas clearly stated/supported succinct • well-organized • logical sequencing • cohesive

17-14 good to average: somewhat choppy • loosely organized but main ideas stand out • limited supports logical but incomplete sequencing

13-10 fair to poor: non-fluent • ideas confused or disconnected • lacks logical sequencing and development

9-7 very poor: does not communicate • no organization or not enough to evaluate

Vocabulary

20-18 excellent to very good: sophisticated range • effective word/idiom choice and usage • word form mastery • appropriate register

17-14 good to average: adequate range • occasional errors of word/idiom form, choice, usage but meaning not obscured

13-10 fair to poor: limited range • frequent errors of word! idiom form, choice, usage meaning confused or obscured

9-7 very poor: essentially translation • little knowledge of english vocabulary, idioms, word form • or not enough to evaluate

Language use

25-22 excellent to very good: effective complex constructions • few errors of agreement, tense, number, word order/function, articles, pronouns, prepositions

21-18 good to average: effective but simple constructions • minor problems in complex constructions • several errors of agreement, tense, number, word order/function, articles, pronouns, prepositions but meaning seldom obscured

17-11 fair to poor: major problems in simple/complex constructions • frequent errors of negation, agreement, tense, number, word order/function, articles, pronouns, prepositions and/or fragments, run-ons, deletions • meaning confused or obscured

10-5 very poor: virtually no mastery of sentence construction rules dominated by errors • does not communicate or not enough to evaluate

Mechanics

5 excellent to very good: demonstrates mastery of conventions • few errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalization paragraphing

4 good to average: occasional errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, paragraphing but meaning not obscured

3 fair to poor: frequent errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalization paragraphing poor handwriting meaning confused or obscured

2 very poor: no mastery of conventions • dominated by errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, paragraphing • handwriting illegible • or not enough to evaluate

AN INVESTIGATION OF EDUCATIONAL SUCCESS IN NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES: SINGAPORE

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Abstract

Singaporean educational system has paid due attention to the quality of its English Language Teaching (ELT) field in recent years. This amount of attention to education and ELT in particular has not been fruitless and we have observed the continuous prosperity in Singaporean educational system. This flourishing system owes its victory to the quality of the teachers and teacher training centers, the future job security, early teaching of the second languages, etc. Firstly, this paper investigates the Singaporean educational system through a detailed discussion of its primary and secondary education. Then teachers' preparation, requirements, standards, and qualifications are put to discussion. Later, Singaporean TOEFL scores in the region between years 1991 and 2006 are compared and contrasted. After reviewing the syllabus of Singapore's educational system, possible success factors are suggested and discussed. These factors have certain implications for Iranian officials and authorities in the ministry of education and educational systems.

Key words: Singaporean educational system, primary education, secondary education, ministry of education

1. Introduction

Education has always played a key role as competitive strength and a necessity for the economic growth and social viability of Singapore as a nation since self-government in 1959 (Ingersoll, 2008). In a process of continual development and ongoing improvement, education policies and practices have been reviewed and refined through the years. Since the mid 1990s, the world has been constantly changing around us and this fact has challenged the Ministry of Education (MOE) to make fundamental paradigm shifts in the strategic direction of the

education system so that it is geared to meet the needs of Singapore in the 21st century (Gopinathan, 1999; Sharpe & Gopinathan, 2002).

First, globalization is rapidly recasting the economic landscape and redefining the international workplace in which nations have to operate. Second, technological change is proceeding at a rapid pace, resulting in changes in the ways individuals live and work.

Third, intellectual capital increasingly will become the basis for competitive advantage among companies and nations. Therefore, education in Singapore must equip successive generations to thrive in an intensely competitive global marketplace, to imbue them with moral attitudes, enterprising and innovative mind sets, and to ensure they are technologically savvy, flexible and willing to continually learn and upgrade their skills.

To succeed in this endeavor, Singapore will be dependent on a high-quality teaching workforce with the values, instincts, life skills and competencies on which we entrust them with the heavy responsibilities of molding the lives of the young people.

As in other Asian nations, teachers generally are well respected in Singapore society, and the MOE has been actively calling for the public and parents to give respect, appreciation, and regard to the profession (Goh & Chang, 2002; Lee, 1996, 2006; Shanmugaratnam, 2004; Teo, 1998). The MOE also is cognizant of the important role teachers' play in educating new generations to break new ground and chart new directions for Singapore. Since embarking on the "Thinking School, Learning Nation" vision in 1997 (Goh, 1997), the MOE has regarded teachers as central to this whole change process and as exemplary role models in seeking out new ideas, learning and practices, and continuously innovating and refreshing their own knowledge (Shanmugaratnam, 2004).

The MOE's goal of building up a qualified teaching force is achieved through a process of careful and detailed planning, aggressive teacher recruitment, comprehensive training and effective teacher retention.

Quality is as important as numbers; nevertheless, numbers do count. With better recruitment comes the opportunity to make an investment in the future by adding more qualified teachers to every school.

With more teachers per school, and coupled with better job prospects, retention rates of good-quality teachers also will improve.

2. Overview of the Singapore education system

The mission of education in Singapore is to “mould the future of the nation” – that is, to shape the learning of young people who will determine the future of the nation (Goh, 1997).

As a system, the key advantage of Singapore education is that it is well structured and efficient in providing educational pathways and differently paced curricula to cater to the different needs, capabilities, aptitudes and learning modalities of students.

To do so, the system identifies as early as possible the different abilities and interests of students and then mass customizes flexible educational programs to cater to the varying requirements of each group of students. Singapore’s education system therefore is geared towards abroad-based holistic education allowing students to draw from a diversity of knowledge, learning experiences and opportunities so that they can pursue their passions and develop special talents. The goal also is to nurture and prepare Singaporeans to go forward with a strong social conscience and mind set so that they will be ready to compete in the highly innovational, highly entrepreneurial economy of the future (Chen, 2000; Lee, 2006; Shanmugaratnam, 2003)

3. Primary education

At the primary level, pupils go through two stages: (a) a four-year foundation stage, from primary one to four (grades 1 – 4); and (b) a two-year orientation stage from primary five to six (grades 5 and 6). The emphasis during the foundation stage is on basic literacy in English and their mother tongue (i.e., Chinese, Malay and Tamil languages) and mathematics. Arts and crafts, health and physical education, moral education, music, science and social studies are included in the curriculum to ensure that students have a good grounding across different areas of study. Furthermore, primary education seeks to provide students with sound values and life skills, and to develop students’ thinking and communication skills.

4. Secondary education

At the end of primary six, pupils take the Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE). According to learning pace, aptitude and inclination, pupils are placed in one of three secondary-school streams: Special, Express, or Normal. These courses provide pupils with different curricular emphases that match their abilities and interests. The majority (approximately 61 %) of pupils takes the Special

or Express courses, while the remaining 39% enter the Normal course stream (Ingersoll, 2008).

The Special and Express stream pupils are of higher ability and study the same curriculum except that the Special stream pupils learn their mother tongue as a first language while their Express counterparts are taught it at a second language level.

These pupils complete their secondary education in four years by sitting for the Singapore-Cambridge General Certificate of Education Ordinary-Level Examination.

Within the Normal-course track, pupils have the option of taking either the Normal/academic or Normal/technical curriculum, both of which lead to the Singapore-Cambridge General Certificate of Education Normal Examination at the end of four years. Those who are competent can proceed onto a fifth year of study where they sit for the Singapore Cambridge General Certificate of Education Ordinary-Level Examination similar to those pupils from the Special and Express courses (Ingersoll, 2008).

5. Teacher preparation, requirements and standards

The importance given to teachers and the teaching profession in Singapore has enabled the nation to maintain a dynamic education system capable of delivering quality education to meet changing needs and demands for more than four decades. It is therefore crucial for educators to be able to attract and retain the people they need to educate the youth. To this end, all the interrelated processes pertaining to recruitment, training, certification, appointment, and deployment of teachers for the Singapore schools are the sole responsibility of the MOE. This is not done in isolation, but in constant consultation with schools, the National Institute of Education (NIE) and other stakeholders—for example, teachers, parents, other government ministries, universities, and businesses. This is particularly important as Singapore seeks to maintain a high level of qualifications among the teachers beyond those related to licensing standards that is common to many countries.

A structure that is basically “closed” enables Singapore to manage its teaching workforce both in terms of quantity and quality, and to carefully monitor issues. Such a centrally managed system helps Singapore prevent wastage in human resources and minimize problems like teacher shortages and high turnover, under qualified teachers and out-of-field teaching.

6. Academic qualifications required for teaching

Interested applicants are invited to attend "Teaching as a Career" recruitment seminars organized by the MOE and held regularly during the year (Ingersoll, 2008). Individuals also can apply via the Internet on the MOE Website. Depending on an individual's academic qualifications, one can apply to become either a graduate or non graduate teacher.

To be considered a graduate teacher, individuals must possess a university bachelor, under graduate or college) degree, including coursework in requisite teaching subjects.

The section on "Secondary Grade Level Teachers' Subject Qualification and the Subject Taught in Schools" provides an indication of majors (subjects) individuals must have studied at the university level to be qualified to teach that subject(s) in schools. The admission criteria for non graduate teachers (i.e., those without any university degree) can include any one of the following academic qualifications: (a) the General Certificate of Education (GCE) 'Ordinary' level (Grade 10) (b) the General Certificate of Education (GCE) 'Advanced' level (Grade 12); or (c) a Polytechnic diploma.

Once individuals meet the academic qualifications, they are then short listed for the interview process, wherein each application is considered in competition with that of other applicants. The interviewers seek to learn more about the following qualities in an individual:

- Passion for teaching
- Ability to communicate well with others
- Creative and innovative spirit
- Confidence
- Leadership qualities
- Good role model

Recruitment, training and deployment of teachers in Singapore are quite unlike that in other nations.

First, it is important to emphasize those individuals who are hired as trainee teachers are regarded as full civil-servant employees (called General Education Officers) of the ministry. Therefore, all trainee teachers are guaranteed teaching positions and are automatically deployed to schools upon completion of training at NIE.

Second, as civil servants, all trainee teachers receive a full monthly salary, including Central Provident Fund (CPF) contributions, year-end bonuses, NIE tuition grant, and other benefits due all civil service employees even when they are undergoing NIE training (Ingersoll, 2008). Depending on the individual's qualifications, pedagogical training, working experience and gender, a teacher's starting salary ranges from \$1,020 to \$2,060 (U.S.) a month. Third, all individuals hired but untrained will be sponsored to attend the NIE for their pedagogical training in the subject areas and grade levels that they have been hired for. Finally, because of this huge capital investment in them in terms of salaries and tuition grants, trainee teachers are required to serve a so-called teaching bond, ranging from three to four years, after they graduate from teacher training.

7. The TOEFL scores of Singaporeans through the years 1991-2006

In this section, I intend to have a quick review on the TOEFL scores of Singaporean candidates during the past two decades (Educational Testing Service [ETS], 2006). A critical look at the score of each section and the total score of each year reveals that the performance of Singaporean candidates is way beyond their Asian neighboring countries. In year 1991 up to 1993, Singapore had the highest total score mean of 593 among the other countries in Asia. Even each of the individual sections is higher in mean comparing to other countries (Table 1).

Table 1, TOEFL Total and Section Score Means – Nonnative English-Speaking Examinees Classified by Geographic Region and Native Country (Based on 1,338,682 students seeking admission to institutions in the United States or Canada who took TOEFL from July 1991 through June 1993)

Geographic Region and Native Country	Number of Examinees	Listening Comprehension	Structure and Written Expression	Vocabulary and Reading Comprehension	Total Score Mean
Indonesia	37,810	52	49	50	503
Japan	260,513	49	50	48	490
Kiribati	4	*	*	*	*
Korea (DPR)	1,859	49	47	47	476
Korea (ROK)	110,232	48	51	52	504
Laos	291	55	50	51	522
Macau	2,857	51	50	49	501
Malaysia	30,367	55	52	52	529
Mauritius	398	58	60	58	588
Mongolia	23	*	*	*	*
Myanmar	1,548	51	51	51	507
Nepal	2,421	52	53	52	520
Pakistan	21,621	52	52	51	516
Philippines	10,198	57	56	56	564
Singapore	4,428	61	58	59	593
Sri Lanka	4,480	54	52	53	529
Taiwan	111,536	50	51	50	505
Thailand	51,758	48	49	50	493
Vietnam	6,905	51	51	50	507

Through the years 1992 to 1994, again Singapore ranked first in the TOEFL proficiency test with a total score mean of 594 (Table 2). As evident in Table 3, Singapore still stays at top both in total score and sub sections (total score= 593).

Table 2, TOEFL Total and Section Score Means, Normative English-Speaking Examinees Classified by Geographic Region and Native Country (Based on 1,319,892 students seeking admission to institutions in the United States or Canada who took TOEFL from July 1992 through June 1994

ASIA					
Afghanistan	465	54	51	49	515
Bangladesh	11,688	48	49	49	485
Bhutan	20	*	*	*	*
Brunei Darussalam	161	58	53	53	546
Cambodia (Kampuchea)	567	54	50	50	515
China, People's Republic of	119,867	53	57	55	549
Hong Kong	77,321	52	50	50	510
India	57,471	56	58	58	575
Indonesia	36,282	52	50	50	506
Japan	266,249	49	50	48	493
Kiribati	7	*	*	*	*
Korea (DPR)	2,164	49	47	47	478
Korea (ROK)	116,799	49	51	52	506
Laos	307	55	51	51	522
Macau	2,881	51	50	49	499
Malaysia	30,533	55	52	52	529
Mauritius	452	58	60	58	588
Mongolia	59	52	52	51	516
Myanmar	1,454	51	51	51	511
Nepal	2,650	52	52	52	520
Pakistan	18,071	53	52	52	524
Philippines	9,671	58	57	56	569
Singapore	3,550	61	59	59	594
Sri Lanka	4,433	54	53	52	529
Taiwan	106,647	50	51	50	506
Thailand	61,703	48	49	50	492
Vietnam	8,008	51	50	50	502

Table 3
TOEFL Total and Section Score Means
Nonnative English-Speaking Examinees Classified by Geographic
Region and Native Country (Based on 1,370,215 students seeking
admission to institutions in the United States or Canada who took
TOEFL from July 1993 through June 1995)

ASIA					
Afghanistan	700	53	51	49	511
Bangladesh	11,318	48	49	49	487
Bhutan	45	56	58	58	573
Brunei Darussalam	151	57	53	53	544
Cambodia (Kampuchea)	520	52	50	50	506
China, People's Republic of	1 184 59	53	57	56	553
Hong Kong	71,321	52	50	50	510
India	52,976	56	59	58	579
Indonesia	36,509	52	50	50	505
Japan	278,309	49	50	49	494
Kiribati	7	*	*	*	*
Korea (DPR)	2,483	49	48	47	480
Korea (ROK)	129,003	49	52	52	510
Laos	369	53	50	49	509
Macau	2,839	51	50	49	498
Malaysia	32,846	54	52	52	525
Mauritius	414	59	61	59	594
Mongolia	301	49	50	49	490
Myanmar	1,503	51	52	51	512
Nepal	2,573	52	53	52	523
Pakistan	18,809	53	53	52	524
Philippines	8,715	58	57	57	574
Singapore	3,163	60	59	59	593
Slovak Republic	591	56	56	54	554
Sri Lanka	4,600	53	53	52	528
Taiwan	105,232	50	51	50	506
Thailand	73,237	48	49	50	492
Vietnam	8,201	51	50	49	501

In the TOEFL exams from the July of 1995 through June 1996, Singapore again scored the highest levels among the Asian countries

(total score mean of 599). The second top ranking country after Singapore is India with a total score mean of 578 (Table 4). In tables 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9 Singapore steadily ranked first both in the total score and the score of the sub sections. This country managed to keep its level unchanged from the year 1991 to 2006.

Table 4, TOEFL Total and Section Score Means, Nonnative English-Speaking Examinees Classified by Geographic Region and Native Country (Based on 731,297 students who took TOEFL from July 1995 through June 1996)

ASIA					
Afghanistan	363	53	51	51	514
Bangladesh	5,106	49	50	50	497
Bhutan	30	57	59	56	576
Brunei Darussalam	71	58	55	55	561
Cambodia	242	52	52	50	513
China, People's Republic of	58,240	53	57	57	556
Hong Kong	33,051	53	50	52	518
India	30,281	56	59	58	578
Indonesia	19,155	52	49	52	510
Japan	144,572	50	50	50	499
Korea (DPR)	1,368	50	48	49	492
Korea (ROK)	86,039	50	52	54	518
Laos	181	51	49	49	500
Macau	1,267	50	50	50	498
Malaysia	16,937	53	51	53	524
Maldives	17	*	*	*	*
Mongolia	248	48	50	50	495
Myanmar (Burma)	773	50	51	51	507
Nepal	1,414	52	53	53	525
Pakistan	10,196	53	54	52	529
Philippines	3,933	58	58	57	575
Singapore	1,449	60	60	60	599
Sri Lanka	2,275	55	54	53	538
Taiwan	46,785	51	51	51	509
Thailand	45,463	48	49	51	494
Vietnam	3,880	51	50	51	505

Table 5, TOEFL Total and Section Score Means, Normative English-Speaking Examinees Classified by Geographic Region and Native Country (Based on 794,989 students who took TOEFL from July 1996 through June 1997)

ASIA					
Afghanistan	362	52	51	51	514
Bangladesh	5,355	49	51	51	502
Bhutan	36	59	59	58	584
Brunei Darussalam	57	57	54	54	553
Cambodia	289	52	51	51	512
China, People's Republic of	73,206	52	57	57	555
Hong Kong	29,184	53	50	53	520
India	30,651	56	59	59	579
Indonesia	21,602	52	49	52	510
Japan	154,204	49	50	50	496
Korea (DPR)	1,586	50	49	50	497
Korea (ROK)	112,630	49	52	54	518
Laos	153	52	50	51	510
Macau	1,097	51	51	51	506
Malaysia	12,694	53	51	53	523
Maldives	21	*	*	*	*
Mongolia	354	49	49	49	490
Myanmar (Burma)	802	51	51	52	514
Nepal	1,862	51	53	53	524
Pakistan	9,047	53	54	54	535
Philippines	4,490	58	58	57	579
Singapore	1,209	60	60	60	597
Sri Lanka	2,370	54	53	53	534
Taiwan	49,737	50	51	51	507
Thailand	50,068	48	49	51	494
Vietnam	3,387	51	50	51	508

*Table 6, Paper-Based TOEFL Total and Section Score Means –
Nonnative English-Speaking Examinees Classified by Geographic
Region and Native Country (Based on 340,223 students who took the
test between July 1998 and June 1999)*

ASIA					
Afghanistan	153	49	50	49	493
Bangladesh	3,885	50	52	52	515
Bhutan	28	*	*	*	*
Brunei Darussalam	2	*	*	*	*
Cambodia	102	47	50	49	488
China, People's Republic of	70,760	54	58	57	562
Hong Kong	9,427	53	51	53	524
India	30,658	56	60	59	583
Indonesia	87	56	52	55	545
Japan	100,453	49	51	50	501
Korea (DPR)	336	49	51	52	510
Korea (ROK)	61,667	51	54	55	535
Laos	49	47	46	47	466
Macau	556	50	51	51	506
Malaysia	218	54	53	55	536
Maldives	1	*	*	*	*
Mongolia	17	*	*	*	*
Myanmar (Burma)	867	50	52	52	515
Nepal	71	57	56	56	560
Pakistan	6,274	54	55	54	542
Philippines	92	58	59	58	584
Singapore	23	*	*	*	*
Sri Lanka	57	57	57	57	571
Taiwan	32,967	50	51	52	510
Thailand	15,054	50	51	53	512
Vietnam	531	50	55	54	530

Table 7, TOEFL CBT Total and Section Score Means, Nonnative English-Speaking Examinees Classified by Geographic Region and Native Country (based on 577,038 students who took the test between July 2002 and June 2003)

ASIA					
Afghanistan	228	20	21	19	202
Azerbaijan	228	22	22	22	221
Bangladesh	2,395	21	23	22	218
Bhutan	20	*	*	*	*
Brunei Darussalam	6	*	*	*	*
Cambodia	112	19	19	19	191
China, People's Republic of	24,075	20	22	22	213
Georgia	443	22	22	22	219
Hong Kong	8,924	21	22	21	212
India	62,151	24	25	24	246
Indonesia	6,585	21	21	21	212
Japan	81,749	18	19	20	188
Kazakhstan	650	22	23	22	224
Korea (DPR)	4,600	18	18	19	184
Korea (ROK)	86,188	20	21	22	209
Kyrgyzstan	178	22	22	22	222
Laos	35	21	21	21	211
Macau	403	19	21	20	202
Malaysia	2,626	23	23	22	226
Maldives	16	*	*	*	*
Mongolia	287	20	18	18	188
Myanmar (Burma)	361	21	22	21	215
Nepal	3,272	21	23	21	219
Pakistan	7,537	23	24	23	233
Philippines	16,920	23	23	22	229
Singapore	387	25	26	25	254
Sri Lanka	1,463	23	23	22	224
Taiwan	27,000	19	21	21	202
Tajikistan	69	20	21	20	203
Thailand	10,995	20	20	20	199
Turkmenistan	43	21	23	21	215
Uzbekistan	429	22	22	22	218
Vietnam	1,980	20	21	21	206

Table 8, TOEFL CBT Total and Section Score Means, Nonnative English-Speaking Examinees Classified by Geographic Region and Native Country (based on 554,942 examinees who took the test between July 2004 and June 2005)

ASIA					
Afghanistan	241	20	20	19	198
Bangladesh	1,649	22	23	22	227
Bhutan	19	*	*	*	*
Brunei Darussalam	7	*	*	*	*
Cambodia	120	21	21	20	206
China, People's Republic of	17,963	20	22	22	215
Hong Kong	7,466	21	22	21	215
India	42,238	24	25	24	244
Indonesia	4,697	22	21	21	214
Japan	82,438	18	19	20	191
Korea (DPR)	4,778	18	19	19	190
Korea (ROK)	102,340	21	21	22	215
Laos	41	21	20	20	204
Macau	326	20	21	20	203
Malaysia	1,664	23	23	23	230
Maldives	13	*	*	*	*
Mongolia	257	21	20	19	199
Myanmar (Burma)	214	21	21	21	207
Nepal	3,583	22	24	22	224
Pakistan	4,936	23	24	23	235
Philippines	9,932	24	24	23	234
Singapore	227	25	26	25	254
Sri Lanka	380	23	23	22	225
Taiwan	26,390	20	21	21	205
Thailand	9,898	20	20	21	202
Vietnam	1,876	20	21	20	204
Azerbaijan	254	21	22	21	216
Kazakhstan	740	22	22	22	221
Kyrgyzstan	171	22	22	22	221
Tajikistan	68	21	21	20	206
Turkmenistan	58	23	22	21	219
Uzbekistan	521	22	22	21	219

Table 9, TOEFL CBT Total and Section Score Means¹, Nonnative English-Speaking Examinees Classified by Geographic Region and Native Country (Based on 574,192 examinees who took the test between July 2005 and June 2006)

ASIA					
Afghanistan	99	18	19	18	182
Azerbaijan	226	21	22	21	214
Bangladesh	1,287	22	23	23	228
Bhutan	11	*	*	*	*
Brunei Darussalam	4	*	*	*	*
Cambodia	74	21	21	20	206
China, People's Republic of	9,017	20	23	22	216
Hong Kong	5,947	21	22	22	216
India	72,973	23	24	23	236
Indonesia	4,641	21	21	21	214
Japan	78,635	18	19	20	192
Kazakstan	1,198	22	22	22	217
Korea DPR	4,203	19	19	20	193
Korea ROK	128,445	21	22	23	218
Kyrgyzstan	108	23	23	23	232
Laos	26	*	*	*	*
Macau	241	19	20	20	196
Malaysia	1,998	23	23	23	232
Maldives	11	*	*	*	*
Mongolia	132	21	20	20	202
Myanmar Burma	138	20	21	21	206
Nepal	5,027	21	23	21	218
Pakistan	4,258	23	25	23	238
Philippines	6,389	24	24	23	238
Singapore	456	26	26	25	255
Sri Lanka	162	24	23	23	234
Taiwan	33,327	19	21	21	206
Tajikistan	27	*	*	*	*
Thailand	13,162	19	20	21	200
Turkmenistan	27	*	*	*	*
Uzbekistan	675	21	22	22	218
Vietnam	705	19	22	21	207

8. The English language syllabus in Singapore

As is commonly known, English language teaching in Singapore is a chameleon, with changes expected at any time and this occurs usually from the top. The national English language syllabus for primary and secondary schools in Singapore, which is revised periodically every 19 years, has been revised several times in its short history of 41 years of nation building. In this connection, English language teaching can be discussed in four main stages: 1957-1971; 1971-1981; 1981-1991; 1991-2001.

Ang (2000), Chew (2004), Lim (2004) and Lin (2003) summarize that the four stages are typically related to how the nation-state has developed over the years. Each of these stages had its own particular emphasis. The period of 1957-1971 was a period of critical importance after Singapore gained independence and the inner struggle for self-reliance and ideological clashes between maintaining the colonial language and keeping a national identity became more prominent. So, national survival was regarded as a top priority. The period 1971-1981 was one of major changes in English language teaching.

According to Chew (2004), this period saw more attention paid to how English was taught as well as a marked increase in student enrollment in English-medium schools. More importantly, it was also a period when the government policy of bilingualism was officially implemented to mean the learning of English as well as one other official language of Singapore – Chinese for the Chinese, Tamil for the Indians or Bahasa Malayu for the Malays. The period 1981-1991 was the time when the 1981 English Language Syllabus and the 1991 English Language Syllabus (CPD) were published. It was a period when the MOE was looking for the best methods.

As Chew (2004) points out, much influenced by the communicative language teaching movement during the time, the 1991 syllabus is much more innovative than its predecessors. It looks at language teaching in relation to language use. The degree of description is manifest, and the predominant features of structuralism are less apparent. Owing to the methodological reforms in the mid-1980s, this syllabus incorporated substantial amounts of key ideas of communicative language teaching and allowed teachers to select from several inventories and lists of language skills, communicative functions, grammar items and tasks and activities in the various chapters of the syllabus as well as the use of themes/topics to flesh out an integrated lesson sequence (Ang, 2000; Chew, 2004). Following the methodological leads in the field of language teaching, the

syllabus explicates that teachers be regarded as facilitators rather than purely knowledge-givers (Lin, 2003).

Consistent with the communicative and functional-notional spirit in vogue at that time, it emphasized fluency rather than accuracy and function rather than form. Language was viewed as a system of meaning-making, though the importance of purpose, audience, context and culture in the acquisition of learning of language was not taken into full consideration. Grammar teaching was more or less inadequately dealt with by teachers despite inclusion of an entire chapter on grammar teaching in the syllabus and the consequence was that students did not have a good grasp of the grammar. One manifestation of poor grammar was the prevalence of Singlish, a stigmatized local besilect (Ho & Platt, 1993), or colloquial variety of English commonly used by students in or outside schools, and in connection to students' poor performance in English the media in Singapore has tremendously sensationalized this phenomenon.

The revised CPD, implemented in the school system, logistically speaking, represents a breakaway from the traditional English curriculum which was described as structural as it was based principally on the learning of discrete items in English grammar in a decontextualized way. The 1991 syllabus gives teachers greater flexibility in teaching the language and encourages a more holistic view of English learning, emphasizing the integration of the four language skills. Much of the teaching of the four skills is theme-based. However, problems emerged due to the flexibility given to the teachers. It appears that it was due to the flexibility that led to severe problems in language learning outcomes. Consequently, not only was grammar teaching marginalized but also the effective teaching of reading and writing was not achieved. Just as Shirley Lim (1995) reports:

... there are serious problems related to the reading and writing ability of some of our students as well as the lack of systematic and effective teaching in reading and writing in some quarters ... This problem is reported to be more serious and less easily addressed than that of poor grammar (pp. 504-505).

It is important to note that the implementation of the 1991 syllabus was preceded by a large-scale project called REAP (Reading and English Acquisition Program) in which new approaches and methods were tried out in schools and teachers were trained to use them. As an integrated book-based program, it was aimed at improving language learning, and fostering positive attitudes. In-service training therefore

was part and parcel of successful implementation. In many ways, Brunei Darussalam's RELA project was patterned on Singapore's REAP, according to Ng (1994), who served as the internal consultant for Singapore's REAP and later as the principal consultant for Brunei's RELA. Ng and Sullivan (2001) report that during an extensive research study commissioned by the Ministry of Education of Singapore, REAP was introduced in 1985 to Year 1 classes in 30 primary schools. It involved elements of "Shared Book" and "Language Experience" approaches, suitably adapted to Singapore, and a "Book Flood" of high interest storybooks. Their findings show that REAP pupils consistently showed better performance in all language skills in Years 1-3, and the Singapore Ministry of Education resolved to extend the program to all schools in Singapore. Follow-up studies showed sustained effects, and the methodology is now integrated into the national syllabus (CPD). This sharing of experience between two ASEAN partners is worth noting here. The idea of book flood is also expressed in the 2001 syllabus in words such as "reading for understanding" and "reading for enjoyment" (MOE).

It seems that the "best-methods approach" did not work perfectly well for Singaporean students and the Ministry of Education. As an ecological approach to syllabus design and development, the syllabus design and development team at the Ministry of Education worked closely with external consults including Beverly Deriwianka, one of the main Australians who propose the genre-based approach to literacy instruction. Given the issues in the 1991 English Language Syllabus (CPD) described earlier, the team developed the 2001 English Language Syllabus (MOE) as a response to such social phenomena, marking the beginning of the third stage, a stage where the genre-based approach to CLT is explicitly expounded.

The original intention of the 2001 syllabus was to rectify the situation of a certain degree of a lack of systematic teaching of grammar as well as to pacify the outcry from the general English-speaking public. It is in this new syllabus that integration and language in use in relation to meaning and function are fully expounded and "grammar in text types" is a prominent feature. To a great extent, the syllabus is a very good embodiment of the principles of what CLT is all about, especially in dispelling a common misconception that CLT is only concerned with oral language skills and that grammar is not a focus.

In the 2001 English Language Syllabus, the CLT principles are represented in a text-based approach that draws heavily on genre theory. This approach to syllabus development agrees with what has

been recently discussed in the language teaching literature regarding the conundrum of searching for the best methods which are non-existent, as rightly pointed out by scholars such as Kumaravadevelu (2006) and Widdowson (1990, 1998). It is evident that context is a defining factor whenever a methodology is promoted as “the best”. What Singapore needs are not the best methods per se but rather culturally appropriate approaches that guide particular classroom procedures according to different levels and abilities of students. Given the uniqueness of Singapore as a small country whose sustained development depends very much on international partnership and collaboration, the CLT principles advocated in the 2001 syllabus are what the syllabus team thinks should be the desired outcomes needed by Singapore in a globalized knowledge-based economy.

9. Discussion

9.1. Possible reasons for Singapore’s success in learning English

1. As Wharton (2000) argued in the primary and secondary schools in Singapore, students study at least two languages, namely English and their mother tongue. It is evident if learners start learning a language before the critical period ends they can master native-like proficiency in their language. The early exposure of Singaporean learners to English beside their mother tongue will develop their L2 as much as possible. This can be a plausible reason for the desirable level of English language proficiency in Singapore.

2. Wharton (2000) also continues:

The government promotes the study and use of all the official languages in Singapore. All of these languages, including English, are easily accessible through media. Consequently, obtaining and maintaining fluency in at least two languages presents little difficulty. Bilingualism, or multilingualism, is thus a common feature of life in Singapore (p. 211).

As can be understood from this quotation, Singaporean students have an easy access to media, supposedly press, satellite, etc. and therefore can improve their language. It is very important not to lose contact with the L2 after class and this frequent exposure to the language through media can be regarded as an optimum way to internalize the linguistic points such as pronunciation, structure, collocation and usage.

3. Referring to Wharton (2000) again, he argued that Asian learners, in general, have proved to be skillful strategy users. Singapore as an

Asian country is not an exception and high level of strategy use among its learners gave rise to their proficiency in English. Wharton argued that this clever strategy use is due to high levels of motivation in the learners. But where does this motivation come from? Part of this motivation may be derived from the future use of the language in the society. As mentioned earlier English is one of the four main languages in Singapore, thus Singaporeans presumably have enough motivation to learn the language as they may use it in their vocations. This high level of motivation as Wharton (2000) argues leads to better strategy use among its learners.

4. The Singapore experience shows that the obvious shift from the earlier English Language Syllabuses (CPD) to MOE in terms of a change in focus in both philosophies of learning and teaching and ideologies has made teacher-educators, school teachers and student-teachers realize that CLT can be implemented at a level that requires more understanding of the various aspects pertaining not only to language learning but also to language use. The Singapore CLT-centered English Language Syllabus epitomizes the CLT principles explicitly, especially those stated in Canale and Swain (1980), through integration of reading, writing and oral communication, whereby grammar teaching through the mastery of texts instead of being in isolation has become the norm. CLT cannot focus only on oral communication abilities. Instead, the syllabus recommends that reading and writing be taught within the framework of different text types, placing heavy emphasis on literacy development in children. These principles have been materialized with a very strong sociocultural consideration. Never in the 2001 syllabus has been any mention of using an exonormative framework for the English taught in schools. A standard variety of English, now commonly known as international English (Widdowson, 2003), has been recommended. This standard variety that is grammatically correct and internationally intelligible (in this case, it refers to an endonormative reference) does not adhere itself to British nor American accent in terms of a phonological model to be decided upon. In fact, there is some kind of explicit recognition that accent is one aspect of the identity of a speech community or a nation that adopts English as one of the official languages. This decision has necessitated a need to aspire to attain a communicative competence that is generally culturally-socially situated instead of strictly following a Hymesian framework of reference (Savignon, 2005). Nevertheless, the ultimate goal of CLT is to produce learners who are able to use English for oral and written communication with the larger context of globalization in mind (Zhang, 2006).

5. Singapore's educational system structure that is basically "closed" enables Singapore to manage its teaching workforce both in terms of quantity and quality, and to carefully monitor issues (Ingersoll, 2008). The rigid and aggressive process of recruitment and training had the advantage of upbringing an efficient work force both in quantity and quality. When there are enough number of teachers available at each and every school and institutions along with up-to-the-minute knowledge and teaching techniques and methodologies, it would be far from expectation to have low levels of proficiency of English in their learners.

Table 1 shows the summary of statistics on teachers in schools by qualification. In 2005, there were 26,382 teachers (excluding vice-principals and principals) comprising 18, 620 graduates (70.6%) and 7,762 nongraduates (29.4%). The Ministry of Education has been steadily increasing the number of teachers in the workforce, but more importantly is the rise in the number of top-quality scholar-teachers and graduate teachers as the ministry moves to upgrade the quality of the teaching profession (Lee, 2006).

Table 10 Summary statistics of teachers in schools, 2006 (from Ingersoll, 2008)

Level/Type of School	Qualification	Teacher
Primary	Graduate	5,827 (31.3%)
	Nongraduate	6,516 (83.9%)
Secondary	Graduate	10,262 (55.1%)
	Nongraduate	1,233 (15.9%)
Junior College & Centralized Institutes	Graduate	2,531 (13.6%)
	Nongraduate	13 (0.2%)
Overall	Graduate	18,620 (70.6%)
	Nongraduate	7,762 (29.4%)
	Total	26,382

6. What Singapore needs are not the best methods per se but rather culturally appropriate approaches that guide particular classroom procedures according to different levels and abilities of students. From this statement it can be concluded that the Singaporean educational system pays due attention to the proficiency level and abilities of its students. Given the different learning levels and styles, the Singaporean educational system has been successful to properly strike a balance between the teaching methods and students' different learning styles.

Depending on the entry qualifications of the candidate, one can be trained to each at the primary or secondary level. To teach at the primary level, one need not have an undergraduate degree. But to teach at the secondary level, one must have at least an undergraduate degree in a particular discipline. All candidates accepted by the Ministry will be sent to NIE for training before they can be appointed to the education service. However, as discussed in this paper, the vision of the Ministry of Education is to increase the number of graduate teachers in its workforce, especially, by increasingly appointing more of them to the primary schools. From the figures quoted, with only less than 30% of the current teaching workforce having less than a bachelor's degree, this vision would become a reality in the not too distant future. With regards to the issues of under qualified teachers and out-of-field teaching, they are not considered problems in the Singapore context. This is because the various administrative practices and policies of recruitment, training, and deployment of teachers in the Singapore school system are closely interrelated and managed centrally by the Ministry of Education. For example, NIE works closely with the MOE in establishing the required standards of subject content and pedagogy expected of teachers graduating from NIE. As a result the issue of under qualified teachers does not exist. And since MOE oversees all the schools in Singapore, it has a good overview of where the surpluses and shortages are. This helps it to efficiently redeploy teachers to schools that need their expertise, hence eliminating the issue of out-of-field teaching effectively.

7. As it was argued earlier in this article, Singapore's educational system has a disciplined system in forming and reforming the syllabus of the primary and secondary schools which form the building stones of the future educational systems. As was argued, Singapore's ministry of education revises the schools syllabi approximately every 19 years. This has the advantage of inserting the

new and recent methodologies into the curriculum and on the other hand extracting the old and inefficient methodologies from it.

Comparing the same issue in Iran, the course syllabi at any level are not subject to calculated and careful change and revision in a regular basis rather it seems that any change in the educational system in Iran is risen from the personal and impulsive decision making of the authorities rather than a thoughtful and expert-oriented action. This watchful policy of Singapore's educational system is definitely one of the underlying factors for their success in ELT and their performance in Proficiency tests like TOEFL.

8. The period 1981-1991 was the time when the 1981 English Language Syllabus (MOE) and the 1991 English Language Syllabus (CPD) were published. It was a period when the MOE was looking for the best methods.

As Chew (2004) points out, much influenced by the communicative language teaching movement during the time, the 1991 syllabus is much more innovative than its predecessors. It looks at language teaching in relation to language use. The influence that the different syllabi had on the ELT throughout the history of Singapore's educational system can be considered as a positive point in pushing the whole concept of language learning forward.

10. Conclusion

In conclusion, I summarize the factors that had more or less influence on the advancement of English language teaching in Singapore: Studying at least two languages (one always English) in their primary school, Frequent exposure to the language through media, High level of motivation and strategy use among the learners, Frequent revision of the educational syllabus, Aggressive recruitment conditions for the teachers, Putting the quality of education in priority, Culturally and individually appropriate teaching approaches.

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PRE-TASK PLANNING: A STATISTICALLY WEAK OPTION IN PROMOTING THE ACCURACY OF ORAL AND WRITTEN TASK PRODUCTION

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Abstract

Drawing on Anderson's (1983) language production model which has its roots in information processing theory, the present study was set out to explore the influence of unguided pre-task planning (UPP) on accuracy of oral and written narrative task production. Sixty Iranian EFL learners were assigned to four equal groups of fifteen, one unplanned and one planned group for each modality. All the groups watched an episode of Mr. Bean's films and narrated their account of watching under the two conditions. The control groups had no planning time available; the experimental groups were provided with 10-minute planning time prior to their task production. The productions were coded based on the two indices of error-free clauses (EFC) and correct-verb form (CVF) for accuracy. Unguided planning showed positive effects for accuracy, however, none of the indices came out to be significant. The findings of this study suggest that unguided planning neither in writing nor speaking has significant effects on accuracy of narrative task production.

Key Words: Planning time, unguided pre-task planning, accuracy, narrative task

1. Introduction

Based on information processing theory human beings have limited processing capacity and attention to one aspect of a task may cause less attention to the other (Anderson, 1983). Language production needs a lot of mental processing capacity, this processing greatly increases while learners are engaged in producing a foreign language. Learners especially those with low proficiency who are involved in

the processes of language production, face with a big mental challenge while producing language in real-time and this leads to producing dysfluent or inaccurate language with pauses and hesitations (Skehan & Foster, 1999). According to Skehan (1996) this is because of the trade-off between form and meaning. Nevertheless, relying on information processing theory of language learning, Van Patten (1990) argues that second language learners do not have enough attentional capacity to attend to all aspects of the language at the same time i.e., accuracy, fluency, and complexity. As a result, they prioritize one aspect over the other and message conveyance which seems to be easier, applicable and more important outweighs accuracy (Van Patten, 1994). He also adds that in such conditions form will be attended only if it is essential to convey meaning, and if there are free attentional resources.

Ellis (2005) considers fluency and accuracy as one of the main aspects of language production and focuses on the important effect of planning on language production. He indicates that "Planning is a relatively straightforward way of influencing the kind of language that learners produce. It serves, therefore, as an effective device for intervening indirectly in interlanguage development" (Ellis, 2005b, P.1). Wendel (1997) differentiates between two types of planning. Strategic or off-line planning that is the time given to learners prior to their production which is also called pre-task planning and on-line planning that occurs when learners are performing the task. Put it simply, planning is the provision of time for preparation prior to accomplishing a task (Ellis, 2005). However, planning studies do not show conclusive results regarding the significant effect of planning on accuracy. Additionally, the effect of planning on writing has been overlooked to some extent in planning studies in comparison with speaking. Thus, to further investigate the issue, this study was conducted to explore the effects of unguided pre-task planning on accuracy of task performance in both oral and written modalities.

2. Literature Review

There are three views toward the effects of planning on learners' accuracy. Wigglesworth (1997) proposes external explanation. She believes that it is the context that determines the extent to which learners consciously give priority to accuracy as an essential factor in task performance. It means that if learners are motivated for their accuracy by different ways like receiving a gift or extra marks, this will provide an environment for a focus on form that will respectively increase accuracy. The second is Wendel's (1997) psycholinguistic explanation. He claims that pre-task planning is due to a conscious process "off-line" while accuracy is the result of monitoring which is

an unconscious or automatic “on-line” process. He believes that off-line planning can not affect on-line monitoring process and accuracy will not increase unless some instructions given prior to performance to attend to form. The third view belongs to Skehan and Foster (1997). They propose a performance-based explanation in which there is a trade-off between accuracy and complexity. As complexity of the task increases, accuracy will decrease because of more attentional resources devoted to accomplishing the task requirements.

Many studies have been conducted in which learners were given the task material and told to plan what they had to say (Crookes, 1989; Ellis, 2003; Ellis, 2004; Ellis & Yuan, 2004; Ortega, 1999; Skehan & Foster, 1999; Yuan & Ellis, 2003).

The results of these studies make it clear that, in contrast to fluency and complexity, the effects of pre-task planning on learners’ accuracy seems to be quite mixed especially in oral narratives (Wendel, 1997; Wigglesworth, 1997).

Ellis (1987) suggests that giving the participants' advice on how to pay attention to the grammatical structures helps them increase the correct use of structures. Accordingly, previous L2 research on pre-task planning used various kinds of instructions to guide participants who were performing their pre-task planning for their speech. Ellis (1987) implicitly guided his participants to use past tense verbs in their written and oral narratives. He instructed them to begin each retelling of task with the phrase "One day ..." He found that 16 out of 17 participants continued using past tense verbs for the rest of their narratives. In general, the results of studies demonstrate that pre-task planning improves fluency and complexity, but not necessarily accuracy in L2 learners’ oral narratives.

In a similar vein, Rouhi (2006) conducted a study on the effects of pre-task planning and on-line planning on Iranian learners' oral and written narrative performance. He selected a cartoon for his narrative task. The participants for oral and written task in no-planning as the control group performed the task immediately after watching it within five minutes and under real-time pressure. Pre-task planners were given ten minutes prior to their performance. They also should finish the task within five minutes and within the same time limitation. In order to create real-time pressure situation speakers were told to finish their narration within five minutes at least with 150 words and writers write 150 words at the same time limitation. On-line planners were instructed to perform the task without any time limitation as they were speaking and writing. He calculated complexity based on an index of subordination, accuracy measured according to the number of error-free clauses as a percentage of the total number of clauses, and fluency was measured according to

Skehan and Foster (1999), number of dysfluencies. He measured dysfluency in written mode by counting the number of words reformulated. The findings of this study suggested that planning time has positive effects on fluency in both oral and written modes. It also increased more accurate speech in spoken mode but not in written. The results did not show any effects for complexity.

Mochizuki and Ortega (2008) studied the effect of grammatically guided pre-task planning on EFL learners. Their results displayed that guided groups produced more accurate relative clauses within their narratives than other groups, while having acceptable level of fluency and complexity. Their finding confirmed that guided planning can provide learners with a healthy balance between their grammar and communication even in high school level learners of EFL condition. Their results suggests that if learners are guided to pay attention to specific grammatical form their attention while planning time will be given to that specific form

Rahimpour and Nariman-Jahan (2011) pointed out that pre-task planning does not increase accuracy of the performance in narrative task for low proficiency learners. They stress that pre-task planning increases accuracy for high proficiency learners. In another study, Rahimpour and Safarie (2011) found that planning did not show any influence on accuracy of narrative writing, but fluency was affected. They justified their findings based on Skehan's trade-off effects. According to Skehan (1998) learners especially low level learners have limited attentional resources and this makes them to pay attention to one aspect of the language at the expense of the other. He believes that if learners are provided with planning time this will help them produce a more balanced output in terms of the aspects.

2.1 Planning in Oral and Written Modalities

According to Kellog (1996) planning process in both speaking and writing are similar to each other. Yet, Ellis and Yuan (2004) maintain that though there are similarities, but in written mode learners have more with-in task planning that helps control the process better than speaking. Moreover, Ellis (2005) argues for the differences to be quantitative rather than qualitative. He believes that the pressure on our memory capacity in speaking is far more than writing. Speaking happens under real-time pressure and "is generally intolerant of significant pauses, the latter, and even when it involves free writing, provides opportunities for the writer to take time-out from on-line production" (P. 17). He also adds that qualitatively, writing leads to a written text which is visual and amenable to inspection while speaking cannot be traced. He further adds that this eases self-correction and monitoring process. According to Skehan (1998)

written task provides learners with more freedom to allocate their attention between aspects of production. He believes that in writing real-time pressure is not as intense as it is in speaking, and they have more control over the speed of their production even under time-pressure.

Additionally, Ellis (2005) contends that foreign language learners are more likely to be better in writing than speaking. This is due to the factor that they lack the procedural knowledge of grammar and vocabulary. Writing buys more time for them, and this makes them be better in unpressured than pressured production and in writing than speaking respectively.

Likewise, Skehan (1998) proposes that in contrast to speakers, there are no interlocutors or tape recorders for writers to force them to write in a no-planning condition, as a result, they can more freely decide on the speed of their production. Consequently, though the planning process is almost the same for both modalities, the differences on their effects could be due to the processes of writing and speaking.

2.2 Theoretical Framework of the Study

The underlying theory of this study is predominantly relying on information processing theory which is evident in the works of Anderson (1983, 1985). This theory is based on the principles of the cognitive psychology of human learning. Information processing theory (IPT) takes a closer look at how the input passes through the processes of attention, perception, and storage, regardless of the context. The theory is interested in studying human cognition in relation with aspects of memory, how information is stored, transformed, and retrieved in human mind. Planning refers to the process that involves the retrieval and organization of an utterance before articulation (Wendel, 1997), so it is a process in the central processing stage in an information processing model.

2.3 Anderson's Language Production Model

This study is relying on Anderson's (1985) language production model as the basis of the study. Anderson divides the process of language production into three different levels. The first stage is called planning in (writing) and construction in (speaking), in which through an outside stimuli or input the writer or speaker determines his communicative goals, and chooses among the events and decides how to shape the selected information, i.e. finds out what he wants to say or write. This involves activating different kinds of knowledge as sociolinguistic, discourse and at the same time background knowledge about the use of appropriate vocabulary, and grammar in the specified context, for instance, is it an instructional, expository, or

story narration? This process is automatically achieved as we all engage with different types of activities through our daily life (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990). In this stage a pre-text or pre-verbal message is produced and sent to the next step. The second stage is called 'transformation' in (speaking) and 'translator' in (writing) and by which he means applying the linguistic rules and changing our messages and plans into meaningful mental reports or statements, rather than the literal meaning of translating from one language to another. During this stage the speaker or writer finds out the appropriate lexicon and applies the grammatical rules to make sentences. This stage is similar to central processing unit in information processing theory, and cognitive theory of language learning which claims that attentional capacities are limited and learners cannot allocate their attention to different matters simultaneously, especially when they are speeded or under time pressure, unless they have automatic access to any of those knowledge, for instance, mechanical and meaningful aspects. As a result, they pay more attention to one aspect than the other i.e. producing a language which is either accurate or fluent, and not both of them. O'Malley & Chamot, (1990) claim that in such situations learners turn into the knowledge which is easily accessible and proceduralized, prioritizing meaning over form. To account for this problem in this stage learner need to have automatic access to one or both of the mechanical skills of language like L1 speakers and writers in order to be able to process the language easily. According to Anderson, at the end of this stage, the writers revise their productions by moving back and forth between the two stages concerning the determined goals to be conveyed. The products of this stage are mental representations or mental messages which are sent to the next step. In the third stage, which is called execution, these mental representations, that are sentences, will be written down or articulated. For O'Malley & Chamot (1990) also according to cognitive theory of language learning learners are moving back and forth between the three stages in order to convey their purpose actively whether in spoken or written language. Anderson's model is similar to that of Kellog (1996) and Levelt's (1979) in the sense that in all models the central executive system is confronted with limited capacity and this leads to trade-off between allocation of attention in different processing levels of writing and speaking. They propose that the demands in formulation stage are crucial and when under pressure, this stage is prioritized over monitoring and execution.

2.4 Research Questions

This study was designed to answer the following research questions:

What is the effect of unguided pre-task planning on accuracy of Iranian EFL learners' written narrative task production?

What is the effect of unguided pre-task planning on accuracy of Iranian EFL learners' oral narrative task production?

3. Method

3.1 Participants

The participants for the present study were 60 Iranian undergraduates majoring in English from two Universities (Islamic Azad University and Payame-Nour University) in Ardebil. The ages were between 19 to 25 years, and they were both male and female. They have learned English in an entirely instructed setting. The participants were randomly selected and assigned to control and experimental groups in a balanced way and based on their scores in Oxford Placement Test (2007). A one-way ANOVA conducted on the scores of the participants in four groups and the results indicated that there is no statistically significant difference among the groups ($p=.214$). Thus, it can be concluded that the groups were homogeneous in terms of their language proficiency. Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics.

Table1. Descriptive statistics for the scores

Planning condition	N	Mean	SD
NP (Written)	15	26	3.16
UPP (Written)	15	28.37	4.99
NP (Oral)	15	29	4.42
UPP (Oral)	15	26.71	4.64

3.2 Procedure

The participants of the study were required to watch an episode of Mr. Bean's films. The film was selected because as Skehan and Foster (1999) say (a) the episode are short and can be easily handled by students; (b) it is silent and avoids the interaction between learners' listening comprehension; (c) it has a proven international appeal.

Pilot studies were run earlier for similar groups to find out the time needed for both modalities to write and narrate the story under real-time condition. The participants were required to complete their task without any time limitation. The times for task completion were noted. The fastest writer finished the task in 14 minutes and the speaker in 5 minutes. The times were set as speeded conditions as (Ellis & Yuan, 2004). The participants for no-planning condition in written mode were asked to begin their writing immediately after the episode ended. They had 14 minutes to write their narration. On the other hand, the pre-task planning groups were told that when the

episode came to end, they have 10 minutes planning time to think about their production in advance. They were given a note-sheet to take notes while planning and a task-sheet to write their narrative task on. They were explained that their notes will be taken away as they began the main task performance. As previous group, this group was also given 14 minutes to write at least 200 words.

The participants in oral groups also had similar conditions with the difference that they were required to talk about the film in five minutes rather than to write. The productions were audio-taped at the laboratory and then transcribed. The productions of the all groups were analyzed for the two measures of accuracy.

3.3 Measures

Two measures were used to evaluate the quality of participants in terms of accuracy in both written and oral modes. These measures are the same as those used in most of the earlier planning studies (Yuan and Ellis, 2003; Ellis & Yuan, 2004; Rouhi, 2006). Accuracy was measured based on the number error-free clauses (EFC) as a percentage of the total number of clauses, and correct-verb form (CVF) which was the percentage of accurately used verbs in terms of modality, aspect, and subject-verb agreement.

4. Results

4.1 Writing

To answer the research questions of the study and find out the effects of planning time on learners' accuracy in both oral and written task production, a series of independent samples t-tests were conducted on the raw scores of the participants of the groups. As previously mentioned, accuracy which was the dependent variable of the study was measured by the two indices of EFC and CVF. The data were fed into SPSS (version 15). Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics and the result of independent samples t-test for EFC in two planned and unplanned conditions.

Table 2 Descriptive statistics and the independent samples t-test for EFC

Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	df	P
NP (EFC)	15	45.45	18.27	-1.359	24	.187
UPP (EFC)	15	57.04	27.64			

As the table represents the mean score for UPP group is higher than NP group. This means that UPP group has produced more error-free clauses than NP group. However, the results of the t-test showed that the difference between the two groups is not statistically significant at alpha level set at $<.05$. ($P = .187$).

Table 3 demonstrates similar trends for CVF as for EFC. The UPP group ($M=69.68$) has outperformed NP group ($M=54.33$) regarding the number of correct-verb forms. Yet, the results of the independent samples t-test run shows that though the results does not reach to significant level, it is very close to it ($P=.068$).

Table 3 Descriptive statistics and the independent samples t-test for CVF

Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	df	P
NP (CVF)	15	54.33	26.65	-1.914	23.57	.068
UPP (CVF)	15	69.89	16.75			

Over all, the results show that accuracy measures favor planned condition in comparison with unplanned condition. That is to say, UPP results in a more accurate text than NP, however, significant effect were not achieved for any of the indices of accuracy in written narrative task performance.

4.2 Speaking

Similar analysis was performed for the accuracy measures of learners' oral task production. Table 4 displays that planned group outperformed no-planned group in terms of the EFC index of accuracy ($M=57.04$) > ($M=45.45$).

Table 4 Descriptive statistics and the independent samples t-test for EFC

Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	df	P
NP (EFC)	15	44.10	22.35	-1.201	28	.240
UPP (EFC)	15	54.16	23.52			

However, the result of independent samples t-test failed to show that the differences were statistically significant ($P = .240$). As for CVF in oral group (table 5), UPP came out to be more beneficial than NP group. Nevertheless, this is in the case that significant difference was not found between the groups ($P = .089$).

Table 5 Descriptive statistics and the independent samples t-test for CVF

Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	df	P
NP (CVF)	16	54.56	18.04	-1.761	28	.089
UPP (CVF)	16	67.26	21.31			

Thus, based on the findings, it can be hypothesized that, though planned condition is more beneficial than unplanned, however, significant difference can not be achieved through mere planning time. This finding is in congruent with the results of the following studies (Crookes, 1989; Wendel, 1997; Iwashita, Elder, & McNamara, 2001; Yuan & Ellis, 2003), with the difference that in this study both oral and written task production were investigated for participants with the same homogeneity and with the same task. Furthermore, taking a brief look at the results easily demonstrates that planned condition has been more beneficial to writing in comparison with speaking.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

No statistically significant effects were found for either of accuracy measures in this study for planned groups which runs counter with (Rouhi, 2006 and Tajima, 2003), but in favor with Yuan & Ellis (2003) and Ellis & Yuan (2004) and most of the earlier research. However, pre-task planning has had some positive effects on accuracy indices, which is more evident and close to significant level in writing than speaking. It can be argued that, planning time provided for the planned groups prior to their production frees up a little bit of their attentional capacities and makes it possible for them to think about their production in advance. On the other hand, due to the existing on-line monitoring which differentiates writing from speaking, learners find the opportunity to revise their text concerning grammatical structures in translator stage of Anderson's model. This

contributes them to have access to their rule-based knowledge and as result enhances accuracy to some extent, however, this is not to the extent that significantly affects accuracy, whereas they are under time pressure to finish the task. Yet, Ellis & Yuan (2004) contend that when writing is under real-time pressure and learners tend to write quickly, they mostly try to edit and correct their text, while in on-line production they monitor their output during the second stage prior to production. Nevertheless, writing allows learners to observe the product of execution and this encourages them for editing and attention to form in comparison with speaking.

Based on the scores gained on the placement test and as mentioned earlier, the participants of this study were third or fourth semester students. That is to say, they have had limited language proficiency. Hence, their access to lexis, spelling, syntax, and linguistic knowledge is mostly controlled rather than automatic. This puts a lot of mental burden on their short-term memory which is restricted by the limitations. Wigglesworth (1997) claimed that planning leads high proficiency learners to attend to accuracy and complexity, and low proficiency learners to pay attention to the content of their productions. This is in the case that Sangarun (2005) believes that participants mostly use their time to focus on the content of their productions. It can be argued that in this study low proficiency learners have dedicated their attentional resources to other aspects of production, i.e. fluency and complexity. Furthermore, another reason for not improving accuracy in a significant level can be due to lack of instructions and guidance for learners on how to attend to accuracy (Mochizuki & Ortega, 2008). Additionally, on-line planning benefits accuracy and pre-task planning results in increase in fluency and complexity (Yuan, 2001).

All in all, pre-task planners in both written and spoken modes produced a more developed output regarding accuracy in comparison with no-planned groups. It seems that NP groups have been under time pressure to attend to different aspects of production and produced a less accurate production than planned groups which were under less time restrictions than their counterparts.

5.1 Conclusion

The results of this study provide more evidence for the insignificant effects of pre-task planning on accuracy of production in both modalities of writing and speaking. So as Yuan and Ellis (2003) proposed in order to make planning more effective, there is a need to manipulate it. The findings of the present study do not suggest pre-task planning as significant factor in developing the accuracy of

learners' output whether in written or oral task production. Further, it recommends that, although pre-task planning is considered as one of the stages in task-based language teaching, however, providing learners with planning time is not sufficient to benefit the accuracy of production and there is a need to manipulate planning either by adding general or specific instructions (Yuan & Ellis, 2003) or changing the amount of time, if the focus is on accuracy, as Mehnert (1997) who found two minutes planning time more effective than 10 minutes on accuracy.

This study also demonstrates that in similar conditions regarding proficiency level and task selection, learners act better in writing than speaking, which is mostly due to the on-line production available for them while writing, and as a result less time pressure, and finally due to the visibility of the product of writing which does not exist in articulation.

Moreover, if learners are unfamiliar with the concept of planning, they need to be trained enough in order to take the sufficient use of planning time productively. In addition, although planning time buys some time for learners to think about their production in advance and this affects their cognitive spans at the time of production to be more free to allocate their attention, yet, this is in the case that learners have some knowledge of grammar and lexicon, otherwise, planning would not be beneficial, suggesting that there is a ceiling for planning time (Ortega, 2005) and even extra time will not be helpful in remembering what one does not know. On the other hand, learners sometimes are not able to remember what they have planned earlier, and this makes them produce on-line. Wendel (1997) argues that planning time does not help learners remember the grammatical structures needed for task completion at the time of oral production and grammatical accuracy should be attained through monitoring at the time of production. Hence, it can be premised that even providing low level learners with pre-task planning does not contribute for accuracy measures and most probably they sacrifice one aspect in detriment of the other, which is easier, more applicable, and more important to the learners.

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FORM NEGOTIATION: DOES IT ENHANCE THE EFFECTS OF DIRECT CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK ON L2 WRITING?

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Abstract

This paper presents the findings of a quasi-experimental study designed to examine the effects of direct written corrective feedback (DWCF) with and without meta-linguistic negotiation on the definite article *the* and the indefinite article *a/an* in the written mode of L2 production. To investigate such effects, 88 Azari learners of English were assigned to an experimental group ($n = 30$), a contrast group ($n = 28$), and a control group ($n = 30$). The three participating groups performed an error correction task, a story rewriting task, and a picture description task as the pre-test. No statistically significant difference was observed among the three participating groups in terms of the correct use of the forms in focus ($F = .15$, $p = .85$). The erroneous use of the forms in focus for the experimental group was negotiated in addition to DWCF provided, the erroneous use of the forms in focus was corrected through DWCF for the contrast group, and the control group received some comments on the quality of their writings. Analyses run on the data collected showed that the experimental group outperformed both the contrast group and the control group and the contrast group in turn outperformed the control group.

KEY WORDS: direct written corrective feedback, meta-linguistic negotiation, L2 writing

1. Background

There is a growing consensus of opinion that some form-focused instruction has to be exercised along with meaning-oriented materials

to ensure that some healthy balance will be struck between form and meaning. Roughly speaking, the paradigm is in the process of shifting towards including form-focused instruction in classroom settings in both oral and written modes of L2 production. As it has already been established, "language focus in L2 writing should be seen within a framework of pedagogic options, including minimally differing pedagogic purposes, writer goals and writing tasks, in relation to writer characteristics and context" (Bruton, 2009, p. 600).

Viewed within form-focused instruction framework, student writers would need some language focus on their writing for converting some new forms to "intake or long-term uptake" (Hedgcock, 2005). Although expert intervention is judged to be of paramount importance for student writers (e.g., Ferris, 2003, 2010; Sheen, 2007), some doubts have already been voiced regarding the efficacy of grammar correction in L2 writing (Truscott, 1996, 2007). The counterarguments made by Truscott (1996, 1999, 2004) boldly questioned the effects of "red pen" on L2 development. Urging L2 practitioners to abandon corrective feedback (CF), he judged it to be of negligible effect and even harmful. Such a strong criticism leveled at CF seems to have dismissed the enthusiasm students have expressed for error correction and the empirical evidence obtained for its benefit. Broadly viewed, CF on L2 writing might be focused or unfocused. In the former, the teacher addresses only one single linguistic feature. In the latter, however, the teacher targets "a wide range of errors in each piece of students' written texts" (Sheen, Wright, & Moldawa, 2009, p. 559). Whether focused or unfocused, CF directly shows the exact location of the error in the written output of L2 learners and at the same time provides learners with the correct form of the grammatical point marked as incorrect. Indirect CF, which has been reported to be favored by teachers and L2 writing researchers (e.g., Ferris & Hedgcock, 2005), indicates the exact location of errors and urges students to revise their writing making corrections required on their own. In correcting errors committed by L2 writers, teachers might go even beyond direct CF and provide the writers with meta-linguistic explanations as well. Such an elaboration, which provides "learners with some form of explicit comment about the nature of the errors they have made" (Ellis, 2008, p. 4), would lead to understanding which implies "recognition of a general principle, rule, or pattern" (Schmidt, 1993, p. 26). These strategies have already been experimented and contrasted with one another in a few studies (e.g., Sheen, 2007; Sheen et al., 2009). The present study, however, introduces oral meta-linguistic negotiation to be integrated with direct written corrective feedback (DWCF) and contrasts the effects of the integrated technique, in a quasi-experimental design, with that of

DWCF on L2 accuracy improvement in writing mode. Error correction based on negotiation involves errors being resolved interactionally through elicitation-response sequences (Nassaji, 2007).

2. Corrective feedback

2.1. Corrective feedback: Counterarguments

Truscott (1999, 2004, 2007, 2009) argues that CF has no place in writing and should be abandoned because language acquisition is a gradual developmental process unlikely to be furthered by any transfer of explicit suggestions. Based on the existing research Truscott (2007) concludes that "... correction has a small negative effect on learners' ability to write accurately and ... we can be 95% confident that if it has any actual benefits, they are very small" (p. 255). In their empirical study, Truscott and Hsu (2008) made an attempt to examine if any learning resulted from the CF on writing assignments. Learners first wrote an in-class narrative and then revised their writing during the next class. Half of the students had their errors underlined and used this feedback in the revision task while the other half did the same task without feedback. Results showed that the underlined group was significantly more successful than the control group. One week later, all students were required to write a new narrative as a measure of short term learning. On this measure, change in error rate from the first narrative to the second for the two groups was identical. Finally, they concluded that successful error reduction during revision is not a predictor of learning, as the two groups differed dramatically on the former but were indistinguishable on the latter.

Some other studies (e.g., Kepner, 1991; Robb, Ross, & Shortreed, 1986; Semke, 1984; Sheppard, 1992) likewise did not find error feedback by the teacher to be significantly more effective for developing L2 writing accuracy than content-related comments. Polio, Fleck, and Leder (1998) conducted a one-semester study in a writing course for 65 graduate and undergraduate ESL students. The students wrote four journal entries per week over a 7-week period. The experimental group received correction, grammar reviews, and training in editing their writing, while the control group received none of these. The results showed no significant differences in accuracy between the two groups on the post-test. There was no significant difference between the groups, apparently because participants in the experimental group receiving error correction were assigned to write half as many journal entries as the control group because of their editing activities. Semke (1984) carried out a 10-week study of the journal writing including 141 German learners of English. They were divided into four groups: direct correction, coded feedback with self-correction by students, comments on content only, and a combination of direct correction and

comments on content. Semke found no significant differences among the four groups in writing accuracy and concluded that "corrections do not increase writing accuracy ... and they may have a negative effect on student attitudes" (p. 195). However, this lack of effect of error correction on accuracy and negative effect on fluency may not have been entirely due to the different treatment methods but also due to the differences in the quantity of writing practice. As a matter of fact, in this study the group who received content-focused comments had to write twice as much as the groups who received corrections or corrections and comments; the group that self-corrected wrote much less new material because of the time required to revise it.

2.2. Corrective feedback: Supporting arguments

A good number of studies have demonstrated that teachers' feedback on students' writing errors is effective (e.g., Ashwell, 2000; Bitchener & Knoch, 2008, 2009; Bitchener, Young, & Cameron, 2005; Chandler, 2003; Ellis et al., 2008; Fathman & Whalley, 1990; Ferris, 1995, 1997; Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Ferris & Helt, 2000; Lalande, 1982; Sheen, 2007). Most of the studies referred to included more than one treatment option so rather than suggesting that their findings have revealed evidence in support of written corrective feedback (WCF), they can be read as offering insights into the relative effectiveness of different types of written CF.

The results of Ashwell's (2000) study revealed that the pattern of content feedback followed by form feedback was not superior to the reverse pattern or to a pattern of mixed form and content feedback. They also showed that it didn't matter to students in which order they received form or content, nor did it matter to them whether or not form and content feedback were separated. According to the results obtained, it was also observed that in terms of simple mean gains in accuracy ratings and content scores the mixed pattern showed an advantage over the other two patterns. In Ashwell's (2000) study, participants were assigned to groups on the basis of an unexplained assessment of formal accuracy of the first draft of an essay. Another problem regarding this study was that all assessments were done by the researcher who was also the teacher, and inter-rater reliability was not computed for the test. One more shortcoming associated with the study was that accuracy gains were measured on the basis of text revisions rather than new texts.

Bitchner and Knoch (2008) demonstrated that all students who received written corrective feedback options (direct corrective feedback, written and oral meta-linguistic explanation; direct corrective feedback and written meta-linguistic explanation; direct

corrective feedback only) outperformed those who did not receive written corrective feedback and that their level of accuracy did not change over 7 weeks. In another study, Bitchener and Knoch (2009) assigned the participants of their study to direct corrective feedback, written, and oral meta-linguistic explanation, direct corrective feedback and written meta-linguistic explanation, direct corrective feedback only. The results showed that no difference in effect upon accuracy existed between the three treatment options, suggesting "... that direct error correction alone may be as effective as direct error corrective with written meta-linguistic explanation or direct error corrective with both written and spoken meta-linguistic explanation" (p. 328).

Bitchener, Young, and Cameron's (2005) study reported a significant effect for the combination of written and conference feedback on accuracy levels in the use of the past simple tense and the definite article in new pieces of writing, but no overall effect was found on accuracy improvement for feedback type when the three error categories were considered as a single unit.

Chandler's (2003) work included two studies based on which it was finally concluded that having the teacher either correct or underline for student self-correction all the grammatical and lexical errors in the autobiographical writing of high intermediate to advanced ESL undergraduates, followed by revision, resulted in a significant improvement in both accuracy and fluency in subsequent writing of the same type over the semester. Neither of Chandler's (2003) studies included a control group. Consequently, they were unable to claim that it was written corrective feedback alone that facilitated improvement in accuracy. Moreover, their sample size was small.

In an attempt to provide evidence that corrective feedback is effective in an EFL context, Ellis et al. (2008) conducted a study in which they compared the effects of focused and unfocused written corrective feedback on the accuracy with which Japanese university students used the English indefinite and definite articles to denote first and anaphoric reference in written narratives. The focused group received correction of just article errors on three written narratives while the unfocused group received correction of article errors along with corrections of other errors. The result showed that both the focused and unfocused groups outperformed the control group, but corrective feedback was equally effective for the focused and unfocused groups, that is, there was no statistically significant difference in accuracy between the two participating groups. The study suffered from some design flaws. Its sample size (forty-nine students for three groups) was fairly small. The results of the pre-test showed that the control group was notably weaker than the two experimental groups. More

importantly, based on the pre-test scores, one of the experimental groups, the focused group, differed from the other groups in a significant way. As the researchers admitted "it is possible that these differences in the group's pre-test scores affected the comparability of the groups" (Ellis et al., 2008, p. 367).

Ferris (1995) included only one group with 30 ESL learners who were provided with selective underlining feedback during one semester. The results showed some improvements, but they were reported to be inconsistent in some error categories. In her later study, Ferris (1997) coupled the selective underlining with teacher commentary and, based on the results, concluded that written corrective feedback improves accuracy. Ferris (1995, 1997) didn't include a control group, so the finding at best can be read as indicative of the potential that selective underlining feedback and teacher commentary might have for helping learners improve the accuracy of their writing. In their study, Ferris and Roberts (2001) examined the degree to which error feedback should be explicit in order to help students self-edit. The conclusion drawn from the study was "that less explicit feedback is likely to help the students to self-edit just as well as correction coded by error type" (p. 161).

Sheen (2007) examined the role of corrective feedback in L2 acquisition by addressing written corrective feedback and the role of one individual difference factor: language analytic ability. The results showed that both treatment groups (namely, direct-only correction and direct meta-linguistic correction) outperformed the control group on the immediate post-tests, but the direct meta-linguistic group outperformed the direct-only group in the delayed post-tests. A significantly positive association was also reported between students' gains and their aptitude for language analysis.

Bitchenor (2008) reported that students who received direct corrective feedback on the targeted features as well as written and oral meta-linguistic explanation and those who received direct corrective feedback but no meta-linguistic explanation, performed significantly better than the control group which didn't receive corrective feedback. More importantly, it was found that the accuracy of the group which received direct corrective feedback and written meta-linguistic explanation was lower than that of the group which received direct corrective feedback and no meta-linguistic explanation.

Although the effects of negotiation on the development of interlanguage have already been theoretically appreciated in SLA (e.g., Nassaji & Swain, 2000; Oliver & Mackey, 2003), most of the studies conducted to date have addressed these effects on oral errors. Stated differently, the role of negotiation in response to learners'

written errors remains to be examined empirically in EFL classroom settings (Nassaji, 2007).

Through negotiation the interlocutors involved in an interaction jointly seek and reach a solution to a problem. Such a problem might be related to getting meaning across, which is likely to be followed by meaning negotiation, or might relate to a formally incorrect utterance, which would call for some form negotiation. Meaning negotiation usually takes place to drive communication forward (Van den Branden, 1997). Through form negotiation, however, one interlocutor, mainly the teacher in the classroom setting, helps the student understand that there is a problem with his/her utterance and most importantly urges him/her to make corrections whenever required. The major concern in the latter negotiation has to do with L2 development and appears to occur between a student and the teacher. In form negotiation one interlocutor tries to push the other towards producing a formally more correct and appropriate utterance, and, as Ellis et al. (2002) put forward, error treatment based on form negotiation constitutes a kind of pedagogic "time out" from meaning-focused communication. According to Nassaji (2007), error correction based on negotiation involves errors being resolved interactionally through elicitation-response sequences. The only difference between oral meta-linguistic negotiation, the error treatment procedure introduced in the current study, and oral meta-linguistic explanation, used in some other studies (e.g., Bitchener & Knoch, 2008; Sheen, 2007), is that the former has a negotiation-based nature, that is, all rules and examples are tried to be elicited from the students through mini-elicitation-response lessons while in the latter rules and examples are explained unidirectionally by the teacher.

In the present study we made an attempt to examine the effects of meta-linguistic negotiation on the accuracy of L2 writers in an EFL classroom setting. Meta-linguistic negotiation is operationalized as elicitation-response sequences which are focused on the errors which have occurred in the writing of participants in the experimental group of the study and have already been corrected by one of the researchers. Elicitations are initiated by the teacher and responses are provided by the students. To investigate the effects of this new supplementary on L2 writer's accuracy the following research questions were addressed.

1. Would DWCF coupled with oral meta-linguistic form negotiation appear to be more effective than DWCF on the use of English articles?

2. Would DWCF help learners of English become more accurate than those who are not provided with such a feedback in the use of English articles?

3. Method

3.1. Participants

The study was conducted in English Language Departments of two universities (Payame Noor University and Islamic Azad University) in Ardabil, IRAN. The participants of this study were 112 EFL students majoring in Translation Studies and Teaching English as a Foreign Language. A general proficiency test, First Certificate in English (FCE), was administered to students. From this pool 99 students participated in the study. The participants were divided into three groups. The three groups were labeled as direct corrective feedback plus oral meta-linguistic negotiation, direct corrective feedback only, and no corrective feedback. Three, 5, and 3 students were excluded from the first, second, and third groups, respectively mainly because they failed to complete some of the tests. Consequently, the final number of participants in the participating groups was 30, 28, and 30, respectively. The results of the ANOVA test run on the proficiency scores confirmed that there were no significant differences across the three participating groups ($F = .16, p = .84$).

3.2. Target structures

As Ellis (2008) claims, "the bulk of the CF studies completed to date have investigated unfocused CF" (p. 6) in which sometimes up to 15 linguistic forms have been treated (e.g., Chandler, 2003; Ferris, 2003; Ferris & Roberts, 2001), but "processing correction is likely to be more difficult in unfocused CF as the learner is required to attend to a variety of errors and that is unlikely to be able to reflect much on each error" (Ellis, 2008, p. 6). On the other hand, according to several studies (e.g., Bitchener & Knoch, 2008; Ellis et al., 2008), there are solid theoretical reasons for believing that focused CF is more effective than unfocused one. As Bitchener and Knoch (2008) argue "learners are more likely to attend to corrections directed at a single (or a limited number of) error type(s) and more likely to develop a clear understanding of the nature the error and the correction need" (p. 356).

Several studies (e.g., Bitchener, Young, & Cameron, 2005; Bulter, 2002; Ellis et al., 2008; Liu & Gleason, 2002) have reported that students with varying language proficiency levels face difficulty in the use of English articles. Moreover, "... obligatory occasions for the use of articles appear regularly in certain types of discourse (e.g., narratives) and thus provide a basis for reliable analysis of learners' accuracy use" (Ellis et al., 2008, p. 357). Having all these in mind in the current

study we chose the English article system as the target structure: *a/an* as the first mention and *the* as the anaphoric reference.

3.3. Materials

Three types of test were used in the current study: (a) a picture description test, (b) a story rewriting test, and (c) an error correction test. The picture description was chosen because, as Bitchener and Knoch (2008) argue, the range of people, objects and activities illustrated in the pictures are capable of creating obligatory opportunities for the use of English articles. Moreover, "... if we are strictly interested in language ability and want to explicitly exclude topical knowledge from the construct, stimulus material such as a visual [material] may be appropriate" (Weigle, 2002, p. 94). A picture description test including four sequential pictures was adopted from Muranoi (2000) for English articles. The participants were asked to write one short story based on them. Word prompts next to each picture were included to elicit noun phrases involving article usage. For instance, next to the first picture the word prompts were *old man*, *paint*, and *picture*, thereby encouraging the participants to construct a sentence like *An old man wanted to paint a picture*.

Following Sheen (2007), the second test included two narrative tasks, namely *The Fox and the Crow* and *The Pet Snake*. The first narrative contained seven indefinite and seven definite articles, and the second narrative contained seven indefinite and ten definite articles. In administering this test the following procedures were taken: First, the teacher handed out the story with an empty sheet attached to it and required the participants to read and then rewrite the story. The teacher then collected the stories. Before asking the participants to rewrite the story, the teacher read the story aloud once while the participants were only listening. The participants were asked to rewrite the story as closely as they could remember. After 20 minutes, the teacher collected the participants' written narratives.

Following Ellis et al. (2008), Bitchener and Knoch (2008), and Liu and Gleason (2002), the third test, which included 21 items, was developed. Each item included two related sentences, one of which was underlined. Every underlined sentence contained at least one error, and the participants were required to correct the underlined sentences. To mask the focus of the study, 6 out of 21 items included sentences containing errors other than articles, and the remaining 16 items (item 8 included two article errors) contained articles erroneously used (8 involving *a* and 8 involving *the*).

3.4. Procedure and data collection

One week prior to administering the pre-test, a general proficiency test was given to the students. On the first day, all participants in the three participating groups took the three tests in the following order: the error correction test, the picture description test, and the story rewriting test. One week later, the treatment was provided. This required us to get back to each of the classes and return the participants' revised writing and ask them to look at the feedback (groups one and two received direct written corrective feedback above errors, mainly article errors, but group three received only some comments on the quality of their writings). The first group's errors were also negotiated with the participants in which rules and examples were attempted to be elicited from the participants through writing erroneous sentences on the board and having mini-elicitation-response lessons. Mainly sentences containing article errors were negotiated. To mask the focus of the study, a few errors related to other linguistic categories were selected randomly to be negotiated. The three participating groups were asked to sit for the immediate post-test. This test was the same as the pre-test including the error correction test, the picture description test, and the story rewriting test.

The second piece of writing was returned after a week. Groups two and three were provided with direct written corrective feedback and general comments on their writings respectively. In addition to receiving direct written corrective feedback, the erroneous sentences were negotiated with group one as they were in the preceding session. The delayed post-test was administered after three weeks. This test likewise included the three tests used in the pre-test and the immediate post-test; the only difference was that in the pre-test and the immediate post-test the rewriting test required the participants to rewrite *The Fox and the Crow*, but in the delayed post-test it required them to rewrite another story: *The Pet Snake*.

It is imperative to mention two points here; first, because we believed that providing the participants with correct forms of erroneous sentences of the error correction test was the same as betraying the focus of the study, in the treatment sessions those sentences were returned untouched and were not discussed. Second, it was predicted that it would be impossible not to tell the participants when we would return to the class, to eliminate the possibility of the participants studying the feedback that they had earlier been provided with, all writings were collected after treatment sessions. The steps taken in this study have been summarized in Figure 1.

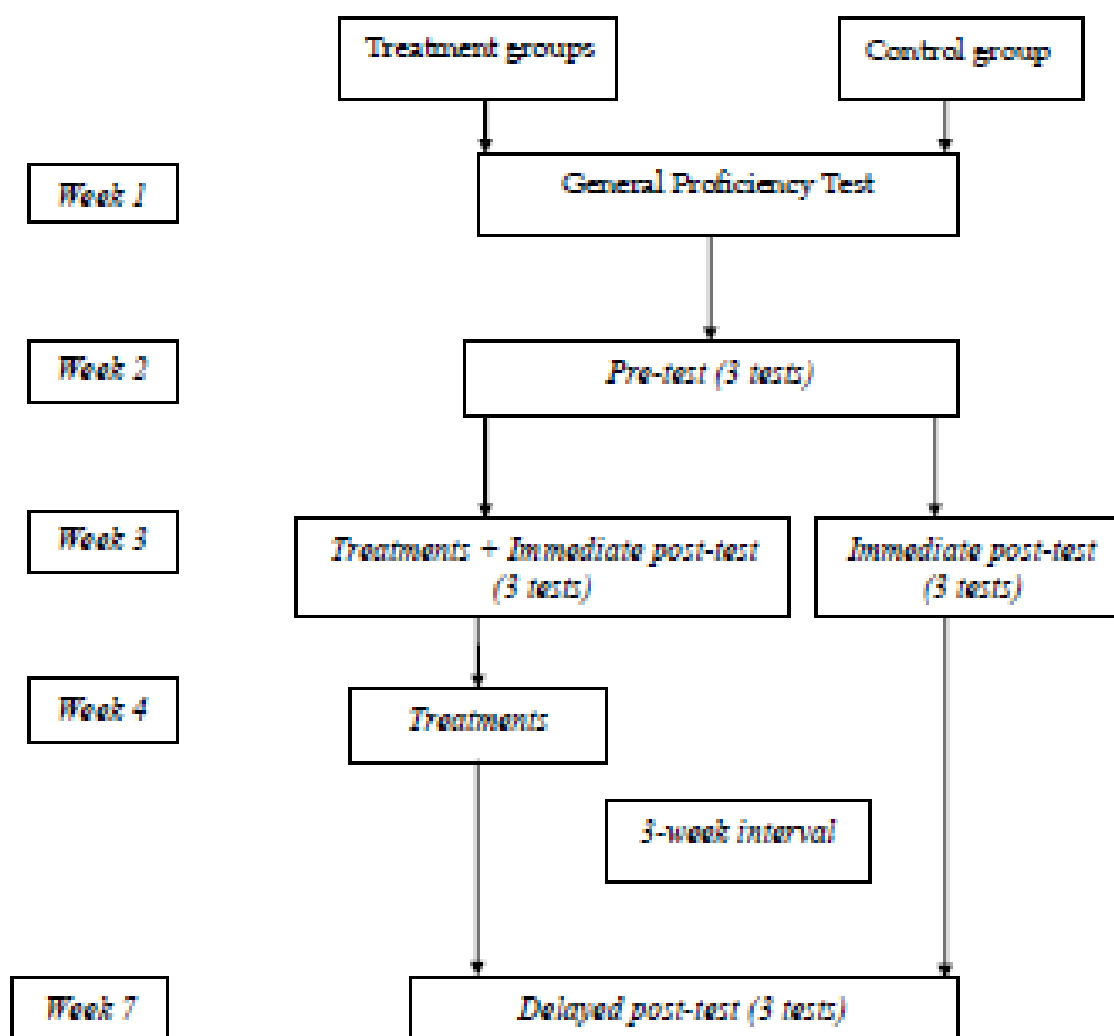


Figure 1. The design of the study

3.5. Measures

Following Ellis et al. (2008) and Sheen (2007), writing tests including the picture description and the story rewriting were assessed by means of obligatory occasion analysis in which on photocopies of the participants' texts all obligatory occasions for the use of *a/an* (first mention) and *the* (anaphoric reference) were identified, then each occasion was inspected to see whether the correct article had been supplied or not. Finally, accuracy on each occasion was calculated as a percentage of correct usage for each writing given the range of

obligatory occasions (e.g., 4 correct uses of the target features out of 10 obligatory occasions meant a 40% accuracy rate). In the error correction test, one point was awarded for each correct supply of an article in the 16 obligatory occasions in the underlined sentences. So excluding distracters, the maximum possible score was 16. However, in order to make these scores more comprehensive and compatible with the scores of two other tests, the scores were presented as proportions of 100. For example, if somebody happened to correct half of the erroneous sentences, his/her score was calculated to be 50. Inter-rater reliability was computed for both the picture description and the story rewriting tests. A second rater scored a sample of 25% of the total data. The sample came equally from the pre-test, the immediate post-test, and the delayed post-test. Employing Pearson product moment correlation, it was revealed that inter-rater reliability indices for the picture description and the story rewriting tests were .94 and .91, respectively.

4. Analyses and results

4.1. Main analyses

In the case of the error correction test the two treatment and control groups showed a gain from the pre-test to the immediate post-test, but only the two treatment groups showed a gain from the immediate post-test to the delayed post-test. One-way ANOVA run revealed that differences among the participating groups in the immediate post-test were significant, $F = 9.12, p < .0001$. The pos-hoc LSD test demonstrated significant differences between the control and the DWCF + meta group and also between the DWCF and the DWCF + meta group in the immediate post-test. The DWCF group outperformed the control group, but it was not significant (Table 1). The results obtained from the one-way ANOVA run on the data showed that the differences in the delayed post-test were statistically significant, $F = 36.5, p < .0001$. The post-hoc comparisons revealed a significant difference in the delayed post-test among the three groups, that is, there was a significant difference between the control group and the two treatment groups and also between the treatment groups. Based on the descriptive statistics for the error correction test, and one-way ANOVAs across the immediate and delayed post-tests with multiple comparisons for the error correction test scores, the summary of between-groups differences can be drawn as in Table 1.

Table 1. Summary of post-hoc comparisons
for the error correction test

Error correction test scores	
Immediate p-t	DWCF+meta > Control *
	DWCF+meta > DWCF *
	DWCF > Control
Delayed p-t	DWCF+meta > Control *
	DWCF+meta > DWCF *
	DWCF > Control *

*The mean difference is significant at $p < .05$

According to the descriptive statistics for the picture description test, the two treatment groups' gains over time were substantial but the control group showed a slight improvement from the pre-test to the immediate post-test but no improvement from the immediate post-test to the delayed post-test. The one-way ANOVA run revealed statistically significant differences between the groups in the immediate post-test, $F = 11.59, p < .0001$. The post-hoc test run showed that the differences between groups were significant. More specifically, in the immediate post-test the DWCF and DWCF + meta group outperformed the control group and the DWCF + meta group outperformed the DWCF group.

Based on the results of the one-way ANOVA run, the between-groups differences in the delayed post-test were also significant ($F = 26.58, p < .0001$). These results coupled with the those obtained from the post-hoc test showed that in the delayed post-test, like the immediate post-test, the DWCF group achieved significantly greater gains than the control group, and the DWCF + meta group outperformed both the DWCF and the control groups (Table 2).

Table 2. Summary of post-hoc comparisons
for the picture description test

Pictures description test scores	
Immediate p-t	DWCF+meta > Control *
	DWCF+meta > DWCF *
	DWCF > Control*
Delayed p-t	DWCF+meta > Control *
	DWCF+meta > DWCF *
	DWCF > Control *

*The mean difference is significant at $p < .05$

For the story rewriting test in both the immediate and delayed post-test significant differences were observed according to the one-way ANOVAs run, $F = 8.98, p < .0001, F = 20.72, p < .0001$.

The multiple post-hoc comparisons showed that in the immediate post-test the DWCF + Meta group performed significantly better than the control and the DWCF group. Although the DWCF group outscored the control group, no significant difference was detected between the control and DWCF groups. Based on the results obtained from the same comparisons, in the delayed post-test all the three groups were significantly different from each other. It can be concluded that in the immediate post-test the DWCF + meta group outperformed the two other groups and in the delayed post-test the DWCF group outperformed the control group and the DWCF + meta group outperformed both the control and DWCF groups (Table 3).

*Table 3. Summary of post-hoc comparisons
for the story rewriting test*

Story rewriting test scores	
Immediate p-t	DWCF+meta > Control *
	DWCF+meta > DWCF *
	DWCF > Control
Delayed p-t	DWCF+meta > Control *
	DWCF+meta > DWCF *
	DWCF > Control *

*The mean difference is significant at $p < .05$

Table 4 presents the descriptive statistics for total scores (i.e., the error correction test + the picture description test + the story rewriting test) over the pre-test, the immediate post-test, and the delayed post-test.

Table 4. Descriptive statistics for total scores

Groups		Pre-test		Immediate p-t		Delayed p-t	
		M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Control	group	116.67	53.31	122.65	54.43	112.71	50.45
(n=30)							
DWCF	group	122.75	42.61	142.70	40.11	150.91	38.37
(n=28)							
DWCF + meta		122.97	51.05	190.21	56.72	215.14	37.88
group (n=30)							

Based on the one-way ANOVA run, the three groups were taken to be equal in their initial writing proficiency regarding English articles, $F = .15, p = .85$.

Table 5 shows the results of a repeated-measures ANOVA run on the total scores in three times for CF. The three groups performed differently on total scores, $F = 32.82$, $p < .0001$, indicating a significant effect for CF. Also there was a significant interaction between time and CF treatment, $F = 7.14$, $p < .0007$.

Table 5. Repeated-measures ANOVA results

	Source	SS	df	MS	F	Sig.	d
Between subjects	CF	158978.42	2	79489.21	32.82	.000***	.43
	Error	205846.68	85	2421.72			
Within subjects	Time	74101.30	2	37050.65	14.91	.000***	.26
	T × CF	74445.65	4	18611.41	7.14	.007**	.14
	Error	379109.68	85	4460.11			

To examine the differences between the three groups statistically, the post-hoc multiple comparisons were performed. The results obtained from these comparisons coupled with the descriptive statistics revealed that the DWCF + meta group outperformed the control and DWCF groups in the immediate post-test and that the DWCF group performed better than the control group and the DWCF + meta group performed better than the DWCF and control groups in the delayed post-test (Table 6).

Table 6. Summary of post-hoc comparisons for total scores

Total test scores	
Immediate p-t	DWCF+meta > Control *
	DWCF+meta > DWCF *
	DWCF > Control
Delayed p-t	DWCF+meta > Control *
	DWCF+meta > DWCF *
	DWCF > Control *

*The mean difference is significant at $p < .05$

4.2. Further analysis

One might claim that the improvement in the experimental and contrast groups' article usage in the post-tests was simply the product

of an avoidance strategy. Truscott (2007) introduced avoidance as a likely source of bias in the findings of the previous research (Kepner, 1991; Semke, 1984; Sheppard, 1992). He claimed that students who are corrected tend to shorten and simplify their writing, apparently to avoid situations in which they might make errors. "The implication is that corrected students hide their weakness. So their scores rise on overall accuracy, this apparent improvement might simply mean they have learned to avoid using things they might get wrong" (Truscott, 2007, p. 268). To check whether this was the case, the number of obligatory occasions for the use of articles performing the first and the second mention in the three testing times was examined for the story rewriting and the picture description tests (Tables 7 and 8).

Table 7. Obligatory occasions for the articles for the story rewriting test

Groups	n	Pre-test		Immediate p-t		Delayed p-t	
		Total	Mean	Total	Mean	Total	Mean
DWCF + meta	30	365	12.1	372	12.4	381	12.7
DWCF	28	322	11.5	311	11.1	323	11.5
Control	30	351	11.7	366	12.2	371	12.3

Table 8. Obligatory occasions for the articles for the picture description test

Groups	n	Pre-test		Immediate p-t		Delayed p-t	
		Total	Mean	Total	Mean	Total	Mean
DWCF + meta	30	319	10.6	323	10.7	331	11
DWCF	28	307	10.9	283	10.1	323	11.5
Control	30	331	11	353	11.7	359	11.9

In the story rewriting test, an increase can be observed from the pre-test to the immediate post-test and from the immediate post-test to the delayed post-test for the DWCF + meta and control groups, and in the case of the DWCF group there was a decrease from the pre-test to the immediate post-test and an increase from the immediate post-test to the delayed post-test. A similar trend was observed for the picture description test. Overall, it appears clear that the CF provided did not lead to avoidance strategy in the present study.

5. Summary and discussion

Research question 1 asked whether DWCF coupled with meta-linguistic negotiation would enable learners to use the indefinite article with the function of the first mention and the definite article

with the function of the anaphoric reference more accurately. This question can be answered by examining the results for all the three tests, the story rewriting test, the error correction test, and the picture description test, and, more importantly, the total scores.

The results obtained from the story rewriting test showed that in both the immediate and the delayed post-tests the DWCF + meta group outperformed both the control and the DWCF groups significantly. However, the DWCF outperformed the control group only in the delayed post-test. Although the control group showed a slight improvement from the pre-test to the immediate post-test, and from the immediate post-test to the delayed post-test, the DWCF + meta group outperformed the DWCF and the control group, indicating that an effect can be attributed to error correction treatment over and above test practice effect. In particular, direct written corrective feedback with meta-linguistic negotiation was superior to direct written corrective feedback alone and to no feedback. This finding can be justified from two perspectives. First, although according to Ellis' (2006) categorization of CF, both direct written feedback with and without meta-linguistic comments are input-providing, they differ in the degree of explicitness and the nature of the input provided in the feedback. According to Sheen (2007), meta-linguistic feedback also leads to a longer "time-out" from meaning negotiation and thus affords more time for noticing the corrected feature. Second, the finding can be explained in terms of Schmidt's (2001) two levels of awareness (i.e., noticing and understanding). According to Schmidt, "noticing" is a crucial step towards acquisition while "understanding" can lead to greater and deeper learning. So it can be assumed that understanding entails noticing while the reverse can hardly be true. It can also be argued that while both direct written corrective feedback with and without meta-linguistic comments are likely to promote awareness as noticing; only direct written corrective feedback with meta-linguistic comments promotes awareness as understanding.

The second research question asked whether direct written CF alone focusing on article errors would produce a significant positive effect on acquisition. Regarding the story rewriting test the answer is positive. While the difference between the DWCF and the control groups was not significant in the immediate post-test, the DWCF group outperformed the control group in the delayed post-test in a significant way. This finding coupled with the fact that the DWCF group improved over three testing times confirms the initial impression (effectiveness of direct feedback) indicating that DWCF is effective in helping learners improve the accuracy of their writing.

This finding is justified by several studies (e.g., Chandler, 2003; Ellis, 1998; Ellis, Loewn, & Erlam, 2006). Moreover, it is in line with the proposal that feedback may lead to L2 development by making problematic aspects of learners' interlanguage salient and giving them additional opportunities to focus on their production or comprehension (Mackey, 2007).

In the error correction test too, in the immediate post-test the DWCF + meta group outperformed both the control and the DWCF groups, and in the delayed post-test the DWCF group outperformed the control group and the DWCF + meta group outscored both of them. No treatment was provided for the error correction test, so the improvements gained by both the experimental and contrast groups from the pre-test to the immediate post-test and from the immediate post-test to the delayed post-test in their error correction test scores could be attributed to the treatment provided on the errors committed in the story rewriting and the picture description tests. Thus this enhancement is noteworthy because the learners were not given any meta-linguistic explanation of their errors and any understanding the learners developed was probably induced as a result of the DWCF, for the DWCF group, and meta-linguistic negotiation, for the DWCF + meta group. While some second language acquisition researchers (e.g., Doughty, 2003) argue that an error correction test does not provide evidence of acquisition, but only of meta-linguistic understanding, the current study in line with Ellis (2008) has confirmed that such knowledge is important in the case of writing which allows for and surely benefits from the conscious monitoring that meta-linguistic understanding makes possible.

The picture description test provided a measure of the learners' ability to use articles while engaged in composing a written text, so it required higher production ability. It is a fairly common view that ESL learners perform poor on this type of test than the story rewriting and the error correction tests. However, based on the results obtained from the picture description test, both the experimental group and the contrast group improved over time and there was a linear and upward pattern of improvement throughout different stages of the study. The control group's correct use of articles, however, was unstable, rising from the pre-test to the immediate post-test but fading away again on the delayed post-test. Moreover, in both post-tests the experimental and the contrast groups significantly outscored the control group and the DWCF + meta group outscored the DWCF group. Taking all these findings into account, it can be argued that regarding the picture description test the answer to both research questions is positive indicating that CF, especially when accompanied

by negotiation-based meta-linguistic discussion, benefits learners' procedural ability to use articles accurately and that CF results in more than just explicit knowledge of the relevant rule.

As mentioned earlier, besides interpreting the results of the three tests separately, the results obtained from the total scores need to be interpreted in full details. The results for the total test scores replicate those for the story rewriting and the error correction tests. Both the experimental and the contrast groups showed improvement over time and the DWCF + meta group outperformed both DWCF and the control groups in the immediate and delayed post-tests, but the DWCF outperformed the control group only in the delayed post-test.

The findings verify the prediction that both CF types (DWCF with and without negotiation-based meta-linguistic discussion) would have positive effects on learners' use of English articles. An additional finding is that the two types of CF had differing degrees of effects: DWCF with meta-linguistic negotiation was superior to DWCF without such negotiation. This finding can be explained by Schmidt's (2001) account of the role of awareness in L2 acquisition according to which CF with meta-linguistic comments is likely to promote awareness as understanding. Schmidt also contends that such conscious rule awareness arising from understanding strongly facilitates later learning. This is verified by the current study, which revealed long-term gains for the DWCF + meta group; However, long-term gains were also observed for the DWCF group indicating that CF without meta-linguistic comments might facilitate later learning at least where English articles are concerned.

The positive effect of DWCF, is not particularly surprising given the growing evidence that has been reported in several recent written CF studies (e.g., Bitchener 2008; Bitchener & Knoch, 2008; Bitchner et al., 2005; Ellis et al., 2006; Sheen, 2007). Though superiority of DWCF with meta-linguistic negotiation over DWCF alone, is supported by several studies (e.g., Bitchener et al., 2005; Ellis et al., 2006), it is a rebuttal for the findings of some other recent studies (e.g., Bitchener, 2008; Bitchener & Knoch, 2009) claiming that direct error correction alone might be as effective as direct error correction with written or spoken meta-linguistic explanations.

6. Conclusion

This study has investigated the impact of the provision of DWCF accompanied with oral meta-linguistic negotiation on writing accuracy. Meanwhile, an attempt was made to investigate the possible effect of the sole DWCF on writing accuracy. In both the immediate

and delayed post-tests the DWCF + meta group outperformed both the control and the DWCF groups significantly. However, the DWCF outperformed the control group only in the delayed post-test. In other words, DWCF with negotiation-based meta-linguistic discussion was superior to DWCF alone and to no feedback.

Both the experimental and the contrast groups showed improvement over time and the DWCF + meta group outperformed both DWCF and the control groups in the immediate and delayed post-tests, but the DWCF outperformed the control group only in the delayed post-test. The findings verify the prediction that both CF types (DWCF with and without negotiation-based meta-linguistic discussion) would have positive effects on learners' use of English articles. An additional finding is that the two types of CF had differing degrees of effects: DWCF with meta-linguistic discussion was superior to DWCF without such discussion.

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STRATEGIC COMPETENCE AND TRANSLATOR'S CREATIVITY: DO THEY ACT HAND IN HAND?

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Abstract

Strategic Competence, in spite of being the most important sub-competence in PACTE's Translation Competence model, has rarely been researched in the field of Translation Studies. More specifically, there can be hardly found any research concentrating on Translator's Creativity and Strategic competence. Strategic Competence is responsible for identifying and solving of the translation problem (PACTE, 2005). As for Translators' Creativity, besides having an individual style either in *producing* TTs or in *decoding* an ST, they have to produce an "accurate", "natural", and "communicative" TT. The present research aimed to find out if there are any correlated relationship between Translators' Creativity and their Strategic Competence. To this end, 60 senior students of English Translation were administered a translation task followed by a validated strategic competence questionnaire (SCQ). The translation tasks were scored using Consensual Assessment Technique (CAT) in which 5 raters – experts in literary translation – rated the translated texts regarding the translators' creativity. Then, a correlational statistical measurement was conducted between translator's creativity and strategic competence score. The result indicated that there was a statistically significant correlation between the variables of interest as hypothesized in the study. The findings can be taken into account in developing courses/syllabi for students of translation. The developers should *create* some methods to put the translators' creativity on its right track and envisage in the training programs those tasks that

would mature the prospective translators' strategic competence, empowering them to solve the translation problems.

Key Words: *Strategic Competence, Translation Competence, Translator's Creativity, Translator Training*

1. Introduction

To label a target text (TT) as successful or not, it would not be sufficient to just compare it against its respective source text (ST) since – in that case – translation *process* and also the *strategies* adopted by its translator would be overlooked.

Attempting to maintain as far as possible both 'form' and 'contents' of a given ST, a translator might find it quite of justice to sacrifice one aspect for the other. It is the power of "discretion" that distinguishes capable qualified translators from others. This power of discretion or decision making is the same as what is referred to as *strategic sub-competence* in PACTE's (2005) Translation Competence (TC) Model:

The strategic sub-competence is the most important, as it is responsible for solving problems and the efficiency of the process. It intervenes by planning the process in relation to the translation project, evaluating the process and partial results obtained, activating the different sub-competencies and compensating for deficiencies, identifying translation problems and applying procedures to solve them. (PACTE, 2005: 610)

In other words, as underlined in PACTE (2003) as well, it is the strategic sub-competence – i.e. "all the individual procedures, conscious and unconscious, verbal and non-verbal" – that plays a very significant role in translation process by helping the translator "to detect problems, take decisions, and make up for errors or weaknesses in the other sub-competences". Characteristics of the strategic sub-competence can be outlined as follows:

[I]t is used to: plan the translation project; activate, monitor and compensate for shortcomings in other translation sub-competencies; detect translation problems; apply translation strategies; monitor and evaluate both the translation process and partial results obtained in relation to the intended target text, etc. (2003: 15)

When *translation problem* is heard, the first thing brought to the mind might be *translation difficulty*; nevertheless, the former is the same concept defined by Nord as "an objective problem which every translator ... has to solve during a particular translation task." (Nord, 1991, p. 151, as cited in Melis & Albir, 2001). The most obvious signs

indicating probable problems encountered by the translators during the translation process include: Interruptions and pauses, postponing of decision-making, and devising provisional solution.

In spite of traditionally being tagged as *inferior, not creative*, and “the poor relation of writing” (Bassnett, 2007: 173), *translation* has been considered to gain more success by the translator’s creativity (Bassnett, 2007). This feature is called translation creativity, which is the other variable of this research. Some might think of “creative translators” only as those having their own individualistic styles in *producing* TTs; yet, besides this encoding phase, the translator’s creativity can be manifested in their *decoding* an ST as well: Considering the primary role of a translator as ‘reader’ of a text, one can attribute the features of an active, top-down processor/reader to a successful translator. Thereupon, whereas Baker (2008: 222) believes in “a reader’s cultural and *intellectual* background” (my italics) as determinant factors in the degree of the sense the readers make out of a text, the same requirements can be true in case of translators as well. In order to have a better picture of translation creativity, it is needed to, first, define creativity itself.

According to the conventional conception of creativity, it belongs to the genius and talented people, who are not the majority of the population, creating great works of art, scientific discoveries, or technological progresses (Vygotsky, 1967).

creativity is present, in actuality, not only when great historical we typically believe that such works are born but also whenever a person imagines, combines, alters, and creates something new, no matter how small a drop in the bucket this new thing appears compared to the works of geniuses (Vygotsky, 1967: 10 & 11)

The idea of being *novel/original* and *useful/appropriate* can be seen in various definitions of creativity offered by different scholars such as Plucker et al (2004) and Starko (2010). Starko (2010) states that *originality/novelty* and *appropriateness* of a creative idea or product are repeatedly identified in different definitions of creativity. These two features should always go together in order to mark a product or idea as creative; being novel, by itself, does not suffice because in this way any impossible or inapplicable idea can be labeled as original. Therefore, it is very important for the creative idea or product to be appropriate for and welcomed by the public, or at least by the people to whom it relates. Moreover, appropriateness varies throughout different cultures according to their interpretation of creativity (Sternberg, 2004, as cited in Starko, 2010). Appropriateness, Starko considers, can be defined as satisfying ‘some goal or criterion’ that can

be constrained by some factors such as politics. To be more precise, novelty, too, can differ from culture to culture depending on their viewpoint towards creativity if novelty is taken to aim at improving something or improving the meaning and beauty of something. Creativity is purposeful and involves effort to make something work, to make something better, more meaningful, or more beautiful.

Parkhurst (1999: 18, as cited in Robinson, 2010: 8) thinks of creativity as “the ability or quality displayed when solving hitherto unsolved problems, when developing novel solutions to problems others have solved differently, or when developing original and novel (at least to the originator) products”. In other words, contrary to the laymen’s interpretation, creativity is not restricted to finding solutions to unsolved problems; rather, it is also applicable to cases where a new solution, other than the routine ones, is offered.

There is a distinction between *high* or *big C* creativity and *everyday* or *little c* creativity (Craft, 2001; NACCCE, 1999; Starko, 2010) with the former referring to highly extraordinary and talented people’s novel and useful works changing the disciplines, and the latter referring to more conventional novelties being related to the ordinary people especially students – it, actually involves their act of problem solving. It is this ordinary type of creativity that is the concern of the present study when *translation creativity* is tapped which is considered as a kind of creative thinking aimed at recognizing and solving translation problems.

For translation, creativity-demanding STs are taken to be those “requiring a relatively non-literal translation, i.e. a creative shift such as an abstraction, a modification or a concretization as opposed to a more literal translation” (See Bayer-Hohenwarter 2010, as cited in Göpferich, 2011). In essence, a creative translation can be defined as a process the product of which enjoys three requirements of “accuracy”, “naturalness”, and “communication”. That is, the translator is expected to have successfully transmitted the ST’s overall meaning, applied appropriate TL natural forms to the ST, and carried over to the target readers the meaning and emotional force of the ST (Khalil, 2004).

1.1. Objectives & Significance of the Study

The present study looks at translation as a creativity-requiring process and deals with the transaction between strategic competence and translation creativity. To this end, the research question “Is strategic competence correlated with translation creativity?” is set forth.

Since the definitions assigned to *translators' creativity* and *strategic competence* share overlaps as far as the common factor of problem-solving ability is concerned, there emerged a need for a research that could tap each of those concepts and explore probable interactions and correlations between those two elements.

Although considerable debates over and researches in creativity and strategic competence – in psychology and education – date back to decades ago, there is a scant literature on translators' creativity and the factors and attributes playing a role in its development, including strategic competence. Thus, being pioneer in the mentioned line of investigation is where the present study obtains its significance.

1.2. Theoretical Framework

This research has a process-oriented approach to translation studies, which in Holmes's (1988 & 2000, as cited in Munday, 2004) framework is inclined towards the psychology of translation. The focus of this kind of approach is on what takes place in the translator's mind. More precisely, this study is based on the psychoanalytic Translation Quality Assessment (TQA) model proposed by PACTE group (2003), called Translation Competence (TC) Model. According to TC model, Translation Competence refers to the system of fundamental knowledge that is necessary for translation; it is expert knowledge as well as procedural knowledge being made up of five sub-competences: The bilingual, the extra-linguistic, the translation knowledge, the strategic, and the instrumental sub-competences. Moreover, it contains the psycho-physiological components, which are cognitive, behavioral, and psychomotor mechanisms. (PACTE, 2005)

As concerns the translator's creativity, the widely-used four P's model of creativity offered by Rhodes (1961) is used in the present study as well. This model elaborates on the fact that talking about creativity, necessarily, entails talking about a creative *product*, a creative *process*, a creative *person*, and a creative *press/environment*.

Many of assessment techniques are designed focusing on the creative product, which can be a creative idea, a literary work, or simply a solution for an open-ended question. Dealing with the translated text as a creative product, this study uses the Consensual Assessment Technique (CAT) which concentrates on the creative product. In this assessment technique, the final product –the translated text, here –is rated by a number of expert judges who are likely to agree with each other on the level of creativity of the product.

2. Review of literature

In *Assessing Creativity: A Guide for Educators*, Treffinger et al (2002) dealt with the challenge of identifying and assessing creativity. They found that creativity – as a cognitive individual characteristic – acting together with the critical thinking during effective problem solving. Here, problem solving ability can be taken as a somewhat representative of strategic competence due to its being an important component of it (Bachman, 1995; PACTE, 2003 & 2005). PACTE (2003, 2005) identified strategic competence as the most important sub competence of Translation Competence and having a controlling role in it and also playing a compensatory role for the other sub-competences' deficiencies.

Personal problem-solving style preferences of high school students, too, were studied by Treffinger and Isakson (2004). Using VIEW – a 34-item web-based format requiring about 10 minutes to complete – Treffinger and Isakson (2004) compared the performance of their respondents concerning OC "Orientation to Change", MP "Manner of Processing", and WD "Ways of Deciding". He found out that the middle and senior level groups did not differ significantly on either OC or MP; however, for WD, the senior teams' mean score was significantly greater than that of the middle teams. As compared with the middle-level teams, the senior teams demonstrated a significantly greater preference for the Task-oriented style

Later, in reviewing more than 25 studies, Treffinger and Selby (2009) tried to find any relationship between and among *Giftedness*, *Creativity*, and *Learning Style*, and examined "ways in which the conceptual and operational complexity of the constructs" had darkened or brightened their sight. Besides finding "several areas of possible overlap or relationship" (Treffinger & Selby, 2009), they concluded that the gifted and creative students differ in characteristics or style. In general, the literature Treffinger and Selby (2009) reviewed suggested significant relationships among personal style, creativity, and giftedness.

The way of relating strategic competence to the development of an overall communicative competence is examined by Mariani (1994). He found that strategic competence can help the language users to have a "more successful performance" which leaves a positive impact on learning. He, also, concludes that strategic competence plays a "self-monitoring" role which helps them control their receiving feedbacks.

Moreover, it enables them to brave the unexpected and odd situations which necessitate their risk-taking power. This, he believes, can be a step forward in achieving the linguistic and cognitive autonomy.

3. Method

3.1. Participants

For the present study, 60 participants were randomly chosen from the senior B.A. students of English Translation of Bushehr Payam-e Noor University, Iran and also Islamic Azad University, Kazeroon Branch, Iran. The testees' race and gender were not the matter of our concern since according to Baer and McKool (2009), there is no significant ethnicity and gender differences concerning creativity, "on any writing task".

3.2. Instruments

Since Strategic Competence – as the most important sub-competence of PACTE's Translation Competence Model – was to be tapped, a 30-item, 6-point Likert scale Strategic Competence Questionnaire (Rezvani, 2010) was used after implementation of a number of wording alterations. The original version of the referred SCQ had been developed and meticulously validated in the course of Rezvani's modeling test-taking strategies. As for the referred modifications, the phrases concerning the general area of 'test taking' were narrowed down to 'translation task'. In order for the researchers to ensure that the students' different levels of reading comprehension ability would not affect their answers to the SCQ, the Persian translation of the questionnaire was used instead. To check the full compatibility of the translated version with the original one, a dual technique of back-translation and re-check by the developer (R. Rezvani) was implemented. Through the SCQ, test-takers were driven to ponder, in retrospect, upon the strategies they had followed – consciously or subconsciously – while performing the translation task. Following the categorizations generally assigned (e.g. by Oxford, 1999) to the different strategies adopted by learners, the strategies of concern in the SCQ can be broken down into *Cognitive* and *Meta-Cognitive*; with the first eliciting the sub-scales of *Comprehending*, *Memory*, and *Retrieval* as exploited by the participants while at the translation task and the second deriving their viewpoint on their own strategies as far as *Planning*, *Monitoring*, and *Evaluating* are concerned. In the original version of the 30-item questionnaire, the above sub-scales were reported to be represented by the following items: Items 1-5 for comprehending, 6-9 for memory, 10-14 for retrieval, 15-20 for planning, 21-25 for monitoring, and 26-30 for evaluating.

3.3. Translation Materials & the Assessment Technique

As for the materials tapping into the participants' translation creativity, a use was made of an expressive (literary) English text written by Bacon, the text type of which was unanimously confirmed by five university instructors who were expert in translation. It is argued that the translation of such texts demand the exercise of *translation creativity* most on the part of the participants. For translation, creativity-demanding STs are taken to be those "requiring a relatively non-literal translation, i.e. a creative shift such as an abstraction, a modification or concretization as opposed to a more literal translation" (See Bayer-Hohenwarter, 2010, as cited in Gopferich, 2011). The chosen text, too, was declared by the instructors to enjoy the complexities the translation of which required translator's creativity.

To take care of the differential effect of various dictionaries commonly used by translators while doing the translation task, the researcher provided English equivalents of the key text words, in a Glossary, at the bottom of the text. In other words, test takers were not allowed to use any dictionary.

As concerns assessment of the participants' translation creativity, Amabile's Consensual Assessment Technique (CAT) was found to be "a well validated" and highly reliable method (Baer & McKool, 2009). This method is based on the principle that "the most valid assessment of the creativity of an idea or creation in any field is the collective judgement of recognized experts in that field" (ibid: 2).

Using a 5-point Likert scale, three university instructors, expert in the field of translation were asked to evaluate the creativity of the texts produced (i.e. translated) by the participants. The experts worked independently and did not influence one another's judgments in any way. It is believed that in cases where there is an acceptable level of agreement between and among the judges, those ratings can act as a criterion for measuring the creativity.

In order to equally help cultivation of the raters' "expert sense" of creativity, the researchers handed over to them a series of notes and quotations defining what can account as creativity. Inter-rater reliability of the scores assigned by the five raters to each translation was checked using Pearson's correlation.

4. Results & discussion

After the tests were taken by the participants and collected by the researchers, for each testee, there were two sets to be taken care of: On

the one hand, five 5-point Likert scale translation creativity scores given by the five raters to each translation product; on the other, answers to a 30-item, 6-point Likert scale SCQ. The analyses done and the results achieved are elaborated on hereunder:

4.1. Item analysis and reliability

Cronbach's Alpha index was used for determination of reliability of the SCQ, covering its six sub-scales referred to above. Evidently, Cronbach's Alpha index is used to ensure that the used instrument elicits consistent and reliable responses. In other words, attempt is made to verify the extent to which all the items in the SCQ measure the same concepts or constructs intended and hence the inter-relatedness of the items within the test.

Upon running Cronbach's Alpha model of SPSS-16 (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) for the whole SCQ, an Alpha index of 0.915 was obtained, which is considerably high. In the same lines, go-togetherness of items and their corresponding sub-scales was determined via "corrected item total correlation" and "alpha if item deleted" indexes.

As concerns the criterion chosen for item total correlation, Rezvani (2010) had adopted the midpoint between Hatch and Lazarton's (1991, as cited in Rezvani, 2010) and Spada et al (2009, as cited in Rezvani, 2010); i.e. $[(0.40 + 0.30) / 2 = 0.35]$. The same index was taken by this researcher; in other words, it was decided that an index smaller than **0.35** would trigger doubt that there might be some problem with the given item. It was further decided – following Rezvani (2010) – that an index of **0.01** be taken as the threshold for "alpha if item deleted": i.e. in case deletion of an item increases the corresponding sub-scale's alpha by at least 0.01, that item raises doubt and might be deleted.

Based on the mentioned criteria of 0.35 and 0.01 for item total correlation and alpha if item deleted, respectively, the following four items were singled out for further analysis:

Table 1. The suspect items when overall reliability of SCQ was checked

	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
ITEM05	.342	.914
ITEM11	.260	.915
ITEM12	.329	.914
ITEM29	.327	.914

As it is shown in the above table, only one of the four items (i.e. ITEM 11) shows an index (i.e. 0.260) considerably lower than the set criterion of 0.35. Nevertheless, (a) none of the alpha indices predicted an improvement over the already-detected overall reliability of 0.915 – let alone an advancement of 0.01 or more – and (b) close scrutiny of the items in question did not reveal any particular problem. Therefore, decision was taken to retain the items intact, without excluding any of them.

Besides a computation of the overall reliability, the two classes of the strategies included in SCQ, namely *Cognitive* and *Meta-cognitive*, were checked for their reliability, which was revealed as 0.815 (for ITEMS 1~14) and 0.870 (for ITEMS 15~30), respectively.

On the whole, SCQ turned out to enjoy a very high internal consistency or reliability index (i.e. 0.915) and the suspected items were satisfactory enough to be retained.

4.2. Assessment of Translation Creativity

The five scores given by 5 raters to each translation product resulted in the following means and standard deviations:

Table 2. Means and SDs of translator's creativity scores

	Rater 1	Rater 2	Rater 3	Rater 4	Rater 5
Mean	2.9667	2.6500	2.8833	2.9333	2.4667
SD	1.16396	1.10200	1.09066	1.14783	1.21386

When inter-rater reliability of the scores assigned by the five raters to each translation was checked using Pearson's Correlation, the obtained coefficient turned out to be 0.901, which is considerably high. Afterwards, the inter-item correlation of the 5 sets of the translation creativity scores was computed. As shown below, the resulted correlation indices were high:

Pearson's correlation between the scores given to translators' creativity by 5 separate raters (Pilot Study)

	Tr.Cr.1	Tr.Cr.2	Tr.Cr.3	Tr.Cr.4	Tr.Cr.5
Tr.Cr.1	1	.770**	.745**	.455**	.611**
Tr.Cr.2	.770**	1	.741**	.464**	.593**
Tr.Cr.3	.745**	.741**	1	.292*	.400**

Tr.Cr.4	.455**	.464**	.292*	1	.740**
Tr.Cr.5	.611**	.593**	.400**	.740**	1
** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed) * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)					

Considering the high correlation, it was thus taken that for each test-taker, the average of the 5 scores can represent his/her translation creativity score.

4.3. The correlation between Strategic Competence & Translation Creativity

In the next step, the researchers attempted to find out whether there is any correlation between the average Translation Creativity scores (given by the 5 raters), on the one hand, and the test-takers' Strategic Competence index found through SCQ, on the other. The resulted two-tailed correlation index of 0.432 turned out to be significant at 0.01 level. In other words, the research question "Is strategic competence correlated with translation creativity?" was answered affirmatively.

This statistically-significant correlation between translator's creativity and strategic competence is in line with what Treffinger et al (2000, as cited in Treffinger et al, 2002) reported as a "harmony or balance between creative and critical thinking during effective problem solving and decision-making" (p. 7) as well as the significant relationships suggested by Treffinger and Selby (2009) to exist among personal style, creativity, and giftedness.

Moreover, it should be pointed out that Amabile's (1983, 1996) Componential Model of Creativity included 'domain-relevant skills', 'creativity-relevant skills', and task motivation stating that the focus on the skills puts the emphasis on the process. Accordingly, based on the above Model, it can be gathered that in case the creativity-relevant skills are boosted through ways including instruction, the person's creativity is also expected to enhance. In the same line, resorting to the significant correlation detected between the translator's creativity and his/her strategic competence, improvement in a person's level of translator's creativity can, in turn, entail betterment of his/her strategic competence as well.

5. Conclusion

The statistically-significant correlation detected between translation creativity and strategic competence signals the significance that must be attached to developing the (prospective) translators' strategic competence, among others, if they are expected to act creatively in shouldering their translation tasks. Besides incorporation of such prerequisites (i.e. strategic competence) into translation training curricula on the public scale, on the individualistic scale, the translators themselves can monitor and evaluate their own level of strategic competence, detect the areas they are lagging behind, and devise due compensatory measures that can help them excel in both areas: Initially, strategic competence; consequently, translation creativity.

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Book Review

Teaching at Its Best: a Research-Based Resource for College Instructors (Third Edition)

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This third edition offers hundreds of practical teaching techniques, formats, classroom activities, and exercises that are suitable for all levels of college instructors. It covers the newest portrait of the Millennial student, some research related to cognitive psychology, an emphasis on outcomes maps, some new legal options on copyright issues, and finally, the best ways, through which new technology such as wikis, blogs, podcasts, vodcasts, and clickers are used. The following is a brief review of the different parts of this book.

Part one, "Laying the Groundwork for Student Learning", is concerned with completing the tasks before the term starts. It consists of five chapters. Chapter one deals with understanding your students and how they learn. So, it tries to use a lot of principles and findings from cognitive psychology and show their implications for teaching. After that, it puts emphasis on the importance of mental structure in learning, retention, and retrieval. Finally, it goes towards reaching and teaching the millennial generation. Chapter Two is concerned with outcomes-centered course design based on Bloom's taxonomy and Anderson and Krathwohl's taxonomy. Chapter Three's title is the Complete Syllabus. First, it provides you with a list of all the information that you should put in a course syllabus. Then, it introduces the graphic syllabus and the online living syllabus, and after that, it focuses on how to get students to read your syllabus. Chapter Four introduces pre-class physical and vocal exercises for enhancing your persona and nonverbal communication. Chapter Five deals with motivation and its four theories. It offers the strategies, through which you can motivate students. Furthermore, the last part of this chapter suggests many ways to create productive learning situations in different places.

Part two, "Managing Your Courses", puts emphasis on administrative aspect of teaching. Chapters Six, Seven, Eight and Nine deal with copyright guidelines for instructors, preventing and responding to classroom incivility, preserving academic integrity and making the

most of office hours, respectively. All of the material on copyright is up-to-date, and the chapter on academic integrity includes the latest incidence and prevalence statistics, addresses electronic forms of cheating, and examines the prospect of changing students' values. Many new ideas concerning places and settings for office hours are covered in Chapter Nine. Chapter Ten provides new literature on the faculty-teaching assistant relationship.

Part Three, "Choosing and Using the Right Tools for Teaching and Learning", starts with Chapter Eleven dealing with matching teaching methods, with learning outcomes. Here, the teaching formats, methods, and moves that are known to students are introduced to help them get specific cognitive results. Chapters Twelve, Thirteen, Fourteen, Fifteen, Sixteen, and Seventeen describe practical instructional methods and present basic principles for establishing and managing them to make sure strong learning experiences are achieved. On the whole, they cover many new topics: using clickers (personal response system or classroom response system) to have a lecture with interactive learning values; teaching and motivating students to take good lecture notes; promoting polite remarks and controlling conflict during discussions; using a question model to advance discussion considering Bloom's hierarchy; posing Brookfield and Preskill's "momentum" questions; applying academic games; planning and reviewing your own simulations; making students familiar with small-group patterns; combining group processing and self-assessment into group work; and attending to the organization or implementation of group tests.

Part Four, "More Tools: Teaching Real-World Problem Solving", emphasize fundamental methods that are of great help in making students acquire various problem solving skills for different purposes, such as resolving the sort of open-ended realistic problems that good cases and problem-based learning present, solving closed-ended quantitative problems, and tackling challenging scientific questions in both lectures and labs. The emphasis of Chapter Eighteen is on all of the methods covered which fall under the general umbrella of inquiry-guided learning. This chapter describes the different definitions of inquiry-guided learning, its effectiveness, the best ways to implement it, various objects and modes of inquiry, and all variations on the inquiry-guided theme. Chapter Nineteen deals with the case method, its effectiveness, the appropriate subject matter, what makes a good case, types of cases, debriefing cases, and a postscript for pointers. Chapter Twenty explains problems-based learning, how it works, and good types of it and where to find them, its

effectiveness, and the feeling of students towards it. Chapter Twenty One speaks about quantitative reasoning and problem solving, so it begins with understanding students' problems with problems and then goes towards modeling expert reasoning, teaching the steps of problem solving, tutoring students out of bad habits of practicing poor problem solving, routinizing peer feedback, making problems more real and challenging, using the power of group learning, and accommodating new methods to traditional settings. Chapter Twenty Two focuses on problem solving in the sciences; consequently, it explains where science education falls short, how to help students learn science, how both the lecture and lab can be made into a meaningful learning experience, the essentials of lab safety and management, and finally why science education is so important. In sum, all the chapters of Part Four, somehow, want to say that peer assessment in quantitative problem solving, the principles of successful science instruction, and an inspiring array of recent innovations in science education are inquiry guided, problem focused, collaborative and more successful in promoting learning than the traditional lecture; although, some of these innovations necessitate minor changes in the traditional lecture, such as peer instruction, the case method, problem-based learning, just-in-time-teaching, and experimental demonstrations. The last point of this part is that students similarly benefit from labs that need inductive reasoning to get scientific principles and no routine problem solving.

Part Five, "Making Learning Easier", collects all sorts of activities, assignments, skill development lessons, ways through which material is presented, and technology applications which are useful in making students learn the material more. Chapter Twenty Three concentrates on why students do not do the readings, how we can equip and induce them to do the readings, specific tools for holding students accountable, and managing your workload. Chapter Twenty Four's title is Teaching Your Students to Think and Write in Your Discipline. For this reason, it uses several strategies, such as cross-disciplinary commonalities, critical thinking teaching through the discipline's meta-cognitive model, meta-cognitive differences among disciplines, ways to make students better thinkers and writers, and finally students' encouragement to write for their futures. Chapter Twenty Five deals with accommodating different learning styles. First, it starts with Kolb's learning styles model and experiential learning theory. Then, it explains Fleming and Mills's sensory-based learning style typology. Next, Felder and Silverman's index of learning styles are described. After that, parallels across learning style models are emphasized, and finally, it ends with multisensory, multi-method

teaching which is the most effective for all. Chapter Twenty Six is about how visuals are used to teach. Hence, it provides you with ways that visuals enhance learning, types of visuals for learning, and the future of visuals in teaching and learning. Chapter Twenty seven tells you how you should use instructional technology wisely. Therefore, it introduces some tools, such as reliable low-tech tools for the classroom, the choice of high-tech alternatives, learning management systems, lecture-related software, web resources, laptops in the wireless classroom, and web 2.0 tools for this purpose. In short, Part Five's strategies include ensuring students perform the readings, explaining how your discipline thinks, teaching in different modes and media, adding visual learning aids, and using technologies (both the traditional and modern) appropriately.

Part Six, "Assessing Learning Outcomes", guides you how to assess students' learning by using tests, activities, and assignments, and then how to evaluate teaching effectiveness and document it for review. Chapter Twenty Eight covers topics such as classroom assessment techniques, formative feedback, student portfolios and extending classroom assessment to classroom research, and the scholarship of teaching and learning. The main emphasis of Chapter Twenty Nine is on constructing summative assessments. So, it gives you some general testing guidelines, and then it makes you familiar with objective test items. Next, it concentrates on constructed response instruments, such as essay questions and writing assignments, and finally, it stresses that tests and assignments are two devices through which the ultimate teaching evaluations are done. Chapter Thirty has to do with preparing students for tests. As a result, three topics are addressed in this chapter, i.e., test preparation measures, anxiety-related measures, and what the effort is worth. Chapter Thirty focuses on grading summative assessments. To do this, it explains what grades mean, what the relationships between summative assessments and grading systems are, what the qualities of a sound grading system are, how constructed responses and papers are constructed, how lab reports are graded, how mechanics are graded quickly while ensuring students learn them, what outcome-based grading is, how students are helped to use your feedback to improve, and finally what the real meaning and limits of grades are. Chapter Thirty Two addresses evaluating and documenting teaching effectiveness. It discusses the following topics: definition and measurement of teaching effectiveness, student evaluation, peer, administrative, and self-evaluations, assessment of your effectiveness as a teacher, comprehensive approaches to faculty evaluation, and complexity of evaluating and documenting teaching effectiveness. What is essential to mention is that in Part Six, new

materials appear throughout the chapters, and other topics have been expanded or updated. As for the former case, writing multiple true-false items for tests, developing objective test items to assess higher-order thinking skills, etc. are good examples, and for the latter one, formative feedback methods, ways to prepare students for tests and the like are typical cases.

The last part of this book is Appendix which has been entitled *Instructional Support and Resources at Your Institution*. Unlike the earlier editions of this book, the information on the instructional support and resources that campuses typically suggest has been moved from the first chapter to the appendix.

To sum up, the reviewer comes up with this conclusion that the third edition of *Teaching at Its Best* by Dr. Nilson will be profitable for both veterans and novices since it gives them a powerful collection of ideas and tools, and practical suggestions for solving all of the problems one faces in different classes with different sizes, abilities, and motivation which shows its superiority over the first two editions. Additionally, new information on how we learn and how students develop, and innovations in instructional strategies complement the solid foundation set up in the first two editions.

POSTMODERNISM VS. MODERNISM IN IRANIAN NON- GOVERNMENTAL ENGLISH LANGUAGE INSTITUTES

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ABSTRACT

English language teaching has stepped in an unexplored territory of post-method during which teaching methods are regarded as inherently problematic. As entangling webs, teaching methods are assumed to have deprived teachers of their creativities and learners of using their different learning strategies. Conceiving the importance of this vital shift from method to postmethod in the field of ELT, the present paper aims at illuminating any meaningful relationships between teachers' method or post method-approach to teaching and variables such as teachers' gender, teaching experience, and their educational background. To this end, a three- section questionnaire reflecting the principles of postmethod was designed and administered to language teachers teaching at different levels in non-governmental language schools in 6 major cities in North-West part of Iran. Based on the data analysis of 162 returned questionnaire, it was found that using modern or postmodern approach to teaching English had no relationships with teachers' gender and teachers' field of study, but there was a slightly positive meaningful correlation between postmodern approach to teaching and teachers' experience. Based on the findings of the study, the paper has also offered some

pedagogical implications.

Key words: Teacher beliefs, post-method, method, ELT, Non-governmental language schools

1. Introduction

Considering changing demands and aspirations of the new generations and the undeniable reality of global village, English language is becoming more and more versatile and unpredictably affecting the nations all over the world. As Pandey (as cited in Ramanujam, 2011) realistically construed that English language today is almost a compulsory second language and the non-native nations and the governments have to adapt their understandings and opinions about this language.

In order to ascertain the role of English language in our time and juxtapose the diversity of perspectives and discussions about the spread of English language, Pennycook (2000) describes six frameworks of comparisons:

The first framework is colonial celebratory in which the flourishing spread of English language is regarded highly good and necessary for all people. Laissez-faire liberalism is the other framework in which the language is not idolized and people have the freedom to choose to learn it or not. The third is linguistic imperialism by which English language is constituted as colonizing and homogenizing the minorities, depriving them from their identity and culture and languages. The fourth framework is language ecology and language rights as stated by Van Lier (2004), the language should be adopted and modified with respect to realities of the adopting context at the same time emphasizing the idea that human rights should be prioritized and the spread of English language should abide with them. In the fifth framework Linguistic hybridity is concerned about this reality that there are many English languages which can co-exist under the umbrella of world Englishes. The last one and the backbone of the current research is postcolonial performativity insisting that, in the postmodern era in coordination between local and global forces the resistance and appropriation of English language are integrated as the accepted norm useful for periphery communities without encumbering their entrance into global community.

2. Postmodernism and post-method

In addition to the contrary view points about English language itself, the notion of language teaching methods also has gone through laudable and turbulent changes. Once regarded as highly trustworthy and efficient and their proponents were in the search for the best method with a universal claim, cookie-cutter approach, based on scientific disciplines and teacher's proof (Fahim & Pishghadam, 2009) but nowadays methods are thought to be highly controversial which not only deprive teachers of their creativity but the language learners of their learning strategies and the context of its local features and characteristics (Hall, 2011).

According to Finch (2010) the new initiative movements happening in ELT are the direct consequences of postmodernism with these main characteristics:

- i. Crossing of borders (breaking down of barriers)
- ii. De-colonization (diversification and regionalism)
- iii. Decentralization (lateral, rather than hierarchical decision-making)
- iv. Deconstruction (questioning traditional assumptions about certainty, identity, and truth)
- v. Eclecticism (the borrowing and mixing of features from different systems and fields)
- vi. Pastiche (imitating the previous works of others, often with satirical intent)
- vii. Relativism (conceptions of time, space, truth and moral values are not absolute but are relative to the persons or groups holding them).
- viii. Self-contradiction (duplicity; the conscious making of self-undermining statements).
- ix. Self-reference and self-reflexiveness (use of meta-language and self-constructing forms)(p, 5).

Based on Hall (2011), postmodernism regards reality as a fragmented concept and personal identity as unstable, affected and changed by variety of cultural and social factors. Hutcheon (1989) considers postmodern's initial feature as to de-naturalize many of uncritically accepted concepts of our way of life like capitalism, patriarchy, and liberal humanism and regards them as 'cultural' - made by us, not given to us. Even the concept of culture is different in postmodernism, while culture in modernism is relatively stable and rigid to changes, in postmodernism they are realities of every society and vastly diverse. As Misha (2005) implies that permanent and irreducible pluralism of cultures, communal traditions, ideologies, is the main asset of postmodernism and as they are plural they cannot be

arranged in an evolutionary format, one being inferior or superior to the others or classified as right or wrong solutions to our problems.

Out-dating modernism and bringing in new trends in almost all branches of literature, science and technology, postmodernism has its own implications in the field of ELT, including the six deaths according to Finch(2010) which are: the death of native speaker: the idea that there are other newly developed acceptable accents and pronunciations acceptable. The death of structuralism believing in the idea that learning language is for communication rather than translation and grammar. The death of the teacher: The advent of student centered class and teaching based on learner's needs put an end to teacher dominated education. The death of imperialism: the time of colonialism is over and we are in globalization era in which there is different voices to be heard. The death of method: the search for the ideal method suitable for all times and all learners in all places is over. The death of EFL: English language has gained new status as international and lingua Franca language it is not foreign language any more but the international language.

Kumaravadivelu (2006) believing in the end of methods and the new era of sailing in uncharted waters for ELT as a profession, considers postmethod not as the dead end of ELT but just a new millennium for ELT to venture beyond methods by adopting three main guide lines for post-method conditions: the first is that instead of continuously searching for the alternative method we are looking for an alternative for method. The second guideline is the autonomy for teacher in which he is the one who based on the context of teaching designs a theory and can approve or reject it. The last one is principled pragmatism which conceives how self observation, self-analysis, and self-evaluation on behalf of the teacher can shape and reshape classroom learning.

Growing competition for dominance is another feature of postmodernism among variety of forces and method and its rivalry postmethod are not exceptions in this era. With this idea in mind postmodernism cannot be understood as the closure and an end to method but an appreciation and understanding of the limitations and pitfalls of method and replacing them with newly developed postmethod solutions to transcend these obstacles. Believing in this feature of postmodernism, Bell (2005) comments that method and postmethod in a struggle against each other and in a complementary influencing atmosphere can liberate ELT in practical aspects.

Postmethod is considered to be the era of replacement in which teacher centered education is replaced by learner-centered one. While in teacher centered education knowledge is transmitted from teacher to learner and he is passive, but in student- centered education, students construct knowledge actively by gathering and synthesizing. In student-centered system teaching and assessments are together while in teacher-centered they are separated and the class atmosphere instead of collaborations and supportive is competitive and individualistic (Huba & Freed 2000).

Another main inspirational asset of postmethod should be mentioned as teacher -liberating movement by which pedagogy is not divided between theory providers and theory appliers (Larsen-freeman, 2005a). Since in method era teachers were just the enforcing power of the theoretical methods provided by linguistics and out-of context professionals they had nothing to do about the bases of their practice, but postmodernism smashed great theories and let teachers theorize from their teaching and teach based on their theories (Kumaravadivelu, 2006).

According to Kumaravadivelu (1994) postmodernism is regarded as the initiating of postmethod era in ELT in which very big changes beginning to revolutionize the whole field of language teaching and learning leading to the concrete belief that unless we break the entangling web of method we would look for the unavailable ideal method for the rest of ELT life.

3. Pedagogic parameters of postmethod

As stated by Kumaravadivelu (2006), postmethod conditions bravely encourage us to reconsider every aspect of ELT which we think can be affected by learner and learning context, so all of the parameters of postmethod can be summarized in three dimensions as the pedagogic parameters of postmethod which are: Particularity, practicality and possibility

The parameter of particularity: Particularity is regarded as the cornerstone of postmethod pedagogy by Kumaravadivelu believing that every pedagogy belonging to postmethod era "must be sensitive to a particular group of teachers teaching a particular group of learners pursuing a particular set of goals within a particular institutional context embedded in a particular socio-cultural milieu" (Kumaravadivelu, 2006, p. 538). It is in a sharp contradiction with this aspect of method-based teaching which considers the same teaching

materials for different teaching context and different learners without recognizing the variety of other specific affecting factors.

The parameter of practicality: This parameter outlines the relationship between teaching and the theory of teaching and is closely related to the sense of plausibility (Prabhu, 1990) that teacher may have of his teaching in the actual class. In a nutshell this parameter is what Hall (2011) mentions "The superiority of theorists over teachers is broken, with teachers encouraged to theorize from their practices and put in to practice their own theories"(p. 100).

The parameter of possibility: The reality that to what extent our understanding of ourselves and our society and the world we live in are actually affected by the language we speak or the language we learn has been a concern of sociopolitical aspect of ELT in postmethod era, the idea that language shapes the power relationships and social structures of its given society.

4. New era: new language learners

Learners in postmethod era are regarded the unique individuals with unique learning styles, in postmethod time they are allowed to explore their learning cognitive styles in order to learn better so they have to recognize their learning strategies and styles in order to know their strong points and weak points as language learners. They should improving their language learning skills by applying those of the successful ones and look for suitable opportunities to be additionally exposed to language beyond what they get in the classroom, for example, through library resources, movies, magazines, social networks like face-book, Internet. They have to have a strong drive to communicate and collect information on a specific project they are working on; and benefit from opportunities to communicate with competent users of the language (Kumaravadivelu, 2006; Kim & Axelord, 2007; Hall, 2011; Dörnyei, 2009; Ponniah, 2009; Brown, 2007).

5. New era: new language teachers

The main roles and responsibilities given to language teachers and language teacher trainers can be as: helping learners improve bottom up peacemaking through even distribution of power and respecting learners' role and culture as accepted ones (Finch, 2004). Using his-her prior as well as potential knowledge and work autonomously in applying these in the contexts of restrictions and limitations imposed by different schools and institutions Kumaravadivelu (2006). Trying to be reflective on what he teaches and the weak and strong points of his teaching and their reasons (Richards 2003). Embarking on new approaches and strategies of teaching in order to adopt continual

process of self-development and believing in learners autonomy and adapting his teaching on the principles leading to it (Benson, 2001). Believing in the principle that teaching is socially- constrained activity in which local, social and cultural and many other factors and values determine what is suitable to be taught or not (Hall, 2009), and at last respecting and accepting the learner diversity and their learning strategies and avoiding an all-inclusive package for the whole class as stated in Hall (2011).

Believing in the idea that ELT cannot be context-neutral, numerous contextual factors based on Stern (1983) are regarded influential like: linguistic factors, whether English is already being used within the learner's local, regional or national community. Socio-cultural factors showing perceived economic, political and cultural status of English language. Historical-political factors reflect any shifts made in political and governmental language policies towards British Empire and imperialism or USA. Geographical factors are closeness or remoteness of a given English learning environment to Britain, USA and European countries and so on. Economic and technological developments illuminating the degree of English language affecting development of a country, the cost of ELT materials and technological equipment and the society's being affluent or impoverished, and at last educational factors are elements like school age at which learners start language learning, the role of other languages, number of hours tuition in the schools, teachers educational background and experience of teaching.

Postmethod has recently been a research topic in Iranian context. Akbari (2008) concludes that in order to stop monolithic approach of methods, future guide lines of ELT should be established based on ethnographical features and real life of the classrooms. Atai & Gheitanchian (2009) arrived at these final points that there were no meaningful relationships between language teachers' positive or negative view on postmethod teaching and their students' achievements. Akbari & Moradkhani (2010) suggest that highly experienced teachers are more successful in managing learner-centered ELT and Ghaffar & Davari (2011) in their research found that imperialistic approach to English language in Iran and its implications like native-like accent and being worried about cultural threats it can have for native culture is still dominant.

Accepting context-sensitivity as the backbone of postmethod pedagogy (Kumaravadivelu, 2006; Finch, 2010) language schools are inseparable part of socio-cultural context and the idea of ecology of

language learning and teaching proposed by Van Lier (2004) reflect this principle of postmethod era. Since most recent studies concerning postmethod in Iran were done in governmental language schools or university classes, and never studied teachers' variables and their relationships with their approach to teaching in private language institutes as the main sector of English education in Iran (Gorjian, 2006; Riazi & Mosalanejad, 2010; Ghorbani, 2010), the current study approached ELT in Iranian context from this point of view.

6. Methodology

In order to illuminate the relationship between method or postmethod approach to teaching and teachers' gender and fields of study and teaching experience, EFL teachers in non-governmental language institutes were identified out of the total population of EFL teachers in East and West Azerbaijan provinces of Iran. A total of 250 questionnaires were administered through face to face contact, Email and language institutes' administration and 162 were filled out, thus, the response rate to them was 64 %.

6.1 Research questions

With these in mind the following research questions were put forward in the quantitative part of the study through a questionnaire:

Q1. Is there any meaningful relationship between EFL teachers' gender and their method or postmethod approach to teaching in Iranian private institutes?

Q2. Is there any meaningful relationship between EFL teachers' teaching experience and their method or postmethod approach to teaching in Iranian private institutes?

Q3. Is there any meaningful relationship between EFL teachers' fields of study and their method or postmethod approach to teaching in ELT in Iranian private institutes?

Based on the research questions three null-hypotheses were put forward

6.2 Participants

The participants of this survey aged from 21 to 55, they shared two different linguistic and cultural backgrounds namely Kurdish and Turkish but they all were quite fluent in Persian as the official language commonly used in Iran. They were from West and East Azerbaijan provinces from cities of Urmia, Bokoan, Khoy, Mahabad, Salmas and Tabriz.

Table1. Characteristics of participants

		Number of teacher
Gender	male	74
	female	88
Experience	1-3 years	54
	More than 3years	108
Fields of study	English teaching	78
	English literature	48
	Other fields	36
Educational Qualifications	MA	66
	BA	94
	PhD	2

6.3 Instruments and procedure

In order to elicit information on the relationships between method or postmethod approach to teaching and factors of teachers' gender, fields of study and at last teaching experience a questionnaire was constructed and reviewed several times. For this purpose item pool was designed based on a thoroughly studying of the most relevant and up-to date literature review of postmethod pedagogy and the items were discussed one-by- one with the supervisor and advisor of the research and sent to a well know researcher in this field, Dr. Finch, for his comments on its validity, subsequently the items were put into a three-section questionnaire and the pilot study was done. Subsequently necessary revisions were made to make problematic items easier to understand and it was decided to allow teachers to answer to the questions in Persian as piloting indicated some teachers had difficulty in expressing themselves in English. For its validity the experts' views were used (4 university lectures commented on it) and for reliability Cronbach Alpha coefficient was measured using SPSS as 0.738 which according to Dörnyei (2007) was good. The instruments in a booklet, containing a page on the main principles and guide lines of postmethod and the purpose of the study and a request for participants, were distributed and data were collected over a 7-week period.

6.4 Material and data analysis

The results of the questionnaire were analyzed using the SPSS statistical package. The attending teachers who had answered open-ended questions were numerically coded and the answers were subjected to content analysis, collected data were interpreted. Frequencies of occurrence of ideas were counted and recurring responses of different participants were noted. In this study data was

collected by means of a questionnaire and three open- ended questions. To explore the first, second and third research questions the analysis was done using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and the statistical procedures like t-test and ANOVA were applied. For descriptive statistics participants' reflections were analyzed qualitatively and tables and pie-charts were designed alongside with frequencies of the answers and percentages of them in relation to the others.

7. Results

First research question: relationship between method or postmethod approach to teaching and teachers gender.

Group Statistics

	learning	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
teaching male		61	1.1259E2	19.84051	2.54032
female		63	1.1365E2	14.08403	1.77442

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variance		t-test for Equality of Means				
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
teaching	Equal variances assumed	4.028	.047	-.344	122	.731	-1.06063	3.08210
	Equal variances not assumed			-.342	107.961	.733	-1.06063	3.09867

Since in t-test results, if the p-value for the t is more than 0.05, it means that there is not a significant difference between the two groups. However, if the p-value is less than 0.05, it means that there is a significant difference between the two groups. The result of the t-test shows that there is not any significant difference between the two

Group Statistics

Learning	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
1 to 3 years	43	1.1674E2	20.08446	3.06285
more than 3 years	83	1.1130E2	14.92888	1.63866

gender groups: $t(122) = -0.344$; $p > 0.05$.

Therefore, the null hypothesis of lack of difference between the two gender groups with regard to postmodernism is accepted.

Second research question was to ascertain any meaningful relationship between teachers' experience and their approach to teaching in terms of method or postmethod.

ANOVA

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variance		t-test for Equality of Means				
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
Teaching	Equal variances assumed	3.617	.041	1.719	124	.051	5.44298	3.16651

ANOVA

teaching					
Equal variance	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	331.309	2	165.655	.563	.571
Within Groups	35620.626	121	294.385		
Total	35951.935	123			

Since the p-value for the t-test is 0.05, the null hypothesis of the lack of difference between the two groups is rejected: $t(124) = 1.719$; $p = 0.05$.

Based on the analytical referential teachers with more than three years experience were more postmethod in their approach to language teaching, but since $p = .051$ their differences cannot be that much high and it can be affected by many other factors affecting the results.

The third research question was going to make clear the relationship between teachers' method or postmethod approach to teaching and their fields of study.

Based on analytical inferential and the p-value for the F ratio of 0.563 are 0.571. If the p-value of F is more than 0.05, F is not statistically significant. In other words, the results of the ANOVA analysis show that there is not a significant difference among the three fields of study because the p-value is more than 0.05: $F(2, 121) = 0.563$; $p > 0.05$. so the third null hypothesis is approved.

8. Discussion

The preceding analysis of the data gathered through a questionnaire indicates the status quo of teaching in private language institutes in Iran. Although our findings may not be readily generalisable to other parts of the country due to many factors like the number of participants little differences are expected. The following discussion will consider research questions one by one.

Although the current research showed that more experienced teachers were more towards postmethod teaching, their superiority was not that much high. Based on other researches done in the Iranian context, too the findings can ratify that in our context experience is not accompanied with knowledge and self study or being aware of up-to-date ELT literature and TESOL courses offered in universities in BA and MA levels or in-service educational workshops in language institutes failed to narrow down the gap between ELT in practice and

in theory as stated in Hashemi (2011). ELT in Iran is too much field dependent, with its less confident teachers not able to change their old and out of date teaching methods, because of barriers they face in language institutes or even learners who have experienced learning in traditional ways in other subjects in addition to English language classes. At last the teaching context of private and governmental language schools, in which the teaching atmosphere is standstill with no need on behalf of teachers to make changes or feel the necessity of them (Hazratzad & Gheitanchian, 2009), are very much alike and teachers have just changed the textbooks not teaching strategies.

Postmethod or method driven language teaching and teachers' gender: the finding of the current research indicated no meaningful relations between method or postmethod to teaching and teacher's gender and it is with the same line with the initiation of gender-neutral education systems or equal-gender education of postmethod era. Postmodernism as the revolutionary movement against what was regarded as traditional and stereotyped systems, preferring one gender over the other, has specialized no priorities or advantages for any of the genders. In the review of literature of its main proponents like Kumaravadivelu (2003b, 2006); Finch (2010); Brown (2007); Richards (2003b) have never preferred one gender over the other and it seems certain that male and female teachers are regarded as the equal agents of postmethod era.

Method or postmethod approach to teaching and teachers' fields of study was dealt with in the third research question. The data analysis revealed that there was no difference between the main academically English language related ones (teaching and literature) and the other fields of study. These possible explanations look reasonable that because just like the ministerial educational systems, private language institutes are equally rigid and whatever major the teachers have does not make any difference since they all have to accept the dominant teaching of the schools and abide with them. Maybe the pre-service or in service courses like TESOL, TEFL in universities or workshops in language schools have not had that much influence on their graduates to change their attitudes toward teaching in postmethod era and although there may have been postmethod theoretically presented in the pre-service or TESOL -TEFL courses in universities in our country but the actual teaching in the universities is still teacher centered and method like one, so how can method based teaching result in postmethod one as mentioned in Hashemi (2011). Educational culture as stated in Akbari (2008) in our country is still in

method era despite theoretically entered postmethod, but we have a long way to make theories practical.

The last point to be reiterated here is that the researchers are aware of this point that the findings of this study are just teachers' beliefs and ideas rather than what actually happened in the real classroom so it cannot be easily generalized as the real teaching in our context, but at least for the pedagogical implications the study can support the principle of providing gender-neutral policies in hiring teaching staff and that when it comes to teaching experience the slogan of 'the more, the better' should be handled cautiously and even teachers' educational background cannot guarantee their approach to teaching based on newly developed criteria.

9. Conclusion

ELT like many other fields of science and technology is going through lots of unpredictable changes and postmethod as the eminent result of postmodernism in ELT has given it enough power and incitement to pass through barriers and make it as more needs- based and context sensitive as possible, since it cannot be neutral to the realities of different context. In the light of the findings of the current study which was carried out in Iranian non-governmental language institutes, it can be concluded that teachers' method or postmethod approach to teaching has no correlation with teachers' gender and teachers' educational background but the same findings revealed that highly experienced teachers had a little more postmethod approach to teaching although their superiority was not as higher as expected. In its passage towards postmethod principles as this survey studied ELT has weak points and strong points as well. Globalization, industrialization, cross-cultural communications and social networks like internet, face-book can be regarded as the pushing forces of postmethod ahead, but traditional and method based education not only of teachers' but of students' and unrealistic language policy of governments can be regarded as pulling postmethod approach to teaching backwards. Postmethod has proposed that no grand theory can provide the needs and demands of every locality in every time and as this study achieved, in order to make it practical not only the teachers but also all related sectors like teacher education system, government language policies, language institutes strategies have to adapt themselves with it since it defies any top-down imposed strategies but accepts the realities of bottom-up pedagogies and what happens in real classes. The complex picture presented here is sufficient to suggest further research in practical aspects of postmethod pedagogy.

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THE EFFECT OF REACTIVE VS. STUDENT-INITIATED FOCUS ON FORM ON EFL LEARNERS' PRODUCTION OF UPTAKE

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated incidental focus on form by comparing the relative effects of two types of focus on form, namely reactive vs. student-initiated preemptive focus on form on learners' uptake in Iranian EFL context. To obtain the required data, twenty hours of naturally occurring meaning focused L2 lessons were observed in two classes of female adults. A total of 371 focus on form episodes (FFE) were identified and transcribed. These FFEs were then categorized in terms of student-initiated and reactive episodes. Categories of uptake and successful uptake following these FFEs were also identified and transcribed. The chi-square analysis was used to investigate the relationship between two types of FFE (i.e. reactive vs. student-initiated FFE) and uptake. Logistic regression analysis was also used to predict which Types of FFE may affect the production of uptake and its successfulness. The results indicated that learner uptake was generally high and successful. The amount of uptake was high in student-initiated FFEs. There was a higher frequency of successful uptake following reactive FFEs. Finally, the implications of such variation for both research and teaching were discussed.

KEYWORDS: FFE; Incidental focus on form; Preemptive focus on form; Reactive focus on form; Student-initiated focus on for; Uptake

1. Introduction

Meaningful communication and communicative activities has recently emerged and rapidly attracted much attention in the field of language learning. It is increasingly acknowledged that creating opportunities for students to interact has important consequences for second language acquisition (Long, 1996; Pica, 1999; Willis & Willis, 2007). According to Long (1985), acquisition is facilitated when learners negotiate for meaning while communication breakdown occurs by restructuring their interaction in order to reach mutual understanding. However, many educators in the field of SLA have recognized that learners who learned a second language through purely communicative classes do not gain high levels of proficiency (Higgs & Clifford, 1982). Also research revealed that learners must improve their grammatical accuracy in the target language (e.g., Hatch, 1978; Long, 1996; White, 1987). This approach is what Long (1991) calls focus on form. Focus on form, as defined by Long (1991), "overtly draws students' attention to linguistic elements as they arise incidentally in lessons whose overriding focus is on meaning or communication" (pp. 45-46). Focus on form has attracted the attention of SLA researchers and theorists by suggesting that it can enable learners to develop linguistic accuracy, hence creating the conditions for interlanguage restructuring to take place (Long & Robinson, 1998; Doughty, 2001; Farrokhi & Gholami, 2007). Focus on form also provides learners with the opportunity to produce 'pushed output' (i.e. the amount of uptake) which stretches learners' linguistic resources to express their intended meaning both accurately and appropriately in the target language (Swain, 1995; Swain & Lapkin, 1995; Swain, 2000; Farrokhi & Gholami, 2007). Ellis (2001) makes a distinction between planned focus on form, which involves the pre-selection of a limited number of linguistic forms and targeting them through meaning-focused activities, and incidental focus on form, which involves focusing on diverse linguistic structures as they arise incidentally during meaning-focused lessons. Furthermore, incidental focus on form can be either reactive or preemptive. Reactive focus on form refers to those occasions during which a learner commits an error in his or her production which is corrected mostly by the teacher or sometimes by other learners. In contrast, preemptive focus on form refers to those moments, when either the teacher or a student chooses to make a specific form the topic of the discourse. The learner's reaction to the teacher's feedback during a focus on form episode is called uptake. According to Ellis, Basturkmen, & Loewen (2001a), uptake is a learner response "that occurs where learners have demonstrated a gap in their knowledge (e.g., by making an error, or by asking a question)" (p. 286). When a learner repairs his or her

erroneous utterance (i.e. reactive focus on form) or demonstrates an understanding of a linguistic item (i.e. student-initiated focus on form), he or she produces a successful uptake. However, when the learner makes no attempt or fails to repair an erroneous utterance, or not demonstrates understanding of the targeted linguistic item, his or her uptake is unsuccessful. Several studies have investigated the effectiveness of planned focus on form in second language classrooms (e.g., Doughty & Williams, 1998; Long et al., 1998). However, very few studies have examined the effects of incidental focus on form (Williams, 2001). In other words, this area is very little researched and there is a need to empirically investigate incidental focus on form especially when it comes to an EFL context such as Iran. In the present study, an attempt was made to investigate how two different types of incidental focus on form, namely reactive vs. student-initiated focus on form episodes may affect the production of uptake and its successfulness. The following research questions have been formed for which the current study seeks to find answer.

RQ1: Does providing two types of FFE, namely, reactive and student-initiated FFE have any significant effect on EFL learners' production of uptake?

RQ2: Which types of FFE (i.e. reactive or student-initiated) is more effective for the production of successful uptake?

2. Literature Review

Several empirical studies have been done to investigate the effects of different types of focus on form in second language classrooms in order to determine which type are more or less effective for language learning (e.g., Doughty & Williams, 1998; Long et al., 1999). However, an issue of key importance to focus on form is the presence of uptake, which is defined as learners' responses to the provision of feedback after either an erroneous utterance or a query about a linguistic item within the context of meaning-focused language activities (Loewen, 2004). This term has recently entered the field of second language acquisition, and very few studies have investigated its occurrence and its potential value. Especially in the Iranian EFL context, the scarcity of empirical studies conducted in the realm of incidental focus on form and uptake is even more tangible.

Uptake has come to the attention of SLA researchers almost recently, and a small number of studies have investigated its occurrence and its possible effects on language learning. Studies of uptake have been mainly conducted in immersion contexts (Lyster & Ranta, 1997) and

ESL contexts (Mackay & Philip, 1998; Ellis et al., 2001a&b; Pica, 2002; Loewen, 2004). To the best of the researcher's knowledge, the only published study investigating student-initiated focus on form in Iranian EFL classroom context is Farrokhi & Gholami (2007). These studies (Lyster & Ranta, 1997; Mackay & Philip, 1998; Ellis et al., 2001a&b; Pica, 2002; Loewen, 2004; Farrokhi & Gholami, 2007) have also shown varying levels of uptake production. Lyster and Ranta (1997), in their study of four classes (18.3 hrs) of Grade 4 French immersion lessons in Canada, reported that (55%) of reactive focus on form resulted in uptake, with repair (successful uptake) occurring after only (27%) of the feedback moves. In another study by Mackay and Philip (1998), they reported that only (33%) of the recasts were repeated or modified, leaving (67%) of the recasts to be followed by topic continuation on the part of the learner. Oliver (1995), in a study of primary school children performing an information exchange task, reported an uptake rate of (35%). Pica (2002), in a study investigating discussion activities in two content-based classes in a university-based English language institute, found that limited opportunities existed for either reactive focus on form or modified student output (uptake). Ellis et al. (2001a, 2001b), in their study of two ESL classes in New Zealand, found that pre-emptive focus on form constituted (52%) of the FFEs that occurred in 12 hours of meaning-focused instruction. In their study, learner-initiated focus on form accounted for just over (38%) of the episodes. The frequency of uptake following this type of FFE was (86.3%) with (71%) rate of successful uptake. Loewen (2004) conducted a study at a private language school in Auckland, New Zealand, with a total of 12 classes with 12 different teachers and 118 students participating. A total of 1373 FFEs were identified in the 32 hours of audio recorded communicative oriented instruction. 365 (26.5%) of these FFEs were student-initiated. There was a (73%) level of uptake and a somewhat lower level of successful uptake (58%). Farrokhi and Gholami (2007), in examining the relationship between type of FFE and uptake in Iranian EFL context, found that (15.9%) of the FFEs were initiated by students. However, they did not count frequency of uptake following student-initiated focus on form. Neither did they investigate the quality of uptake (its successfulness) in their study. Ellis et al. (2001a, 2001b) and Farrokhi and Gholami (2007) investigated teacher-initiated FFEs as well as reactive and student-initiated FFEs. However, following Loewen (2004), the current study does not include teacher-initiated FFEs because the linguistic structures targeted in them do not necessarily reflect actual gaps in students' linguistic knowledge; rather, teacher-initiated FFEs reflect teachers' perceptions of gaps in students' linguistic knowledge (Loewen, 2004). However, in student-initiated preemptions, the gap is

presumably real (Ellis et al., 2001b). Student-initiated focus on form has not been researched in Iranian EFL context; consequently, this study aims to investigate this type of focus on form as well as reactive one and subsequently compares their resultant uptake and its successfulness.

3. Method

3.1 Participants

The participants in this study were 40 Iranian EFL learners from two intact classes, all female students with a mean age of 20 years. The type of instruction they received in their program consisted of meaning-based tasks and activities. Drawing on the research design of the previous incidental focus on form studies (Ellis et al., 2001a, 2001b; Loewen 2004, 2005; Farrokhi and Gholami, 2007) no experimental and control group were also determined in the present study. Consequently, this study investigates the intact EFL classrooms, including all learners in each class as study participants.

3.2. Instruments

An MP4 recorder is used to record the oral interaction between teacher and students in two intact meaning-centered EFL classrooms. After recording the required data, the FFEs are identified, prescribed and codified. The kappa reliability application from SPSS software is used to determine the reliability of FFEs codification as well as their identification. A detailed account of the remaining two other applications, namely chi-square and logistic regression used to analyze the obtained data.

3.3 Data collection procedure

The source of data for present study is the oral interaction between teacher and students in two meaning -centered EFL classroom. The English proficiency of the learners participating in this study is intermediate which has been measured by an in-house placement test administered by the institution. A wireless mp4 audio recorder is used to record these classroom interactions. A total of 20 hours of meaning-focused classroom interaction are collected including 10 hours of recording devoted to each class. An external microphone is attached to the teacher to record the interaction between individual students and teacher as well as the interaction between students as a whole class and the teacher. The researcher is a non participant observer present during all of the data collection procedures. The only information provided to teachers and students is that the study aims to investigate classroom interaction during meaning-focused lessons. Therefore, they do not know the precise purpose of the study.

Drawing on the definition provided by Pica, Kanagy, & Falodun (1993), and Loewen (2004), meaning-focused activities will be defined as activities with the primary goal of exchanging information, rather than learning about or practicing specific linguistic forms. This definition will not be given to the teachers in order to prevent any change in their teaching methodology. One advantage of such an approach is providing the necessary conditions to observe and probe into naturally-occurring classroom interaction that is not specifically designed for research purposes (van Lier, 1988).

3.4 Data analysis procedure

The focus of this section is a description of the procedures in analyzing the obtained data. The data analysis procedure of the present study is comprised of two stages. In the first stage, an attempt was made to identify and transcribe some specific moments in classroom interactions in which the participants briefly shift their attention from meaning to form, i.e. focus on form episodes (FFE). Therefore, the focus on form episodes made up the primary unit of analysis in the present study. Then, a sample of ten percent of the whole data was identified by a second rater to determine the inter-rater reliability of FFEs' identification. In the second stage, the identified FFEs were coded according to the type of FFE (whether it is teacher- reactive or student-initiated focus on form), the presence of uptake and its successfulness. Again at this stage, ten percent of the data was coded by a second rater to determine the inter-rater reliability of codification. After the completion of these two stages, the statistical procedures including chi-square and logistic regression were used. To obtain these inferential statistics, the frequency of FFEs and their characteristics (i.e. reactive vs. student-initiated FFEs, the resultant uptake and its successfulness) were put into SPSS software and the results were obtained. These procedures are fully discussed in the following subsections.

3.4.1 Identification of focus on form episodes

The first phase in data analysis involves the identification of focus on form episodes (FFE). Focus on form episode (FFE) is defined by Ellis et al. (2001a) as a discourse instigated by a gap in learner's language knowledge either by making an error or query about a linguistic form and ends "due to a change in topic back to message or another focus on form" (p.294). In this study, an FFE refers to either the time when a student makes a linguistic error in his or her production and is subsequently corrected by the teacher (reactive focus on form episode) or when a student asks about a linguistic form (student-initiated focus on form episode). Some studies (Ellis et al., 2001; Farrokhi & Gholami, 2007) investigated teacher-initiated focus on form together with

reactive and student-initiated focus on form; however, following Loewen (2004), the current study did not investigate teacher-initiated focus on form because the linguistic forms raised in these episodes do not reflect the actual gap in learner's interlanguage; rather, they reflect the teacher's impression of the cause of the gaps in learners' linguistic knowledge. An example of an FFE identified in the recorded data of current study is presented below:

Example 1

Student: speak your family.

Teacher: pardon?!

Student: speak your family members.

Teacher: talk to your family members.

Student: yeah.

The above episode emerged as the class members were discussing living without TV. This FFE began when a student had just used an inappropriate verb (pragmatic error) which was immediately addressed by the teacher, first in the form of clarification request and then corrected by providing recast. The student acknowledged the teacher's corrective feedback and they switched back to the discussion of living without TV.

A sample of ten percent of the whole data was identified by a second rater to determine the inter-rater reliability of FFEs' identification. Then, inter-rater reliability was established, the results of which appear in the following table.

Table 1 Kappa reliability for FFE Identification

	Value	Asymp. Std. Error ^a	Approx. T ^b	Approx. Sig.
Measure of Agreement Kappa	0.797	.111	4.517	.000
N of Valid Cases	32			

a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.

b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.

As is shown in Table 1, the kappa reliability for identification of FFEs was calculated and the result was 0.797 and the approximate significance was .000 < 0.05 suggesting that there was a high level of agreement between the two raters.

3.4.2 Codification of FFEs

After identification of FFEs, they were coded according to the type of FFE (whether it is teacher- reactive or student-initiated focus on form), the presence of uptake and its successfulness. Following (Loewen, 2004), in the present data, those focus on form episodes which involved the learners' erroneous utterances followed by the teacher corrective feedback were coded as reactive FFEs. The following example, taken from the data of the present study may better typify a reactive FFE.

Example 2

Student: I study for my physic

Teacher: oh, physics

Student: yes, physics

This episode happened while a student was talking about his leisure time. He produced the non-target-like lexical item *physic* for "physics". The teacher stopped him immediately and provided him with corrective feedback in the form of recast. This is a typical example of FFEs coded as reactive in the current study.

In contrast, preemptive focus on form occurs because something in the discourse, other than a learner error has motivated attention to a form (Ellis et al., 2001a). In other words, learners' explicit questions about a linguistic form while no linguistic error has occurred are a manifestation of student-initiated preemptive FFE. The discourse structures of student-initiated FFEs are different from reactive FFEs as the teacher's move in a student-initiated FFE is not a corrective feedback move but a response move. In the present study, those episodes in which a student asked a question about a specific linguistic item in the middle of meaning-focused activities were coded as student-initiated FFE. Consider the following example taken from the data of the present study:

Example 3

Student: what's the name of the place in airplane that pilots sit?

Teacher: cockpit

Student: cockpit...pilots smoke in cockpit.

This student was an air force staff, and as he was talking about the restrictions on smoking among military forces, he paused and asked the teacher about the lexical item "cockpit". As evident in the example, the learner did not commit an error; he queried about a

lexical item that he did not know and the teacher's move was not a corrective feedback move but a response move. Thus the discourse structure of this example is different from Example 3.2 and was coded as student-initiated FFE.

Uptake is another important component of FFE codification. Drawing on the definition of successful uptake provided by Ellis et al. (2001a), in the present study successful uptakes were coded as those student's moves which make use of the information provided in either the teacher feedback move (as in reactive FFEs) or the teacher's response move (as in student-initiated FFEs), as in the learner's uptake in Example 3.3. On the other hand, those student's moves which did not successfully incorporate the information provided by the teacher either in reaction to the student's error or his query about a linguistic form, were coded as unsuccessful uptake, as in Example 1.

In order to determine the reliability of FFEs codification, a second rater coded a sample of ten percent of the total data. In the following table, the results of the kappa reliability of codification are presented.

Table 2. Reliability for FFE Codification

	Value	Asymp. Std. Error ^a	Approx. T ^b	Approx. Sig.
Measure of Agreement Kappa	0.697	.135	4.136	.000
N of Valid Cases	32			

a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.

b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.

According to table 2, the kappa reliability, calculated for the codification of FFEs was .697 with the approximate significance of .000 < 0.05, showing that the two raters had a high level of agreement in FFEs codification.

3.4.3 Statistical procedures

After identification and codification of FFEs, the total frequency of FFEs and uptake in general, and the number of reactive vs. student-initiated FFEs as well as the amount of successful uptake in particular

were calculated. The SPSS software was applied for the calculation of inferential statistics. Chi-square was used to investigate the relationship between uptake and type of focus on form. Although chi-square investigates the association of variables, it does not indicate causality (Loewen, 2004). In order to investigate causality in the data, a binary logistic regression analysis was performed (Hatch & Lazaraton, 1991; Saito, 1999).

4. Results

4.1 Focus on form as reactive vs. student-initiated FFEs

Out of the two classes, FFEs and uptake moves were determined for the entire sessions as well as each separate session. A total of 371 FFEs occurred in the twenty hours of meaning-focused lessons in these two intact EFL classrooms. Table 4.1 shows the occurrence of FFEs and uptake in each session of Class A and B.

Table 3. Frequency of FFEs and uptake for each class

Class A	FFEs	Uptake	Class B	FFEs	Uptake
Session 1	21	21	Session 1	24	21
Session 2	19	17	Session 2	26	25
Session 3	29	24	Session 3	29	24
Session 4	31	28	Session 4	32	26
Session 5	20	17	Session 5	20	18
Session 6	27	19	Session 6	33	29
Session 7	27	21	Session 7	33	26
Total	174	147	Total	197	169
Percentage	46.9%	46.51%	Percentage	53.09%	53.48%

The findings in table 3 show the frequencies and percentages of reactive and student-initiated FFEs in general and between two classes in particular. Overall, the frequency of FFEs and uptake was higher in Class B with the rate of (53.09%) for FFEs and (53.48%) for uptake, respectively.

The number of student-initiated vs. reactive FFEs, uptake and successful uptake occurring in each class were also determined. The results for class A appear in table 4..

Table 4. Frequency and percentages of FFEs and uptake in Class A

Class A	Student-initiated FFEs	Uptake	Successful uptake	Reactive FFEs	Uptake	Successful uptake

Session 1	8	8	4	13	13	7
Session 2	4	4	3	15	13	9
Session 3	13	13	3	16	11	10
Session 4	13	13	3	18	15	12
Session 5	8	8	4	12	9	7
Session 6	8	8	3	19	11	10
Session 7	10	9	2	17	12	10
Total	64	63	22	110	84	65
Percentage	36.78	98.43	34.92	63.21	76.36	77.38

As shown in this Table, (36.78%) of the total FFEs in Class A were student-initiated and (98.43%) of them resulted in uptake. (34.92%) of uptakes in student-initiated FFEs were successful. The frequency of reactive FFEs in Class A was (63.21%). (76.36%) of these episodes were followed by uptake and (77.38%) of the uptake moves were successful. The frequency counts and percentages of Class B's FFEs and their resultant uptake are also given in table 5.

Table 5. Frequency and percentages of FFEs and uptake in Class B

Class B	Student-initiated FFEs	Uptake	Successful uptake	Reactive FFEs	Uptake	Successful uptake
Session 1	8	7	2	16	14	10
Session 2	9	8	1	17	17	14
Session 3	13	13	3	16	11	10
Session 4	12	12	6	20	14	13
Session 5	6	6	2	14	12	10
Session 6	10	10	6	23	19	14
Session 7	14	13	3	19	13	9
Total	72	69	23	125	100	80
Percentage	36.54	95.83	36.50	63.45	59.17	80

As table 5 reveals, (36.54%) of the total FFEs occurring in Class B were student-initiated and (95.83%) of these FFEs were followed by uptake. (36.5%) of uptakes in student initiated FFEs were successful. Reactive FFEs made up (63.45%) of the total FFEs in class B. (59.17%) of reactive FFEs resulted in uptake and successful uptake comprised (80%) of these uptake moves

4.2 Chi-square results for the effects of FFE Type on uptake

The first research question of the present study dealt with the effects of student-initiated vs. reactive FFEs on uptake production. To answer this question, chi-square results are presented relating to (a) the overall amount of FFEs and uptake, (b) uptake in reactive and student-initiated FFEs, and (c) the effects of reactive vs. student-initiated FFEs on uptake and its success or failure. Since the data consisted of frequency counts of categorical data, Pearson's chi-square analysis was used. These results are given in Table 6 and 7.

Table 6. Chi-square results for Type of FFE and Uptake

Type of FFE		Presence of Uptake		Total
		No Uptake	Uptake	
Reactive	Count	51	184	235
	Expected Count	34.8	200.2	235.0
	% within Type	21.7%	78.3%	100.0%
	% within Uptake	92.7%	58.2%	63.3%
Student-initiated	Count	4	132	136
	Expected Count	20.2	115.8	136.0
	% within Type	2.9%	97.1%	100.0%
	% within Uptake	7.3%	41.8%	36.7%
Total	Count	55	316	371
	Expected Count	55.0	316.0	371.0
	% within Type	14.8%	85.2%	100.0%
	% within Uptake	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

The sum of FFEs, as shown in table 6, for both classes, was 371 and the total number of uptakes produced during the FFEs was 316 moves; In other words, (85.2%) of the total FFEs resulted in uptake. There were also 55 FFEs within which no uptake was present. These accounted for (14.8%) of the whole data. 235 episodes of the total FFEs were reactive and they were accompanied by 184 uptake moves (78.3% of the reactive FFEs were followed by uptake moves). However, 51 episodes (21.7%) of reactive FFEs did not lead to uptake. There were also 136 episodes identified as student-initiated FFEs. In addition, uptake moves were present in 132 episodes (97.1%) of this type. Only 4 episodes (2.9%) within student-initiated FFEs did not result in uptake. The level of significance for FFE Type and uptake was $.000 < 0.05$,

indicating that the association between FFE Type and uptake was highly significant.

The association between FFE Type and the resultant successful uptake are also reported in table 7.

Table 7. Chi-square results for Type of FFE and Successful Uptake

Type of FFE		Successfulness of Uptake		Total
		Unsuccessful uptake	Successful uptake	
Reactive	Count	39	145	184
	Expected Count	73.4	110.6	184.0
	% within Type	21.2%	78.8%	100.0%
	% within Successful Uptake	31.0%	76.3%	58.2%
Student-initiated	Count	87	45	132
	Expected Count	52.6	79.4	132.0
	% within Type	65.9%	34.1%	100.0%
	% within Successful Uptake	69.0%	23.7%	41.8%
Total	Count	126	190	316
	Expected Count	126.0	190.0	316.0
	% within Type	39.9%	60.1%	100.0%
	% within Successful Uptake	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

In analyzing the total amount of uptakes obtained from the whole data, as shown in table 7, 190 uptake moves (60.1%) were coded as successful and 126 (39.9%) as unsuccessful. The frequency and percentages of successful and unsuccessful uptake occurring in reactive FFEs were 145 (78.8%) and 39 (21.2%), respectively. In student-initiated FFEs, there were 45 successful uptakes (34.1%) and 87 unsuccessful uptakes (65.9%). (76.3%) of the total successful uptakes belonged to reactive FFEs and (69%) of the whole unsuccessful uptakes were produced in student-initiated FFEs. The level of significance for FFE Type and successful uptake was .000<

0.05, meaning that the association between FFE Type and successful uptake was also highly significant.

4.3 Logistic regression results for the effects of FFE Type on uptake

Although chi-square investigates the association of variables, it does not indicate causality. In order to investigate causality in the data, a binary logistic regression analysis was performed (Hatch & Lazaraton, 1991; Saito, 1999). In the case of the present data, it was desirable to use logistic regression to determine which type of incidental focus on form (i.e. reactive or student-initiated FFE) would best predict the dependent variables of uptake and successful uptake. A stepwise logistic regression analysis was performed to understand which FFE type predicted uptake and successful uptake. Two independent variables of reactive and student-initiated focus on form episodes were entered into the model. The statistical output from step 1 of the regression is presented in tables 8 and 9.

Table 8. Uptake regression overall percentage accuracy^a

Observed			Predicted		Percentage Correct
			Uptake		
			No Uptake	Uptake	
Step 1	Uptake	No Uptake	0	55	.0
		Uptake	0	316	100.0
	Overall Percentage				85.2

a. The cut value is .500

Table 9. Successful uptake regression overall percentage accuracy^a

Observed			Predicted		
			Successfulness of Uptake		Percentage Correct
			Unsuccessful uptake	Successful uptake	
Step 1	Successful Uptake	Unsuccessful uptake	87	39	69.0
		Successful uptake	45	145	76.3
	Overall Percentage				73.4

a. The cut value is .500

Tables 8 and 9 indicate that the best model produced had an overall percentage accuracy of (85.2%) for uptake and (73.4%) for successful

uptake. Logistic regression calculates the overall percentage accuracy of the model rather than amount of variance accounted for, since variance does not occur in binary variables. Therefore, the higher the proportion of correct classifications, the better the model is performing (Chatterjee, Hadi, & Price, 2000).

While tables 8 and 9 represented the overall percentage accuracy of the model, tables 10 and 11 show which FFE type would be the most significant predictor of uptake and successful uptake.

Table 10. Logistic regression for FFE type and uptake

		B	S.E.	Wald	Df	Sig.	Exp(B)	95.0% C.I. for EXP(B)	
								Lower	Upper
Step 1 ^a	Type	1.283	.158	65.743	1	.000	3.608	3.227	9.47

Table 11. Logistic regression for FFE type and successful uptake

		B	S.E.	Wald	Df	Sig.	Exp(B)	95.0% C.I. for EXP(B)	
								Lower	Upper
Step 1 ^a	Type	-1.972	.257	58.720	1	.000	.139	.084	.230

a. Variable(s) entered on step 1: Type.

The results of stepwise logistic regression for uptake and successful uptake are reported in tables 10 and 11. The logistic regression for uptake and successful uptake was performed in two stages. In the first stage, the effects of the independent variables of reactive vs. student-initiated FFEs, coded as 0 and 1 were investigated against the dependent variables of no uptake vs. uptake respectively. The odds ratio for type and uptake was 3.608 meaning that in this data set, student-initiated focus on form episodes were almost three and half times more likely to result in uptake than reactive FFEs. In the second stage of the analysis, the effects of the independent variables of reactive vs. student-initiated FFEs were calculated against the dependent variables of unsuccessful and successful uptake. The odds ratio for FFE type and successful uptake was 0.139, indicating that in this data set, student initiated focus on form episodes were roughly

one seventh as likely as reactive focus on form episodes to contain successful uptake.

5. Discussion

Farrokhi and Gholami (2007) found 641 episodes of focus on form in twenty hours of oral interaction in Iranian EFL context with a rate of one FFE each 1.9 minutes. However, in their study, Farrokhi and Gholami (2007) also investigated teacher-initiated focus on form. In order to compare the results of the present study with Farrokhi and Gholami (2007), the overall number of teacher-initiated FFEs occurring in one third of the total data was also identified and included in the analysis. This time, each FFE occurred in 2.01 minutes which demonstrates no significant difference between the two studies. Ellis et al. (2001b) identified 448 FFEs in 12 hours of meaning focused lessons in ESL context of New Zealand with language learners from various linguistic backgrounds and nationalities. The rate of FFEs was one in every 1.6 minutes. Loewen (2004) identified 1373 FFEs in 32 hours of 12 communicative classes in New Zealand, one FFE in 1.4 minutes. Lyster (1998b) identified 558 FFEs in 18.5 hours of immersion instruction, a rate of one FFE every 1.97 minutes. It should be noted that he did not include the preemptive FFEs in his analysis; rather he only examined reactive FFEs. The frequency of FFEs in the current study is comparable with the rate of FFEs in Farrokhi and Gholami (2007). Although the frequency of the total FFEs in the present study along with Farrokhi and Gholami (2007) is lower than the rates reported in Lyster (1998b), Ellis et al. (2001b) and Loewen (2004) which were conducted in ESL and immersion contexts, the difference is not significant. The total number of FFEs in this study indicates that a considerable number of FFEs exist in the observed lessons and that communicative classroom involving trained teachers and motivated, adult EFL learners can lead to a noticeable number of focus on form episodes. However, this study has not directly investigated the optimal frequency of FFEs; rather, it offers a descriptive picture of the amount of focus on form in EFL classes with intermediate EFL adult learners. In spite of somewhat similar frequency of incidental focus on form in this EFL context with ESL and immersion contexts, there are some differences in the proportion of uptake and successful uptake in reactive vs. student-initiated FFEs in comparison with similar studies in the literature.

Reactive and student-initiated FFEs comprised (63.34%) and (36.65%) of the total FFEs, respectively. The frequency of uptake following reactive FFEs was (78.3%), which was lower than the amount of uptake (97.1%) produced during student-initiated FFEs. However,

successful uptake made up (78.8%) of the total uptakes in reactive FFEs which contrasts sharply with the rate of successful uptake (34.1%) instigated by student-initiated FFEs. These results were substantially higher than those reported by Oliver (1995), Lyster & Ranta (1997), Mackey & Philp (1998) and Pica (2002). Lyster & Ranta (1997), in their study of four classes (18.3 hrs) of Grade 4 French immersion lessons in Canada, reported that (55%) of reactive focus on form resulted in uptake, with repair (successful uptake) occurring after only (27%) of the feedback moves. In another study by Mackey & Philp (1998), they reported that only (33%) of the recasts were repeated or modified, leaving (67%) of the recasts to be followed by topic continuation on the part of the learner. Oliver (1995), in a study of primary school children performing an information exchange task, reported an uptake rate of (35%). Pica (2002), in a study investigating discussion activities in two content-based classes in a university-based English language institute, found that limited opportunities existed for either reactive focus on form or modified student output (uptake).

In the present study, student-initiated focus on form accounted for (36.65%) of the total FFEs with the rate of (97.1%) uptake and (34.1%) successful uptake. Student-initiated focus on form was followed by a higher rate of uptake compared with the amount of uptake instigated by reactive focus on form. Ellis et al. (2001) reported that learner-initiated focus on form accounted for just over (38%) of the episodes and that the frequency of uptake following this type of FFE was (86.3%), which is in line with the findings of the present study. However, the frequency of successful uptake identified in student-initiated FFEs by Ellis et al. (2001) was (71%), which contrasts with the rate of successful uptake reported in this study. Farrokhi & Gholami (2007), in examining the relationship between type of FFE and uptake in Iranian EFL context, found that (15.9%) of the FFEs were initiated by students. In other words, the frequency of student-initiated in this study was two times more than the amount reported in Farrokhi and gholami (2007).

6. Conclusion

The findings of this study suggest that preemptive student-initiated focus on form episodes result in higher rates of uptake. However, the amounts of successful uptake produced following reactive focus on form episodes were significantly higher. The discourse structure of the two types of FFEs might be the partial explanation for the variation in (successful) uptake production. As Loewen (2004) states, when students initiate an FFE, they are often looking for explicit information about a linguistic item, such as a vocabulary definition or

an explanation of a grammatical item. The response to the provision of such information is very often likely to be an acknowledgment token, such as "oh" or "yeah". For example, in student-initiated FFEs about vocabulary in this study, students did not often repeat all or even part of the definition provided for them. In contrast, the classroom environment may have created an expectation that student errors would be pointed out, and that when this occurred, students should produce the correct form, regardless of whether it was supplied or elicited by the teacher. Although further investigation of these points is warranted, they may go some way in explaining why reactive FFEs resulted more in successful uptake than did preemptive student-initiated FFEs, considering the important role of incidental focus on form in meaning-focused classrooms, and regarding the scarcity of studies conducted to examine the effects of type of incidental focus on form on uptake, it is hoped that the findings of the current study will contribute to a better understanding of focus on form and that the results will provide EFL teachers with a higher awareness of the role of incidental focus on form, which could help them make informed decisions about the use of focus on form in their classes.

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